



Italian Prisoners of War in America, 1942-1946: Captives or Allies?

Louis E. Keefer

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This book records the history of the 50,000 Italian prisoners of war who were captured in North Africa during fighting in the desert and shipped to the United States as POWs. After Italy surrendered to the Allies and declared war on Germany, 35,000 POWs worked with the US Army as "Co-operators" in "Italian Service Units" serving on ARmy posts throughout the United States. The 15,000 "non-co-operators" remained in stockades until their release in 1945 and 1946. The text itself is more than 50% oral history and is based largely on interviews with nearly 50 former POWs, their friends and families, and the US civilian and military personnel who worked with them. Many of the POWs returned to the United States after the war (some as male "war brides"). Every individual interviewed has a colourful, vivid, emotional story to tell of his experience with bullets and bombs, with the dead and the dying, and about the trauma of captivity. The interviews and archival data indicate that the United States treated its POWs very well for the most part, with a couple of dreadful exceptions, and that the POWs' participation helped the US to win the war. Italian-Americans interested in their heritage and students of World War 2 should find these stories informative.

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