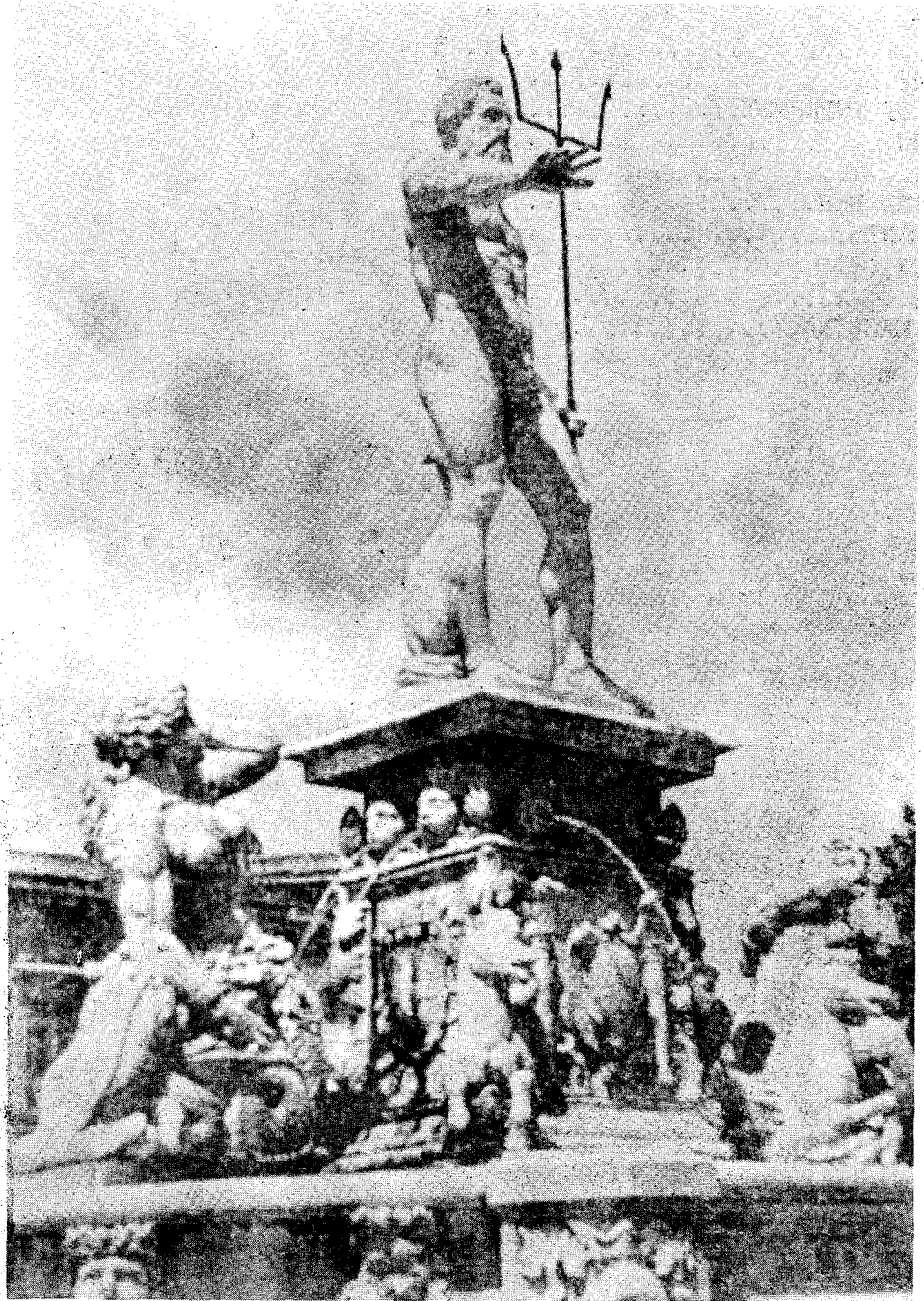


# *MESSINA*



*March 1963*

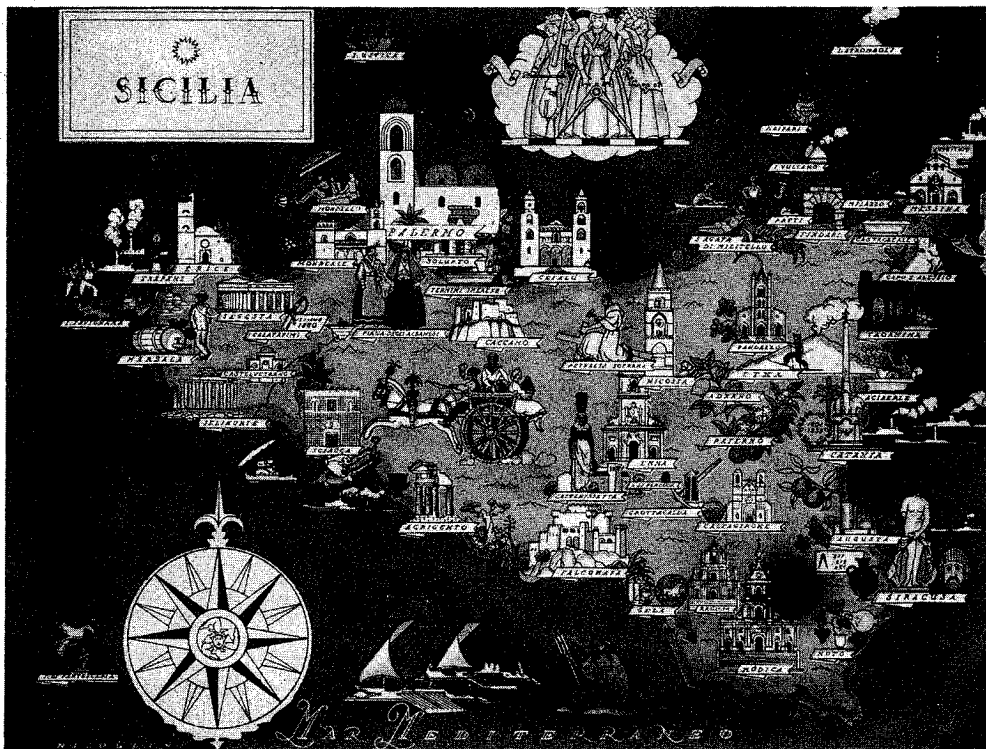
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## U. S. S. SPRINGFIELD

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# SICILY

In the earliest days of history, the inhabitants of Sicily could be divided into two different ethnical groups: one was formed by the natives (Sicani--Mediterranean descent) who had occupied the Western part of the land, and the other group (Siculi--Indo-European descent) who had come gradually, tribe by tribe, from the Italian continent. The two groups did not mingle, and Mother Nature had divided the island in two parts by the opposite valleys of the rivers Imera (today called Fiume Grande at the North, and Salso at the South).

When the Greek expansion started in the 8th century, Sicily was the nearest land which offered natural resources. The Northeast part of Sicily was the first to be colonized. Naxos, on the actual beach of Taormina, was founded first, followed shortly by Lentini, Catania, Zancle (Messina), Siracusa, Gela, Megara (near Augusta), and Selinunte, (628 B.C.)

From this time on Sicily was invaded and controlled by almost every power which moved about in the Mediterranean which included the Romans, Arabs, Spaniards, French, Germans, Normans, and Bourbons.

Under the Bourbons the Sicilians tried to obtain the Constitutions which were first granted, and subsequently revoked in 1816. By that time Sicily was ready for the great insurrection and began to feel the necessity of being "only one land" with Italy.

