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GENERAL CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE
IN BRINDISI
DEC. 1943; JAN. 1944

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ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS
Information and Censorship Section
Censorship Branch
Civil Censorship Section
APO 550, U. S. Army

29 January 1944

Subject: Conditions in Brindisi, 26/12/43-9/1/44
To : Chief, Censorship Branch, INC, AFHQ.

1. Attached is a report on Conditions in Brindisi for the period 26/12/43-9/44, gathered from the weekly reports of the Allied Censor Control Officer there. The number of letters examined is not available for this period, although it will be for future reports.

2. Most of the mail examined comes from Italian military units stationed at or near Brindisi and sent thru the provincial post office, although some of the mail is internal civilian correspondence.

3. Only one universal subject is apparent from these communications, food. Adverse comments on the shortage of food and on Black Market prices are frequent. (See report, paragraphs 3, 4, 9, 10 and 15).

4. Other subjects of more than routine interest include: Fear of Retribution for Fascist Activity (par. 2); Robbery of Townsfolk by Soldiers (par. 3); No Allotments paid? (par. 11); Poor Train Service (par. 12); Persecutions and Barbarity of Germans (par. 7 & 17).

5. Material for the period 3/1/44-9/1/44 precedes that for 26/12/43-2/1/44.

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1-BCSI - ACMP

1-FEA

1-PWB - AFHQ

1-File

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*0914 - Report
Proposed General Conditions*

CONFIDENTIALCONDITIONS IN BRINDISI, 26/12/43 - 9/1/443/1/44 - 9/1/441. GENERAL MORALE GOOD

There is no indication of any general dissatisfaction in the military units stationed here, but various individual malcontents are reported.

2. FEAR OF RETRIBUTION FOR FASCIST ACTIVITIES

A junior officer in a labor battalion is worried because he was "compelled" to attend the Fascist Academy at Rome and now fears retribution. He sums up a common excuse by writing: "....we young men, to secure a future, were compelled to follow the current."

3. ROBBERY OF TOWNSFOLK BY SOLDIERS

An artilleryman lists some fairly serious troubles between the soldiers and the townsfolk: "....In regard to the town and the people, conditions are worse than Sandonaci; the great number of soldiers who ruin things and rob is unbelievable. They steal hens, lambs and kids in great style. That is why the population looks at us with an evil eye."

4. INADEQUATE RATIONS

Food plays its usual prominent role in soldier's gripes. A senior Signal Corps Captain gives figures on his unit's ration: "....a loaf of bread, 200 grams a month, and daily, 12 English biscuits. Warm meals once a day consisting of four inches of potatoes and vegetables; water is included at noon. In the evening a small can of meat for four, an orange and a bottle of wine, or, instead of meat, 30 grams of cheese. A Coast Artilleryman complains not only of the short rations, but of discrimination in favor of officers: "....New Year's Day they did not give us bread; at noon, a few strings of macaroni that of us did not get, and in the evening one spoonful of lentils-

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-no more. What can we do with this hunger? Nevertheless, as long as the officers eat anyway we are not even paid attention to....I have decided to go way, that is run away, because the last few days a score have already done so. In about ten more days there will be no one left in this group....Rather than die of hunger in the Army it is better to die with our families."

5. FAMILY WORRIED

Some soldiers worry, quite naturally about their families; others are upset by the war on general principles. One writes: "I feel very bad with my wife and child in the hands of the Germans." Another comments: "....where war has passed is like the end of the world."

6. CONFIDENCE IN ALLIES

As a whole the soldiers whose mail has been examined show trust and confidence in their new Allies and in the prospects of victory. A Finance Guard praises his treatment by the Americans: "....in Torre Cavallo is a true America: plentiful meals furnished by our Allies....meat, cheese, coffee, white flour, good bread....we can call ourselves truly lucky."

7. HEROISM (?)

A certain amount of patriotic fervour has been recorded. This is, however, generally coupled with the writer's desire to exaggerate his role in the war, especially his proximity to the front lines. One Bersagliere writes from Brindisi: "....I shall return victorious and with honor. We are participating in the taking of Rome...." A soldier of a motorized unit reports: "We are in the front lines....we attacked what, according to American Intelligence, should have been a single company. But instead, when we carried the assault we were confronted with the Herman Goering Panzer Division....our wounded remaining behind were killed by the Germans with machine guns. The Germans and the Fascists swore they would and they are keeping their word. To us, tho, nothing matters, we are ready for anything."

8. SENSE OF DUTY

There are a few examples of lack of discipline but the general attitude is one of fulfillment of duty.

