

# QUADERNI

del Centro di Studi  
sulla deportazione e l'internamento

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Extract Pages 87 to 95  
Emanuele Caffiero

R O M A  
ASSOCIAZIONE NAZIONALE EX INTERNATI  
1976-1977

*Emanuele Caffiero<sup>1</sup>: - VERSO IL LAGER (Towards the Camp)*

*Jannina (occupied Greece), 8 September 1943*). At dinner, by chance I switched on the radio, it was about 8 pm, I and the officers lingered at the canteen and we hear the transmission of a press release in which Badoglio informs the nation about the conclusion of the armistice with enemy powers. The news is greeted by the troops with shouts of joy and jubilation; a sign that they morally exhausted. It is however a surprise to us and leaves us perplexed and worried. How will the Germans react to it? They are infinitely unhappy. I did not expect such an end! The enthusiasm still lives in me at the same level at which we came to the war. Even if, very deep down, after what transpired soon after the start of the Greek campaign, I felt that we didn't have it; though I could never have imagined such an undignified end! However, I too feel that all I now have is the fruit of a betrayal and I am not indignant.

I pass on the news to my department commanders, in particular, **Captain Ferraro** who is hard to reach as his battery deployed at the cliff stronghold, he instructs me to be ready for any eventuality. From his command post Ferraro reports to me unusual and unidentified troop movements. I sounded the alarm. The men went quickly to their combat positions, something that had never been achieved during the various exercise drills of alarm! I do the rounds of the guard positions and the defence station near the barracks complex and I find the guards in order and resolute. This gives me immense pleasure. At the same time I can't but worry about the big risks we run due to unpreparedness of our commanders.... Later we get the order to sound the alarm. I remain at my command post till late and I continually try the lines for connection with Ferraro, the Garrison Commander and Katricka, the Artillery Commander.

So far nil neither orders nor plan. We are waiting for the events to unfold. However, I confer with **Ferraro** about the order I had been given to defend should we be attacked.

I make the arrangements for the destruction of secret documents. The Regimental Standard that is in sacred safekeeping with my group, is feverishly and emotionally removed from its present-day safe place and put into the bespoke package prepared expressly for this purpose. The night passes calmly

*Jannina, September 9, 1943*. As soon as it is daybreak, I am informed that the German troops are stationed around the enclosure of our barracks on an escarpment. I go to see what it is all about: They are a few meters from our positions, armed on all sides with an attitude you certainly would not call benevolent. **I get in contact with the Commander of the XXVI Artillery C.A.**

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<sup>1</sup> General Emanuele Caffiero: on the 8 September 1943 commanded with the rank of Captain. The CXV Corps from 149/13 of 26th regiment regrouped with C.A. From his POW diary written in the camp (Lager) and saved from the searches, the pages published here are those that illustrate the dramatic events after Armistice, the march on foot up to Albania and then back to Greece, at Florina where the journey begins by train.

of whom it would only be Colonel Chierico who would be the higher-ranking officer (as General Saporetti is doing the inspections rounds in Preveza). where he was surprised by the news. With respect to my request, he does not know how to give me any clarification nor dispositions. With regards the protocols, even less.

Later the men from the mess who were getting provisions let me know that the Germans are disarming the Italian soldiers who they encounter along the way. I ordered that no one leave the garrison.

I was successful in connecting with the Regimental Commander, Colonel Cavaliotti, who had been hospitalized for some time at Jannina's medical centre. I ask for advice on procedures that I had specifically requested via of Lieutenant Fuselli. He demands that I give him an assessment of what I'm going to do at dusk?

I gather the whole unit and tell my men about the serious situation in which we find ourselves in based on the strength of the circumstantial evidence, I explain that in these critical moments we must remain more united than ever. I predict however, contrary to the rumours about our return to Italy, that if all goes as I expect that we shall end up as prisoners in Germany, Based on the agreement between our High Command and that of the Germans, the ranks can leave unarmed.

