

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Lissabon.

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Although most of the refugees crowding Lisbon during the past year have disappeared by now, while no more of them will be admitted, that city is still a huge waiting-room. Many hundreds of people there spend days, weeks, months, and money, doing nothing but waiting for their chance to leave for Britain. The two most important words in their vocabulary are "priority" (A, B, and C) and "preference". If you have "priority", your stay in Lisbon will be limited to one or two weeks, - being an "A-case" you may even depart within two or three days after your arrival. If you are a person with ^{mere} "preference", it will take you at least 3 weeks. And if you are just a person, you better settle down for several months.

It depends upon your usefulness for Britain's war-effort, rather, than upon your nationality, how you are being classified. I have seen ~~many~~ distinguished British Ladies, related to persons in the government, but without any special mission in this war, who couldn't get either, "priority", or "preference". "Don't look now" such ladies would sadly joke, - "but over there at that table sit three of my newest enemies, - yes, those silly boys. They have just arrived from the States, yet will be sailing tomorrow, - while I, Lord Goddard's own sister-in law, have been vegetating here for a month, and obviously shall go on ~~vegetating~~ ^{vegetating} for ever and a day."

The Lady's "enemies" would mostly be persons somehow connected with the aircraft-industry, - American engineers, or Britishers, returning from their missions to the U.S.A. diplomats, journalists, ~~and~~ propagandists, and big business-men will also enjoy "priority" but will have to wait until the last airman has left for London, before being ~~then~~ taken care of on their part.

Nobody, however, will learn, just when and for what destination he is to fly, before the great day has actually arrived. You have got to keep on calling "British Overseas" constantly, only to be told to get in touch with them again "tomorrow".

There are land-planes and seaplanes ferrying between Lisbon and somewhere in England. At the ~~HEMPHRE~~ airfield of Cintra you may see a Luft-Hansa-machine, its tails adorned with a huge Swastika, alongside one of the Free-Dutch-operated, camouflaged Douglas-ships, ready to take off for Britain. It's an unappetizing and rather unbelievable view. A little girl who, I had taken out there to admire the airport suitably ~~HEMPHRE~~ asked "why don't they shoot at each other?"

Well, - they do, - somewhere else.

[REDACTED]

The night I left two sea-planes were ready to take off from the marine-airport. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The other, a huge American-made Clipper, had come from Africa [REDACTED]

I was among the 61 persons who jammed the Giant to capacity. Sixty-one persons on one plane, - I had never seen anything like it. "What's this, - Dunkirk?" somebody said, mustering the crowd, and our departure had indeed the character of a mass-evacuation. Nine children between three and eight years of age, were being flown home to England; they played and sang in the moonlit darkness of the pier, while their mothers cleared through the customs.

There were no bunks or sleeping-accomodation on the plane, or, rather, they couldn't possibly be used on this trip. We were

sitting, crowded, -talking, snoring, playing cards, flattering ourselves that we were on our way to England. Where would we land, - [redacted]

[redacted]
Gradually the truth filtered through.

"And then?" we asked, -
seen " said the skipper, -

"That remains to be

We arrived [redacted] early in the morning, but had to spend a couple of hours in the custom-house.

To busses were ready to carry our strange party some 15 Miles into the country where, at the breakfast-table of an attractive old inn, we didn't mind waiting for further developments.

HHHH

Fresh, green and peaceful was the [redacted] landscape, but, despite its meadows, hills, cows, white churches, and gray ruins, it failed to sooth our eyes which were red and hot from sleeplessness. The bus, at least 30 years of age, rumbled thunderingly from one hole into another. The children whose behavior had been exemplary during the night started weeping and being quite ill; - two extremely old ladies,

one of them blind, the other lame, - she had been brought into the Clipper on a stretcher, - were the only ones to remain fresh and receptive.

[REDACTED]

But we hadn't been given a choice, anyway.

[REDACTED]

The pilot who flew us [REDACTED] was happy to learn that 61 of us had been "evacuated" on the American Clipper [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] "Roosevelt gave us two of those beauties" he said "and they are an absolute godsend. We can hardly wait for the third which has already been promised. You see, - " he added and his voice turned passionate, - "it's here, as it is everywhere in this war: we are doing a good enough job, - maybe, - but we could be doing an excellent one, if we only had the tools; we have the men and the or-

ganisation and the guts, and, by now, we have all the aggressive spirit necessary for cleaning up the whole mess. If we haven't done so yet, it's merely owing to the lack of material."

It was good, though, to look down at the fields where countless silverish birds seemed to have gathered for a community-flight: British fighters on the alert.

Magically illuminated by the setting sun, the barrage-balloons surrounding us swayed lightly.

At the [redacted]-airport we didn't mind being searched and questioned for more than three hours. 270 excess-cigarettes, I learned, cost you one ~~HHHH~~ Pound and eighteen Shillings in custom-taxes (about 8 Dollars, or ~~HH~~ about 4 times their price); but, then, hardly any cigarettes can be bought in London and it's fun having a few to please ones tobacco-hungry friends.

There was quite some excitement among the mothers and their kids. Would the husbands and fathers be there to fetch them? I knew that they scarcely would, - hour and destination being kept strictly secret. A little girl, aged three, never stopped asking: "when do ~~HHH~~ we arrive in England?" And, when her mother assured her that we had arrived and that this was England, she shook her head impatiently. "This couldn't be England" she insisted, - "there is no Dad." Obviously she expected her soldier-dad whom she hadn't seen since his evacuation from France, to be spread all over the place and it couldn't be England, as long as he was not there.

When he finally was there, - at Paddington-station in London, - she did not recognize him, but looked at him with wide and amazed eyes. ~~HHHH~~ "That's him?" she asked. It sounded a/ but like "that's all?". Her childlike mother cried and the soldier who was Dad seemed very hoarse when he said H nothing but "hello.." and "well...."

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Erika Mann