

SM 06: Evasion

Sunday, 23 November 2008

G.I. JOE: Special Missions #6

Evasion

Cover Date: July, 1987

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Summary (by Russ Humphress): In a back alley in Krogdanz, Borovia, we find Stalker, Snow Job and Quick Kick being held at gunpoint by members of the Borovian Security Police. Colonel Ratnikov tells them they will spend the rest of their lives rotting in the gulag for nothing, and comments how pathetic it is that one part of their government sent them on a mission to rescue a spy who had already been released because of a deal with another part of their government. Snow Job quips that "It was worth it to take a shot at you." Colonel Ratnikov threatens that Snow Job can still be "shot while attempting to escape."

As the colonel orders the captive team members taken back to security police headquarters, a Sergeant notes that one of the "imperialist terrorists" had a brown beard, and is missing, which leads Ratnikov to notice the sewer grate in the alley where Outback had been hiding, despite the other team members attempts to keep the Security Police distracted. Ratnikov sends one of the Security Police down into the sewer, but they find nothing...

Because Outback has already moved into another section of the sewer. As he navigates the sewers by dead reckoning and the name-plates at major intersections, he notes that the Michelin Guide rates Krogdansk's best Restaurant at minus three stars.

As the Joes are carted away in a truck, they see that Ratnikov has called for a tanker of gasoline to pump into the sewer system. In the sewer, Outback is passed by a stream of rats, and simply comments, "yuk!" Back in the alley, Ratnikov stops the pumping of the gasoline and has one of the sergeants drop a lit cigarette into the manhole, which sets off a chain of explosions, blowing off manholes all along the sewer line. Outback suddenly realizes what spooked the rats, and climbs the nearest ladder to the street, emerging just in time to grab onto the bottom of a passing streetcar, and let it carry him to relative safety just as the manhole explodes behind him.

Later, at Security Police Field HQ, Colonel Ratnikov is informed that although teams have searched the now extinguished sewers, there is no sign of Outback. After examining the possibilities, Ratnikov decides Outback must try to head west, toward the border of the "decadent democracies." He orders the western border sealed. Meanwhile, Outback leaves the streetcar at a "farmers collective market", and acquires a disguise and transportation, in the form of a chicken farmer's truck.

At Security Police Field HQ, Ratnikov chastizes a subordinate for closing the border a bit too conspicuously, as Sgt Gruvich informs the Colonel that the team had large amounts of expertly forged Borovian currency in their luggage. The Colonel orders teams to the markets, to check for more of the forged currency. North of Krogdansk, Outback muses that the 50,000 Borovian Rubles he paid for the truck would buy a loaded Jeep Cherokee in the states, even with a bad exchange rate. Seeing a hitch-hiker, he decides it might be good cover, but when he stops the hitch-hiker is revealed to be car-jacker...

Back at the market, the Chicken farmer is discovered to have the money, tells the Security Police that the stranger who bought the truck asked directions for the most direct route to the mountains, north. To the north, Outback disarms the car-jacker, and sticks the man's face through the truck's windshield.

While not far behind, Ratnikov flies in a helicopter over an armor column looking for the fugitive Outback. The chicken farmer has been brought along to identify the stranger, and spots the truck crashed in a ravine. The helicopter lands to investigate, and finds one man with a mangled face in the truck, but the chicken farmer says he can't tell if it is the man he sold the truck to, because of the damage to his face. Sgt. Gruvich finds a blood trail leading away from the truck, and on up into the mountains. As the Security Police make ready to search the area, the chicken farmer muses that something is missing. Later, Ratnikov spots tracks, fresh blood, and then Outback, who has collapsed in the snow. They land, only to find that it is only Outback's clothes and a freshly dead chicken, which was the source of the blood. As Outback gets the drop on the group, the Chicken farmer remembers that he threw in the chicken when he sold the truck.

Outback hijacks the helicopter, taking the State Security personnel, but leaving the chicken farmer. He also takes the Colonel's uniform to replace his own clothes, leaving Ratnikov to fly in the front of the helicopter in his underwear.

Outback disables the vehicle's gyrocompass, and radio, and dons a parachute. Later, Outback jumps out after telling the Borovians to stay above cloud cover, and turn back without trying to follow him. Ratnikov orders the helicopter down over the pilots objections, where it is promptly blown out of the sky by an artillery unit of a neighboring country. The artillery commander, Hauptmann Rockwitz advises his headquarters they have captured a suspected Borovian commando, who is asking for an audience with not the Borovian, but the American Consul.

Review: A good issue, and a nice follow-up to issue 61 of the regular series. This issue reveals a lot about Outback, and just how good he can be at what he does. Outback isn't one of the most used characters in the series, but he does seem to get more time than many of the characters who were intro'd around the same time frame.

Colonel Ratnikov's determination to capture Outback leads to his undoing, and one realizes Outback must have figured the Colonel wouldn't listen to him, hence his reason for leaving the chicken farmer behind when he hijacked the helicopter.

This issue also provides a description of Borovia's relative location. When Colonel Ratnikov is examining the possible way Outback might try to escape the country, he notes: "To the East lies Russia and Siberia. To the South is a desert peopled by religious fanatics, To the north lies Austria, Bounded by the Alps..." and of course, the decadent democracies to the west. This places Borovia in one of the world's most historically politically unstable regions, the Balkan peninsula. (Although the description to the south is a little puzzling, seemingly leaving out a few large countries (Greece anyone? Turkey?) Either Colonel Ratnikov isn't very good a geography, or the European and Middle-Eastern regions of the G.I. Joe universe have some significant differences from our own world. Of course, Geography isn't my field, so if I've missed a desert region to the south of Austria, let me know.

It's also worth noting that this region is different today than when this issue of the Joe comic was published. At the beginning of the issue, Borovia is described as "behind the iron curtain," a political distinction that, thankfully, probably doesn't mean very much to today's teenagers, who, if they have even heard the term, have probably only heard it in history class.

One glaring technical problem with this issue, is that all four of the Joes appear in their regular uniforms, despite having been in black commando style outfits during issue 61. The most probable reason for this would seem to be that the artist might have seen only the cover to issue 61 (which depicts Stalker, Snowjob, and Quickkick in their usual uniforms, instead of the outfits they wear in the interior artwork.) Then again, this could also have to do with "brand recognition" issues, (ie. the Joes are more recognizable in their figure-based uniforms, and this is, after all, a toy tie-in.) While this issue is a good enough one-shot story of Outback evading capture, it's also a good bridge between issues 61 & 62 of the regular series. I've always felt that it was this kind of cohesive storytelling which made Marvel's G.I. Joe as cool as it was.

Reprinted in:

- G.I. JOE: Special Missions, Volume 1 (July 2010). A trade paperback from IDW Publishing collecting issues #1-7.