I receive orders from the Artillery Commander to surrender weapons, munitions, and the vehicles to the 1st German Division. What sadness! We are already under their control! However honour is retained: the Italian High Command obtained a concession that *"the Officers could retain their pistols, the CC.RR. their rifles; no machine guns nor other automatic hunting rifles."*<sup>2</sup>

In the afternoon, Ferraro with all his men and vehicles comes back to my bunker. We debate, we debate throughout the night, but fail to find any reasonable answer to the various questions we ask ourselves. In every possible outcome the future is bleak.

Jannina, 10 September 1943. In the morning the Germans take the weapons and ammunition. What despair!

Jannina, 11 September 1943. The vehicles are impounded, (all the outdated vehicles in the the service of the Italian troops), including various supplies, food provisions, water, etc.<sup>3</sup> The Artillery Commander orders me to make 20 drivers available to the Germans. I am able to reduce the number to ten. In the afternoon I participate in the meeting of the Departmental Commanders including Army Corps Commander, his Excellency Della Bona Commander of XXVI C.A.; he explains that he was forced to cede the weapons in order to avoid shed blood unnecessarily, in view of the extraordinary German arms and materiel superiority. He advises us to remain united and told us that we will all return to Italy. With respect to the transfer, it shall be a march to Florina by road in four columns with everything of the Army Corps has. We shall be part of the Saporetti column. It was practically a declaration of impotence.

Jannina, 12 1943. Preparations are made for the departure. I learn that the Military Union stores are being looted by the Italian military. What purpose does it serve? The same happened to the food stores that were kept full, beyond belief whilst they had informed us late yesterday that the provisions were low and it was necessary to make savings. For which they were solicited and encouraged initiatives of the type "gardens of war", a type of animal husbandry etc.

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<sup>2</sup> From the written orders of the Commander of the XXVI C.A. Officer of Services - n. [...] / 8 Serv. of prot dated "PM 207. September 9, 1943 n.

<sup>3</sup>) See previous note

This act of vandalism makes us lose any possibility re-provisioning in an orderly manner for the long march to Florina: approx 260 km.

Jannina, 13 September 1943. 1800 Hours: the company is roused for departure; it starts in good order, on foot, bearing towards the North Sector where it will have to meet up with the Saporetti column. The Group's Lieutenants **Fuselli, Ancona and Macchitelli** remain in the garrison to take care of the trucks left by the Germans; they will have to arrange for the transport the Group's personal heavy baggage, food and canteen for the cooking of the meals during the course of the transfer march. Along the city route a few Greeks, mainly women, are seen, they wish us "*kali patrida*" (good journey home!)

We arrived at the northern checkpoint where we meet the Saporetti column and shortly after we resume the march. For a good stretch it rains, thankfully only lightly. We stop at the crossroads for **Bisduni**, some 12 km. along the Jannina-Kalibaki road. It is 2200 Hours. The march remains orderly, just a few signs of fatigue here and there. Half an hour later; the supply officers arrive with the cooks to provide us with hot rations which are distributed as per normal. We sleep under tents. There is high humidity.

Crossroad for **Bisduni** (Greece), 14 September 1943. Wakeup call at 0700 hours and departure at 0800 hours. 23 Kms, to the **Kalibaki** crossroads. The baggage trucks have not yet arrived. Fortunately, I had thought of taking with me and as I had suggested also to my men, to load their backpacks with the minimum necessary, so-called indispensables (including dry rations) to ensure a certain personal security. A march under a scorching sun proves difficult. We suffer from thirst. **Almost all the soldiers are unaccustomed to the long marches and the relative inconveniences (in general, these are territorials, gunners and mechanics of C.A and military administrators)** they show signs of fatigue. After the first 6-7 km. first they begin to throw themselves on the ground to rest however they would continue at a slow pace and proceed to lighten their backpacks full of all Godly goodies, only now do they throw on to the road what seems to them useless and heavy. The columns get longer and longer and we mingle. There are no more formal divisional structures. Along the way there are scattered groups of soldiers seen fallen to the ground, literally burnt out! There is nothing that can be done for them.

