

WAR DIARY -- CAIRO --
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Special to PAYDAY:

The fourth Arab-Israeli war was well into its second day before many of us realized what had happened. It was just another quiet October Saturday afternoon devoted mainly to preparations for the opening of the academic year at the Seminary. Although by evening scattered reports began coming in, we did not take them seriously and went to bed unaware that the Bar-Lev line had fallen and that a major war was blazing only 80 miles away.

My first response on seeing the Sunday morning papers was one of irritation. Gas rationing would start on Monday, and also sugar, tea, and cooking oil. Meat was to be sold on two days only. The airport closed. But further reading under the scarlet headlines and the realization began to come home. It was too early then to appreciate the extent of the Arab success, or to imagine how we would be affected personally. One thing was clear enough. Some of my favorite theories about wars in the Middle East had been blasted; that they come in ten year cycles, more-or-less, that there is a certain orchestration of events leading up to actual combat which provides advance warning, that the Arabs usually carry out an extensive psychological preparation of their people before hostilities begin. So much for theories, but here we were once more.

One would have thought that having experienced several previous wars in the area we might have been ready when it happened now again in 1973. The situation did have a familiar feel, but there was very little immediate reaction except to hurry out for gasoline and flip the radio dial for outside reports. There were other kinds of response elsewhere; some 3000 tourists suddenly stranded in the kind of panic that occurs when well-planned and expensive itineraries are disrupted, the local expatriate school alive with nervous rumors (after all, the Israelis had bombed a quarter of a mile away in 1970), the German community for some unclear reason deciding suddenly to move out (the Russians had had advance warning and sent dependents out before Oct. 6), some people retreating behind closed shutters and locked doors, refusing for a time even to let their children go to school. But to walk the streets of Cairo in that first week it was difficult to believe this was a nation at war. The bustle and murmur of business was undifferentiated from that of any other time. One looked in vain for signs of strain on passing faces. Wherever we mingled, at whatever level, we encountered the usual proprieties. If anything, the courtesy was just a shade more correct, the

solicitousness a trifle overdone, an elaborate casualness about the conversations. As if to bely the carnage of battle so near at hand, Cairo was overhung with a sky of remarkable brilliance, the air gentle and fresh. The Egyptian autumn had come in its usual pleasant way.

The second phase of this experience began to dawn towards the end of the first week, as it became evident to the world that the Arab armies had scored a startling military success. There was a notable heightening of the public spirit, a new animation in the crowded streets and when President Sadat made his statesmanlike address on October 16, Egyptians glowed with pride -- not only because their armies were doing well, but also because their leader had kept his balance and was addressing the world in terms that everyone had to respect, even people in Tel Aviv and Washington. It was an experience of pride for us too to note how Mr. Sadat laid aside the ritual demagoguery of former years, how he could address himself to justice rather than retribution and even in the midst of war make clear his desire for peace. We found ourselves believing too that on the other side of the blood and fire there could be a day of peace.

Going into the second full week the news began coming through of Israeli infiltration on the West Bank behind Egyptian lines. For a time this information was withheld from the Egyptian public and when finally reported minimized. But

the foreign community was increasingly aware of this growing shift in the fortunes of war. Having finally evacuated the last of the tourists, the embassies and consulates turned their attention to the large resident communities -- 1100 Americans along -- and the busy traffic of rumors. Would there be air raids? Would the Israelis drive for Cairo and if they did, how would the Egyptian public react? At the same time there was a strong counter-sentiment in the foreign community to stick it out. Egyptian authorities were giving clear assurances on the protection of foreign life and property, and their previous record in this regard has been impeccable. The diplomats wavered, consulted and finally stood firm. Several times later we were to hear Egyptian friends express appreciation that we did not leave as we had in 1967. But then there have been times when it was best for them and for us that we did go. It is a difficult line to draw.

The week of Oct. 22 was, in ways, the most difficult of all. It began with the announcement of the UN agreement on a cease-fire tied to immediate negotiations and the implementation of UN 242. So that was what Kosygin had been doing in Cairo and Kissinger in Moscow!

We lived that day on a cloud of hope, incredible vistas of peace stretching into the future. Driving into town we pulled up at a light beside a carload of Russians reading the English paper and talking excitedly while their Egyptian driver listened to the same news on the car radio in Arabic. But did Israel and the Arabs really agree on the terms of 242, especially the withdrawal from territory occupied in 1967? Would negotiations come before, after, or with the implementation of 242? Egyptians were not asking such questions that day, they were simply full of a joyful expectancy and a flowering of the pride that had been growing since the first military successes. So it was a sad thing indeed to see the disillusionment spread as the cease-fire came unstuck on Tuesday and the Israelis greatly enlarged their territory on the west bank. As each day brought new cease-fire efforts and then new failures, the release and return of tension was quite hard to take. The gloom in the city was quite as palpable as the rejoicing had been on Monday. I remember thinking that if the Israelis, either militarily or politically, would force the Arabs into a position of humiliation, we would all be back to zero and the deadly cycle could only begin again.

By Saturday, Oct. 27, there was a definite change, the first day no fighting was reported, the UN peace-keeping forces moving in, taking up positions, Egyptian and Israeli commanders meeting for the first time to define a cease-fire line. We found ourselves listening for the news once or twice a day instead of the 3 or 4 times it had been before. Suddenly we were in a new phase, a time between, something had ended and something new, as yet undefined was about to begin. It became a period of idle jobs, sorting pictures, filing, redding up. My wife had her hair done for the first time since the war began. There was a kind of sleepiness about, born in part of the alacrity and softness of the October air and the sight of the brightly dressed children in the parks, but also of the release from the tension and fear of the battle days, and no less of a reluctance to be caught up in some terrible new surge of history. There remained a sadness that the dream of an unimaginable peace which had glowed on Monday had been shattered, not easily to come again. The psyche will tolerate only so much disillusionment. We were relieved not to look back, but reluctant to look ahead. \$\$

Attached to this issue of PAYDAY is the proposed slate of candidates for the 1974 Officers of the Staff Association, as well as a pamphlet and offering envelope for the 1973 Thanksgiving Offering.
