

## Unloading at Barri

From Salerno I was returned to Naples and put in charge of a truck convoy to Santa Maria Caeserea. The mail route over the mountains to Barri took me within 6 kilometers of the German lines and as I look back on it now, that was probably the most dangerous assignment given to me in Italy. However, it proved uneventful until we arrived in Barri.

As we approached Foggia headquarters for the Negro 8th Air Command my driver suggested that I unlimber my 45 and prepare to shoot my way out of a trap or surrender. Before I could make up my mind which to do, we were through a narrow gap and hightailing it as fast as our cumbersome transport would permit for Barri which was the seat of the only Law Library still in the hands of the Allied forces.

I was amazed at the damage done in Barri. Apparently in a battle with the Adriatic Fleet of the German Navy, a stray shell had hit an ammunition barge and caused a series of explosions which destroyed the German naval striking power north of Barri and bottled up the German fleet at Taranto.

On an island in the bay at Santa Maria Caeserea there is a huge monument to the sailors of the Italian navy who died in World War I.

We were quartered close by an enormous derrick huge enough to lift a fully loaded freight car from its tracks and deposit it in the hold of an out-going vessel. It was an awesome sight to see this derrick in operation. With true G.I. sense of fitness, this mammoth machine operated day and night under the arc lights and a G.I. had painted the name "MARY" on the side of this engine of destruction.

The area was fully guarded by a battalion of Sikhs. Every time I had to go to our headquarters I had to show my pass and military credentials to the bearded Sikh on guard. I rode from Barri with the officer in command of the Sikh battalion and to make conversation I told him that I thought his men made splendid guards since none of them spoke English and the maddest of Englishmen would not dare to attempt an entrance to the Customs House without showing his pass.

The officer laughed and said that was true but they had certain difficulties as a security guard, and illustrated his point by approaching the guard and showing him a personal letter from his wife in lieu of a pass. He explained that to the Sikhs one piece of paper was the same as any other and we received a very smart military salute when he showed the old family letter he had received. This ruse worked perfectly with the Sikhs but I did not risk trying it myself.

In a few days I was ordered back to Naples by a more southerly route and was ensconced in the Toledo Hotel prepared to spend an uneventful 4th of July.