At 1800 hours we reach the crossroads for **Kalibaki**, with a part of the group. The remains of the former **Saporetti** column continue to arrive until after midnight in dribs and drabs, in a pitiful condition. An area close to a river is chosen for the camp: the renowned **Kalamas** (River) that we had not been able to overcome in '40. **How many memories of war, of our hard fought advance, of the sudden subtle halt and of the subsequent retreat manoeuvres done in lurches along with the rear guard to which my battery had been positioned!** Now the Kalamas is a friend for us to quench our thirst and take a nice restorative bath! I was able to get hot rations for all the group personnel despite the consternation of the provisioning officers and having done so, it lifted the comradery of the cooks and volunteers.

We sleep under tents, after having made every effort to arrange the men of the Group as best as possible.

Crossroads for Kalibaki 15 September 1943. We rest for most of the day. The General in Command decided, after the pitiful results of the march yesterday and because of the heat, to do take the journey at night.

Departure at 2100 Hours for the crossroads at Konitza: km. 22. Despite the day of rest, the march returns into disorder and the group also begins to disintegrate due to the lack of interest of some officers. Only the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> batteries are able to move compactly thanks to the good work by **Fazio and Ferraro**.

Crossroads at Konitza (Greece), 16 September 1943. At 0400 hours of the morning we arrive in the area that we believe is the one chosen for the encampment but we do not find the trucks. We sleep in the open close to a little fire waiting for the day! It's cold.

Approaching 0600 hours in the morning with the two batteries left, we go to on a search for trucks by moving along the predetermined route. So we reach, after 12 km. of march, the area of the nearby the **Perati** bridge near the border with Albania where we find them again. In the dark they had become disorientated and lost contact with it our troops. Rest ends at 0200 Hours tomorrow September 12.

Perati Bridge zone (Greece), 17 September 1943. Departure is at 0300 Hours. We now enter Albanian territory. I recall the reverse transfer-night journey, from Koritza (Albania) to Argirocastro (Albania), when we carried out an offensive with my group in '40, in a very different state of mind, with the headlights of trucks and tractors deliberately switched on to startle the Greeks. Now we retreat, to who knows what destination on a part of the road made earlier with so much enthusiasm and deception!

Today we head to **Leskoviku** (Albania) where we arrive at 0900 Hours after 16 km. of marching all uphill. The usual disorganization and indecision for the choice of the area for the camp persists. Food and supplies begin to run out. We compensate very well with vegetables from the farms and the vineyards abandoned by the Albanian farmers. We ate some excellent grapes.

**Leskoviku** (Albania), 18 September 1943. We leave again once again early in the morning (0200 and 3000 hours). We come to km. 61 of the road to Koritza just beyond the village of **Germeni**: 18 km of marching. The group keeps more or less compact. But morale is low. The provost official makes me lose my patience. I replace him with someone else that volunteered, and whom seemed to me motivated by good will and endowed with greater spirit of initiative.

**Germeni** (Albania), 19 September 1943. March of 19 km. up to **Baarova**. The town is all burnt out. The population had fled. Who knows what had happened!

**Baarova** (Albania). September 20, 1943. Rest! Most appropriate: Serves well to collect ones thoughts about the situation and the choice of the political landscape that we will have to consider and to regain our physical stamina.

**Baarova** (Albania), 21st September 1943. 10 km march to **Selenice**.

**Selenice** (Albania), 22 September 1943. 20 km of march ends at an altitude 1173. Alpine landscape, perhaps even beautiful, but whoever wants to admire it? At least we no longer suffer the heat.

After so many days of marching the men have begun to acclimatize to walk on foot with a backpack on their backs and the groupings at least have mostly regained their cohesion.

**Selenice** region, 23 September 1943. 18 km march to **Drenova**. More fond memories; we stop in the same town where the group

stopped before the march for **Argirocastro** when I was still a lieutenant commander of a battery, just a few months after first graduating from **School of Application** (*assume Military College*), full of aspirations and ambitions! But then the Group was fully functional with appropriate military infrastructure, tractors and vehicles.