In 1848, the first Italian war for independence started in Milan preceded by an insurrection in Sicily. Thirteen years later, Garibaldi landed in Marsala, won at Calatafimi, entered in Palermo, and conquered Messina. Three months later Sicily was declared united to the Italian Kingdom.

After World War II there arose the "Separatists Movement" that wanted the complete autonomy in every field, something like a federal state. However, this could never be obtained--Sicily needed Italy and Italy needed Sicily. Finally, on May 15, 1946, a legislative decree instituted the Sicilian Region, and in April 1947 the first Sicilian parliament was elected.

Today Sicily is a region which has self-government within the political unity of the Italian State.

The climate in Sicily, which was named the "island of the Sun" by the Moslems, is generally excellent the year around with the coolest month, January, having a low temperature of 52 degrees.

There is a great variety of vegetation on the island. The mountains are covered with



Solunto, Sicily

oak, ash, pine and chestnut trees; the lower slopes make fine pasture land for the flocks and herds. Grains make up the most important crop, among them being wheat, maize, barley and letils. Grapes, olives, oranges, and lemons are also grown there.

Textile weaving and sardine and tuna fishing are the island's most important industries. Among Sicily's exports are wine, salt, sardines, olive oil, cheese, raising, citrus fruits and liquorice.

# The City

The city of Messina is located on a peninsula which extends to within three miles of the mainland of Italy. Its population has been reduced by attack, earthquake and epidemics but still is reported to be about 220,000.

