

WAR DEPARTMENT EDUCATION MANUAL

EM 503

Spoken Italian

BASIC COURSE · UNITS 1-12

A SELF-TEACHING COURSE



UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES INSTITUTE · MADISON, WISCONSIN

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Spoken Italian

BASIC COURSE · UNITS 1-12

A SELF-TEACHING COURSE

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INTRODUCTION

1. What We Are Trying to Do. This course in Italian is designed for those who need to make themselves understood on ordinary topics in Italian and cannot devote the years of study required of the average school courses. It is based on the principle that you must hear a language if you are to understand it when it is spoken and that you must practice speaking in order to be able to speak.

A teacher of Italian will not always be available for the men for whom this book is written. For that reason the course has been made as nearly self-teaching as possible. This manual covers the course completely and requires the use of no other reference material. It explains in detail, step by step, how the work is to proceed and sets the stage for the listening and talking which you are to do.

2. The Italian Language. The language covered by these lessons is standard Italian, which is spoken by all educated people in Italy and is clearly understood by everyone regardless of the dialect he personally uses. In general, the vocabulary comes from the section around Florence and the pronunciation from Rome. The language is spoken by over forty-five million people, including all of Italy, the cities and towns of Lybia, Eritrea, Somalia; and the islands of Pantelleria, Malta, and Corsica, to some ex-

tent. Emigration has also created thousands of Italian-speaking communities in most of the large cities of North and South America.

Variations in language are perfectly natural and are found in every language in the world. When these variations are as small as they are in English, they are nothing to worry about. In Italian, however, the variations are much greater than in English; so much so that Italy speaks many different dialects. You should not worry about the many variations in the pronunciations of Italian words. All the people, even the peasants, understand standard Italian and can make themselves understood in it. Therefore, do not be surprised if the pronunciation you hear does not quite match what is given to you in this manual or what you hear in this course. Imitate as far as possible the person with whom you are speaking. He, in turn, will do his best to pronounce so that he can be understood. Likewise, do not be surprised at the use of gestures, for that is part of the language, as it were. Use the gestures yourself if you can imitate them.

3. How to Use This Manual. If you are going to speak Italian, you must have a native speaker of the language to work with you as you use this book. For those

who cannot get a native speaker, a substitute has been provided with this course in the form of a set of phonograph records on which students can hear the voice of a native speaker. Do not try to use the book without either the living speaker or the phonograph records.

The book is arranged so that it can be used for individual or group study. The group may or may not have a regular teacher; if you have no regular teacher, choose one of your own number (called the Group Leader) to lead the others and direct their activity.

4. **A Native Speaker**, as everyone knows, is the only good source of first-hand knowledge as to the pronunciation and usage of any language. The living speaker of Italian is referred to throughout as the Guide; if you can get a Guide, it is far preferable to do so, and to use him as a source of information throughout the course. The Guide's job is to act as a model for you to imitate, and as a check on your pronunciation; it is not his business to be a teacher or to "explain" the language to you. The Guide should be, if possible, a person who speaks standard Italian, not merely the dialect of his region; but he should speak Italian naturally, as the other people in his region do, and not affectedly or unnaturally. He need not be too educated nor should he be too ignorant.

5. **This Book** is divided into five major sections, each containing six Units, one of which is devoted to review. Each unit contains several sections, usually the follow-

- A. Basic Sentences (with Hints on Pronunciation in Parts I and II of the book).
 - B. Word Study and Review of Basic Sentences.
 - C. Review of Basic Sentences (Cont.).
 - D. Listening In.
 - E. Conversation.
 - F. Conversation (Cont.).
- Finder List

6. **The Basic Sentences** in each unit are arranged so as to give you a number of new words, first broken up into short phrases, and then used in complete sentences. On the printed page they are presented in parallel columns which contain on the left the English equivalent, and on the right the Italian material. In Part I the Italian material is given in the special spelling which is called the Aids to Listening; in Part II the Italian is given in the Aids to Listening and also in the conventional Italian orthography; and from Part III on, the Italian is given only in conventional spelling.

When you have the book open at whatever unit you are going to study, and when the Guide is ready to begin speaking the words for you or the teacher is ready to start the phonograph records, you can start working on the Basic Sentences for that unit. If the Leader is working with the Guide, the Leader will read the English out loud, and the Guide will pronounce the Italian twice, each time allowing enough time for you to repeat the Italian after him. If you are using the phonograph records, two voices