**Drenova** (Albania), 24th September 1943. Rest day

**Drenova**, 25th September 1943. 25 km march to 21 km to Korça-Bilisti. We move during the day. We cross the town of Korça; another disastrous march due to the heat. Reach the location chosen for the stage at 1400 Hours. Along the way my men gathered grapes, onions and potatoes. I'm sorry for the peasants, but I can't help it. So, we are able to prepare an excellent warm dinner for the evening.

**Bilisti** area (Albania) 26 September 1943, 27 km March the final 13km of the road leads to the Greek-Albanian border and from there to Florina (Greece), the last stage of our exhausting journey on foot. Pleasant memories of the period during which time my Group was sheltered in **Bilisti** even before the war with Greece. The comparison does not hold up with our current conditions. Once again the same mistakes are repeated of the earlier days. Areas are set for camps without first making sure there is water.

Km 13 road to **Florina**. March for 10 km of the 23 km distance to Florina, near the town of **Antartikon** (Greece). We cross once more the Greek-Albanian border and return to Greek territory.

**Antartikon** (Greece), 28 September 1943. Rest day!

**Antartikon**, 29th September 1943. 30 km march ends in Florina, accomplished well by all. We stop 4 km, from the village. I meet up with Sergeant **Sciales**. He tells me that the heavy baggage has already arrived at **Florina**. I go to the town to get information from the officers and other troop's personnel to enquire if they had seen the baggage and where to go to retrieve it. By chance I meet **Sergeant Major Gagliardi**. In the town square I find, suitcases, boxes, backpacks and various cartons thrown together in a jumble and unattended! I was fortunate to find my backpack intact, but I could see neither my document valise nor my cot. I chatted with one the officers that Sergeant Major Gagliardi had recommended, who assured me of having seen troop carriers leave for Germany. I also take a white wool blanket, similar to those supplied to the infirmaries. **In the evening, we discuss and bicker. The problem is whether to 'accept' or say 'no' to join fascist army. The Badoglio government has operated in a clumsy way. But there is insufficient reason for betraying the oath given to the King, which I believe still continues to be in force, despite all the legal confusion and the will of the nation.**

From the news received here and there we are convinced that the destination of our transfer journey is not to Italy but Germany.

**Florina (Greece)**, 30th September 1943. We hope to leave today. We unpacked the tents and arranged them along the street waiting for the long-expected order to board the train. But this never arrives. German Officials gather the troops to recruit volunteers for the work in Greece. They take away half my group. This dashes away my vision to get the whole Group back home intact. In the evening, they make us go to a fenced enclosure, a sorting concentration camp in the same city. End of freedom.

The attendant to Lieutenant Fazio prepares for us exquisitely prepared pasta 'asciutta'. Up to today he (Lieutenant Fazio) had been arranging in the middle of the town square to sell to the Greeks, stuff that had been abandoned by officers and troops. I think of my loyal admirable orderly Bassi, from Brescia, who despite having left by truck



with it heavy baggage from Jannina had managed to remain with Gagliardi. What happened to him? I'm sure he'll be fine! With a strong fibre like his! I remember that cold and snowy April morning of 1941, the day after the night transfer of our CA to the western sector, when I saw him emerge from under the my car (in which my driver and I had settled down to sleep) got up smiling as always. He had chosen that solution because, although not having found a place in the truck that I had indicated, he did not **have dared to bother me to ask for another accommodation.**

Finally, after 17 days of hard ground, I sleep in a porta-bed!

**Florina**, 1 October 1943. We learn that there is a train leaving, but only for troops. There are no positions available for officers in the passenger carriages because they are occupied by about a hundred Italian Officers, picked up in Korca in (Albania) and in Greece, that had decided to continue the struggle against the Anglo-Americans alongside the Germans. **The Officers and non-commissioned Officers of my group decided to end this situation of uncertainty and to leave with the same train as our gunners.** We settle into a boxcar with our luggage. We are about thirty in all. Before leaving I make a gift on my cocker dog, Croc who has faithfully followed me this far, to a Greek civilian who says to be a hunter and loves dogs.

