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Recent Books

ROMMEL RUFT KAIRO (Rommel Calling Cairo). By *John W. Eppler*. (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag. 1959. Pp. 300. DM 6.85.)

Operation Condor was a bold, even desperate stroke—the attempt to place a German resident agent in the heart of the British North African command center, one who could provide Rommel with vitally needed order-of-battle information. It failed, partly because of bad luck, but mainly because of the agent's cowboy operational methods, brash and almost incredibly insecure.

Published just on the heels of a British account of the same events,¹ Eppler's tale of his espionage activities in Cairo for Field Marshall Erwin Rommel during the struggle for

¹ Leonard Mosley, *The Cat and the Mice*. (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1958. 160 pp.)

Recent Books

North Africa reveals little new substantive information. Mosley's report, reviewed in the last number of the *Studies*,^{*} will be of more interest to the professional intelligence officer. Eppler has told an adventure story in a romantic, intensely personal style characteristic of much of the recent spate of German war reminiscences. The fact that a motion picture is being made in Germany based on Operation Condor is perhaps indicative of the nature of the book.

We learn nothing from Eppler about how he was spotted and recruited by the Abwehr; the story opens with his posting to Rommel in North Africa, and the first 130 pages deal with the problems and experiences of his 4,000-kilometer trip across the Sinai to reach the target area. He gives passing mention to technical intelligence preparations for the mission, such as documentation, communications equipment, and clothing. Inasmuch as he is arrested by British security forces on page 216 and devotes himself from then on to his treatment by his interrogators, it will be seen that he gives relatively little space to his actual work in Cairo. Details on the recruiting of sub-agents are almost completely lacking, as well as a useful account of what, if anything, was accomplished. One incident is described, the separating of a British courier from his pouch of battle plans by the belly-dancer Hekmath Fathmy; a satisfactory account of this is available from Mosley. Mosley also deals at some length with the tracking down of Eppler by British security forces, to which Eppler's own account adds nothing of significance.

Eppler never again made radio contact with Abwehr base stations after his initial report upon arrival. The two special radiomen assigned to service him had been posted too close to the front by order of Rommel and had been captured with their codes during a raid by the Long Range Desert Patrol. Eppler was cut off (*eingemauert*) after this in order to prevent a play-back. Eppler's radioman tried night after night without success to make contact with base station, and the title of his story would therefore more logically read *Cairo Calling Rommel*. This book can safely be passed by, especially by those who have read *The Cat and the Mice*.

^{*} Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 1959), p. 139.