

462
2

September 14, 1943.

The Man from the Mountains

I spent an hour with him this afternoon. He had just talked with a friend who had left Milan on the 10th. His friend said that Rommel's forces are almost non-existent in the region of Milan, Como, Varese and Gallarate. Small groups are moved around to several places to make a false show of strength. For example: a small group that came to Como looked the situation over for half an hour and went back south.

It is said that General Ruggero who made the Milan agreement with Rommel knew that Rommel was weak in that region, figured that his troops must be moving south, and that it would be unfortunate to resist sufficiently to draw them back toward Milan.

His friend met many escaped Greek prisoners-of-war between Milan and Como. These men had been given civilian clothes and food by the Italian populace. They found the Italian side of the border entirely unguarded but the Swiss side heavily guarded as they approached Chiasso along the main road from Como.

In the region of Milan the few trains that run are so packed with civilians that men and women both have to enter and leave through the windows in most cases. No one buys a ticket and the one man that his friend saw who did have a ticket was kidded by the others in the train.

On the morning of the 8th, Badoglio asked the opposition parties if they wanted to form a government.