The Germans distribute dry food for the journey. Journey starts 1800 Hours for an unknown destination!

2 October 1943. Towards the early hours of the morning, we arrive at Bitola (Yugoslavia, now North Macedonia). We still enjoy a certain freedom in the sense that there are no armed escorts and we can get off the train during stops, to stretch our legs and to replenish our water and make certain indispensable personal needs without anyone restricting us.

3 October 1943, long stop in **Skopje** (Yugoslavia).

October 4, 1943. Late in the evening we arrive in **Niš** (Yugoslavia, now Serbia). At midnight a hot meal is distributed. In all these Balkan railway stations there are great comings and goings of Italian military and Yugoslavian civilians -Slavs scrambling to trade cigarettes and personal items for general food stuff. What the Germans provide as a daily ration is not enough to feed us: bread, margarine and jam. In each of the long stops we cook our last of our tinned meat, on an improvised hearth.

6 October 1943. We are still in **Somló** (Hungary). They say we are heading for **Vienna**. We learn that Graziani is trying to reconstitute the army and that Mussolini, now freed, has formed a new Fascist Government. I ponder long and hard. **Sentimentally I am predisposed to accept.** I do not confide with those who travel in the carriage about the fascists. I also avoid talking with **Major Viviani** about it, he is one the few of the regimental commanders who were observers in the war and perhaps the only one in **Tepeleni** region (Albania) that saw deep into the enemy territory that had directed and controlled the attack by our batteries. I find myself in front of a mature man rich in experience, who has clear and solid ideas about it.

October 7, 1943. Travel across the long Hungarian hinterland. In the small stations of this country where the train stops, rural communities welcome us show sympathy and throw us bread, fruit and vegetables. We reciprocate with giving cigarettes. The morality awakens. In the meantime I have succeeded to move and settle down in the provisions carriage that is almost empty. With me there are: Captain **Guata** (of the group from **149/19**), Ferraro, the Senior medical lieutenant, **Uberti** and the faithful and good friend **Melandri** who has followed me since Jannina and who rendered me assistance as an attendant and secretary, during the transfer march on foot.

We have more space and comfortable especially among friends with whom we can strike accord. 8 October 1943. The train journey through Hungary continues. Long stop in **Dombóvár**. The station is very crowded with military and Hungarian civilians. When returning to my carriage after having helped myself to water from the station fountain, a Hungarian soldier (who may have been from the police?) tries to take away my camera. I resist and manage to prevent him from taking it from me!

9 October 1943. Stop at the **Aba** station, still in Hungary.

10 October 1943. This night we have stopped at a station on the Austrian border, now German. They made us get off the train and first they do is to force us to relinquish all pistols, including all adherents and non-adherent, to great scorn of the adherents. It is a moral slap. It strengthens doubts I have about the opportunity to join the Fascist Republic. **The officers are separated from the troops.**

12 October 1943. Departed again by train, in the morning we arrive in **Ludwisburg** (Stuttgart - Germany) and from there we are sent to a concentration camp. For the first time I realize what POW camp looks like. It leaves a bad impression; the tight cages **crosslinked** high and low and high sentinel towers with machine guns at the ready pointing in a definite direction! They give us a kind of warm lime juice together with a large slice of black bread. They say this is the daily bread ration for prisoners of war.

In afternoon we learn that this is a temporary stop gap measure. In fact, later they transfer us, adherent officers and non-adherent officers, to beautiful panzer barracks. They put us in a large dormitory that was a repurposed garage, both superior and lower ranked officers for supper together. There are bunk beds that we immediately occupy without squabbles or confusion. I manage to have the group of my officers close to me. We are treated well and we are given the same food as the German soldier. Just prevented from going out, but at least there is no fencing. **Ludwisburg**, 13 October 1943. Registration operations begin. Why? As always, we discuss the problem of **adherence**. I continue to doubt the value of the fascist cause.