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A cadet officer writes: "....I assure you my program is the same as many others who share my ideas, and this is not youthful pretentiousness but for true love of righteousness, humanity and country. A private in a terrorized unit writes to his father that he wants news of the front: "....only to hear of the love our Allies have for us and of the spirit of cohesion against the hated Germans."

9. BLACK MARKET PRICES

There are widespread complaints over the scarcity of certain necessities and the high prices in the Black Market. A civilian lists some prices along with his complaint: "For four months they have given us nothing on our ration cards; everything is bought on the Black Market: oil is 200 lire per liter; pasta, 80 lire per kilogram; flour 60 lire per kilogram; sugar, 120 lire p...." Another civilian lists: "....bread, 150 per kg.; pasta 1100 per kg.; oil, 1150 per liter; coal, 1 14 per kg.; meat, 1130 per kg.; an egg costs 116. 1500 is not enough to live on."

10. AMERICANS NOT AS PROPAGANDIZED BY ENEMY

The Allies shape up in most correspondence as the true friends of the Italian people in both word and deed. Surprise is occasionally expressed that the Americans are not the barbarians they were painted as being. One soldier writes: "It is not at all true what they want us to believe about the Americans, whom I now see are exactly the opposite of what they told us; and I am sure this is also true of the rest of them."

26/12/43 - 2/1/44

11. LITTLE DISCONTENT

Discontent is neither widespread nor concentrated on a particular subject, with the exception of the Black Market.

12. NO ALLOTMENTS PAID?

An infantry private is upset over the rumor that the government allotments to his wife is not being paid regularly, something he has presumably heard thru enemy propaganda: "When you write me tell me....if you're getting the pay because I've heard on the radio that you've been two months without pay..."

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13. POOR TRAIN SERVICE

A civilian complains about the train service: "I'd like to have come to see you (in Lecce-Ed.) but the train service is so bad we don't even think of traveling."

14. FAITH IN VICTORY IN '44

Many soldiers express a natural regret that they cannot be with their families during the holiday season, but expect to be home in a world at peace by next Christmas. One writes: "I count on being with you for the end of the year." Another: "Everything is getting along well, and we have faith in the future."

15. ANTI-FASCISM

There are occasional imprecations against their former Fascist leaders. An anti-aircraft corporal writes: "That cursed Mussolini has ruined my health in this inconsiderate way of his, but he'll meet his doom and it won't be long."

16. INADEQUATE RATIONS

Food is, as always, a cause for complaint among the military, although apparently a just one if the figures they give are not deliberately minimized for sympathy. A Head Signaller writes: "Things can't go on like this. People are too hungry. We military still eat but only 100 grams of bread and according to reports (Enemy propaganda?-Ed.) none at all some times. In several places the civilians are suffering too much. Here they're living on pot-herbs and only those who have money can buy them because the prices have become prohibitive."

17. BLACK MARKET PRICES

A civilian writes: "With ration tickets you get nothing, not even bread which has not been distributed for about three months; and it was only the day before yesterday (Under the Fascisti?-Ed.) that they distributed 80 grams per person for 2 days. What discourages us most and causes most hardship is the lack of fats. Here's a list of the prices (Black Market, of course, which is the sole and blessed source of supply to which all have recourse, even the beggars: wheat L7000 a quintal; potatoes, L2,600; oil, L20,000 for 100 litres; pasta products,

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products, L10,000 a quintal; rice, L20,000 a quintal; beans, L9,000 a quintal; salt, L70 a kg. Greens are very scarce and prices scandalous, and oil is put on food with a dropper. The banks haven't permitted withdrawal of small savings accounts. Bonds generally have no sale." A mother writes: "...a note book (for school children-Ed.) costs from 8 to 10 lire; a box of matches, L25 and you can't find them."

18. GRATITUDE FOR ALLIED LIBERATION

There are increasing expressions of gratitude for the Allied liberation of Italy from the Fascist yoke, as the Allies penetrate deeper into what was enemy-occupied territory.

19. PERSECUTIONS AND BARBARITY OF GERMANS

There are a few accounts of the barbarity of the Germans in their retreats. A civilian writes: "I had to flee because of the atrocious German persecutions....Pitiless German persecution reached Teano, however, and I lived there like a cat in an attic. Forced to take refuge in a cave near Pugliano we lived 9 days in mortal fear." A civilian woman writes: "Here we've been thru terrible days at the hands of the Germans... You may perhaps know about the wholesale deaths the Germans are sowing; before abandoning a countryside they burn it, kill babies by covering them with oil and burning them, strip women and carry them around the country..."

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