

Tom Harris-Matthews: War Diary, Fontanellato

previous day, shooting and taking prisoner many Italians in the process. It seems that all over the north of Italy, Italian soldiers are getting into civilian clothes and fleeing to their homes to escape being conscripted by the Germans. Thus the Germans are looking for all men of military age in mufti, which is not going to make things any easier for us. However this particular one proves a blessing. He speaks normal Italian rather than dialect and can explain our wants to the farmer - that we want to stay on the farm for an indefinite period, and that we

someone will give us away -

but our host was equal to the occasion and had his guests well hidden. He agreed to take us across as soon as he had finished the milking. We were very glad of the rest, and settled down to talk to the soldiers, and partake of a bowl of milk warm from the cow. For the first time we learn that thousands of British prisoners have been taken direct from the camps, and transported straight to Germany by train.

The milk works wonders on our fatigue, and in ten minutes we are ready to start with the

farms north of the PO are much bigger and more prosperous than those of the south. The farmer's house, the barns, and the houses of the farm labourers form a hollow square of buildings, with a cemented yard in the centre where the maize is put out to dry, the dung

not, for the same reason. However we give him as detailed instructions as we can, and place on him the responsibility of getting the others through.

Sept. 16 - Thursday - Left at approx. 0600 hours and succeeded in losing our way in the fields. When the sun came up - found we were walking exactly due south instead of north. This means nearly two hours lost - but we manage to find the railway, and crossing it the

Carabinieri are definitely against us -

Our guide is by occupation a doorkeeper of some establishment in COMO, and the phrase from the Psalms keeps jingling monotonously through my head, "I would rather be a

dark. However, he leads us unerringly through small streets, past railway crossings, and

He is quite friendly, and after "frisking" us for arms, carts us off to the nearest police post. There seems to be sentries at about 10 yard intervals along this lane - so we should almost certainly have been caught anyway.

At the police

of these dozes, to see a telegraph boy walking round the room, shouting "telegram for Dr. Meyer from Addis Ababa" – I think – "This must be a nightmare", I get up and look at his