**Ludwisburg**, October 14, 1943. They assign me the number 51744.

**Ludwisburg**, October 16, 1943. The arrival of a camp of an Italian mission for options is announced. I think hard and deep: what is the best way to continue to serve the homeland and the best interests for the future well-being of **my little family**? I think of my baby and of Gilda left alone in the certain chaos that is engulfing **Rome** .....

**Ludwisburg**, 22 October 1943. We learn of the death of the consul of the militia. Sigh of relief! Yes, because they, with their ways of doing things and agitation by the **" Ras"** managed to instil a hint of fear.

At 1400 Hours the officers are gathered in the courtyard for the supreme decision. A lieutenant of the SS, who says he was authorised by Mussolini to speak in his behalf, after a short speech on the "betrayal " and on new situation, asking us if we will join the SS of German army. **More than 500 did not wish to adhere, we did not take the** step forward as asked to be adherents, 27 joined. I become very emotional. We are immediately separated from the others and transferred that same evening to a camp in the vicinity and imprisoned. The rooms assigned to us were a former stable. Along the breadth of the walls there is a row wooden planked bunkbeds.



The mattresses are made up of sack cloths filled with strips of paper. To cover ourselves we must use a similar sack. The bunkbeds are infested with fleas, much larger than those I found in Albania during the war and striated with light and dark lines. Despite this we feel happy and in a good spirits, we spontaneously begin to sing as though we were freed from a long so-called agonizing nightmare. I go to sleep in my cot, the bunkbed is disgusting.

**Ludwigsburg**, 23 October 1943. They search again our valued belongings and personal objects. They take my camera and my cot from me. In return they give me a receipt. The day prior someone stole my hobnailed shoes. And thus, they put an end to many possibilities to barter with these. And what is worse I must adapt to sleep on their lousy mattress. Apart from the bad living conditions, it seems to us to be quite well treated. To our great surprise, there are two hot meals a day. The torturers prove to be human. We learn that there are French prisoners in the camp, being punished for trying to escape. I am unable to contact them.

**Ludwigsburg, 27 October** 1943. Early in the morning they transfer us to the French sector where they make us take a cleansing shower combined with disinfection. They make us undress in a cold environment and then enter in the shower room. Then after having finished washing, we are held in a cold room where we wait for about two hours for the return of our garments that had been sent to special gas chambers to be disinfested. They are returned to us, on trolleys, and thrown together in a heap. There was great confusion and some squabbling as we try to distinguish and recognize our dismal rags. I suffered in the bitter cold.

**Ludwigsburg**, 28 October 1943. March on Rome: March on Strasbourg. Unexpectedly we are ordered to collect our belongings and leave the camp to go to the railway station. Here we await the arrival of a train that no one knows where it will take us. All stare at us. They look at us with indifference. The train arrives: they make us board into third-class passenger carriages full of civilians and soldiers. We settled in the compartment however best one could. We exchange trains at least five times and for five times we must cross the railway tracks of the stations hurriedly, dragging our heavy luggage sometimes aided by our escorts. At 1630 Hours we arrive at the railway **Strasbourg** station, a city under German occupation. We deposit the heavy luggage in a room of the station and we set off on foot across the city to the **Kronprinz fort**, eight kilometres from the station. The glances of the infrequent passers-by we meet, seem to be sympathetic. At the halfway point, the commanding officer stops a truck driven by a French driver and makes us get on board. The concentration camp is an old fortress of the '600s, mostly in brick red, with thick walls and numerous internal courtyards. We settle in a place with high walls and quite well lit by great windows with broken glass. The organization of the camp within the complex, leaves us with a bad impression. There is dirt and disorder everywhere. It's a camp solely for Italian troops. I have the impression that our arrival is not welcome. Most of them are employed in external jobs on behalf of the German military authorities. The services of the camp are directed by a Major Corporal who also acts as an interpreter. A solitary meal a day is even worse.

**Strasbourg**, 3 November 1943. Departure is about 0800 Hours in the morning, blanketed by a dense fog, for an unknown destination. It's my second journey in freight wagon: Each wagon has a stove at centre and benches. We are 44 per wagon in addition to backpacks of course: four more than normal "eight horses 40 men".

