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ITALIAN TROOPS SAY "DON'T WORRY ABOUT US."

By Alan Moorehead, Representing the Combined Press.

The following despatch has been received from Alan Moorehead in Continuation of his earlier story (M.O.I. Issue No.16) of today:

(Continued on the other side)

I picked a snub-nosed boat that was taking on a twenty-five pounder gun, and clambered aboard with a parcel of sandwiches and a novel. Half way across we developed a list to starboard and water began to flow in so quickly we had to put back and pump the hull dry. Then, dodging between warships and transports that were passing in all directions, we made a quick trip across to the mainland. Spitfires were trailing lines of vapour above Reggio and, as we drew near a mainland beach, the Luftwaffe came in with more dash and pace than yesterday. The first stick missed the beach and put up so thick a cloud of dust from the vineyards that the shore was only semi-visible for ten minutes. In the night the traffic tangle on the roads had been straightened out and one could bowl forward at a good 15 or 20 m.p.h. One of the sights near Reggio is a wrecked Italian ammunition train. The Air Force caught it some time ago and now the torn skeleton of the trucks is rusted and falling to bits. A few civilians were coming back into San Giovanni, but nothing much is left of the place. Every mile or so a column of Italian prisoners was either tramping along through the dust or turning into one of the prisoners' compounds which have been thrown up along the coast. They keep saying to the British "You needn't worry about us. None of us are going to shoot".

Still, you never can tell, and they are being watched. Many are volunteering for work. + + +

Along the beaches are many curious earthworks which the Germans built to assist their evacuation from Sicily. Here and there German invasion barges are piled up on the rocks. For the rest the coast is as picturesque and as placid as in peace-time.

Germans inland still have a few guns in the mountains and an occasional shell comes over. Having no vehicle today I hitch-hiked in many different vehicles and talked to many of the men. For some strange reason two rumours always start at the front at the beginning of every campaign. They are "we have made a landing in France" and "Turkey has come into the war".

It is usually the same two rumours every time and everyone was asking about them today. As for this campaign the men are taking it with astonishing calm. Already it is beginning to seem to them that it is a matter of course that they are in Italy. Most of them have been doing the routine things for so long now - the fatigue parties, the convoys for fuel and supplies - that it doesn't matter to them much what country they are in. I would like to report that the invasion of Europe is more exciting than this but it isn't at present. It is just a professional business with the emphasis heavily on the quartermaster and the engineer. But then anything can happen in a war.

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MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

The following passage should be taken in at the asterisks above.

Only a handful of Germans have come in as yet and there has been no opportunity of getting many. Once you round the northern corner of Italy's toe you have a superb view of the great cone of Stroboli rising out of the sea. All this coastline was well fortified. I went into almost impregnable pillboxes along the cliffs, clearly disguised cement blocks covered with dead branches and concrete trenches running through the cypress groves. The guns were still there but none of the strongholds I entered seemed to have been manned. The guns were well oiled, the ammunition standing ready. One of these pillboxes had been blown bodily into the sea by a naval shell. Scilla is a lovely terraced village that gleamed in the sunlight. The inhabitants had mostly fled. A crater had been made in the mainroad where the cliffs come down to the sea.