At five A.M. on the morning of December 28, 1908, it was a flourishing city of 120,000 inhabitants. A few minutes later, it was a heap of rubble, shaken to pieces by an earthquake which gathered up the water of the Straits and flung them, together with most of the ships, against the wreckage in which 80,000 people lay dead or dying. There is now little to remind one of that disaster, except the curious flat look of the city, for anti-earthquake precautions placed a restriction on the height of new buildings.

The people of Messina are friendly and will usually turn out by the thousands to see an American warship. The temperature is mild in the winter and hot in summer, but there is usually a breeze. The center of the city is in walking distance from the dock.

Messina is rich in myth and legend. The scant space of water between Messina's Faro Point and Calabria's Scilla used to be the feared Charybdis, the giant whirlpool of Greek myth. The visitor who speaks some Italian may learn from Faro Point's fishermen of the fabled Cola Pesce, the half-fish, half-man creature who, according to legend, swam the



treacherous Straits underwater. On some early mornings in spring and summer, the mirage of Fata Morgana occurs in the Straits. During this phenomenon the Mainland appears to be connected to Sicily by a large, shining city, completely obliterating the Straits.

## Points of Interest

Cathedral Tower of Messina: This cathedral is of Norman origin and dates back to 1092. Earthquakes and bombardments have caused extensive damage, but it has been restored.



On the left corner of the facade stands the steeple with its complex astronomical clock, built by T. Ungerer of Strasbourg in 1933. Each day at noon things happen on the steeple. A lion moves his tail and head and roars (everything is done three times), a cock opens his wings, raises his head and crows, a dove turns atop a skeleton, a church appears from below, remains until midnight, disappears and reappears the next day at noon.

Then a scene appears above the clock depicting Christmas, the Epiphany, Resurrection and Whitsunday. In these scenes appear the Holy Family, shepherds and Magi; Christ arising from the tomb to the consternation of the guards and a dove representing the Holy Spirit flies over the Apostles. The last event depicts the legend of the letter sent by the Virgin to Messina. All of this in less than a quarter of an hour and you have seen one of the most amazing mechanical contrivances in Europe.

### HISTORICAL CHURCHES:

Annunziata: Via Garibaldi (12th C. Norman)

St. John: Near prefecture (12th C.)

St. Francis of Assisi: Via Torrente (12th C.)

St. Mary of the Valley: Benedictine Monastery (12th C.)

National Museum: 525 Via Salvatore dei Greci Isol (free admission week days 0900 to 1400).

## Shopping

Specialties of the region include embroideries and miniature reproductions of the Sicilian carts. It has been said that prices are raised considerably when a U.S. Navy vessel is in port, and with few exceptions, bargaining is the rule. If the first quoted price seems way out of range, do not hesitate to "bargain" for a lower rate, it will probably be expected. However, don't lose sight of the "spirit of bargaining" which can lead to harsh words. Don't forget, there's always another dealer or vendor down the street with whom you can compare prices and who will be anxious to make a sale.

Reliable establishments to buy goods are:

Women's clothes, De Dominici, Viale S. Martino.

Shoes, Paladino, Viale S. Martino 240.

Jewelry, La Motta, Viale S. Martino 134.

## Hotels



Grande Hotel, viale San Martino (rooms, dining room, bar).

Reale Hotel, via La Farina (fair rooms reasonably priced).

## Clubs and Bars

Irrera Bar, (orchestra, fairly expensive).

This is the only night spot in Messina outside of the waterfront cafes.

### RESTAURANTS:

Only the hotels mentioned above offer good quality food in Messina. It is recommended that personnel ashore do not drink or eat the local dairy products.

## Currency

The official rate is 625 lire per dollar. You can probably get a little more than the official rate on the street but it is against Navy orders to take American money ashore, and it is against Italian law to change money on the street. There is also the possibility of acquiring counterfeit money or getting short changed by experts.

## Sports



THE SKI SLOPES OF MOUNT ETNA

If facilities are available, there may be a tour to Mount Etna, the highest volcano cone in Europe. There is good skiing on the slopes in January, February and March.

There is a beach in front of S. Margherita Hospital and there are excellent beaches at Taormina, about 30 miles from Messina.

The Navy yard athletic field has facilities for softball, baseball and football. Athletic fields are also available at Campe Celesti, the Military Arsenal and Marine Officers Girstea in Messina.

Tennis courts at the Paradise Club can be used for matches. Basketball courts at the University of Messina and Le Farina College are also available to Navy personnel.