November 5, 1943. On the train, we are very tired. One sleeps badly and eats just as badly and, above all, we are very tight. There are frequent episodes of hysteria and sufferance due to fatigue and moral and material inconveniences of the trip. We had even a challenge to a duel between two senior officers who previously seemed to be close friends and who now don't talk anymore! Among the worst problems was to have to do one's personal needs by request to the commander who would only agree when the escort deemed it appropriate; not you. It is a pitiful spectacle and simultaneously grotesque to see all these men awkwardly dressed and covered, to fight bitter the cold, with bare butts in the air, guarded by a swarm of armed soldiers! When the hygiene period is late in being granted and we no longer can hold on, we have the courage to rebel against the torture by shouting at the light stops, from all the wagons: "abort ""abort" and making a devil of a fracas by banging with utensils on the doors. For those who can't hold on, a different system was devised as per example: urinal in the corner where there was a specially enlarged floor crack and newspapers; or rags for the big needs to be thrown time out window from time once filled.

Despite having the stove lit, it is cold because of the wind penetrating through the various cracks and windows without glass. We generally lie close to each other to stay warm. The big blanket white wool that I managed to take in Florina allows me, indeed allows me and my friends to stay warm. Taking turns, being careful not to step on one another, we look out over the high windows of the wagon to look out

**Chelm** (Poland), 10 November 1943. Finally, after 7 days of tiring and uncomfortable train journey, we arrived at the city station of Chelm, at the eastern end of Poland, near the border with Russia. For the last three days of travel, they had not given us anything to eat. We had to contend with eating white sugar beet, turnips and potatoes pilfered from freight wagons at stations stops where our train was held up. Moreover, white sugar beets eaten raw are disgusting and leave an irritation in the throat. But most of all I relieved my hunger without any sense of guilt, with some Buitoni barley cream I bought for **Letizia** on one of my service trips from Greece to Albania.

They made us get us off the train and transferred us to the imprisonment camp on foot. We are here in the middle of winter with abundant snow. All is like an extended white plate. As soon as you arrive at the camp, the usual counts. I am able to be assigned to the same barrack as Fazio. They are all wooden barracks. There in the evening, after settling in, they distribute a refreshing hot meal to us! The beds are the usual wooden bunks. But this time we receive a 'dowry' of real woollen blankets. They also give us pork stew.

EMANUELE CAFFIERO

## What is The Forty and Eight?

**La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux** (The Society of Forty Men and Eight Horses), is an independent, invitation only, honour society of American veterans and service members; more commonly known as **The Forty and Eight**.

The Forty and Eight is committed to charitable and patriotic aims. Our purpose is to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, to promote the well-being of veterans, their widows, widowers and orphans, and to actively participate in selected charitable endeavours, which include programs that promote child welfare and nurses training.

The titles and symbols of The Forty and Eight are derived from the experiences of U.S. troops during World War I. American soldiers were transported to the front on the French rail system. Cramped into narrow gauge boxcars, each stencilled with "40 Hommes/8 Chevaux", denoting its capacity to hold either 40 men or 8 horses. This uncomfortable mode of transportation was familiar common experience for every Doughboy that fought in the trenches; a mutual small misery among American soldiers. Thereafter, they found "40/8" a lighthearted symbol of the deeper service, unspoken horrors and shared sacrifice that bind all who have endured combat.

The Forty & Eight was founded in 1920 by American veterans returning from France. Originally an arm of The American Legion, the Forty & Eight became an independent and separately incorporated veteran's organization in 1960. Membership is by invitation of honourably discharged veterans and honourably serving members of the United States Armed Forces.

Source: <https://www.fortyandeight.org/what-is-the-408/>

XXVI Army Corps (Italy)

[https://military.wikia.org/wiki/XXVI\\_Army\\_Corps\\_\(Italy\)](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/XXVI_Army_Corps_(Italy))

37th Infantry Division Modena

[https://military.wikia.org/wiki/37th\\_Infantry\\_Division\\_Modena](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/37th_Infantry_Division_Modena)