

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785016

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AGRICULTURE, GRAIN COLLECTION
AUG. 1944

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To the Secy of War

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12 August 1944

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My dear Mr. Prime Minister:

This is in reply to your two letters, August 2nd and 3rd, relative to requests for agricultural purposes. Petrol supplies for civilian uses in the forward Provinces present one of the most difficult problems facing representatives of the Commission, due mainly to the destruction of transportation lines and transport.

An allocation of petroleum products for all purposes including agriculture has been made to Ascoli Province and every endeavor is being made to deliver it there in spite of transportation difficulties.

Your letter of August 3rd referred to the supply of petroleum products for all agricultural regions. The Commission is cognizant of the situation and our representatives are putting forth every effort to assist with the harvest and massing. Allocations of petroleum products are being made to the fullest extent that same can be made available. It would appear that some of the petrol is being used for non-essential purposes.

I agree with you that the harvest and the massing is at this time one of the most important matters facing your government and the Commission. We will continue to do everything that is possible for us to do. In the final analysis, however, the success of this matter rests with your Government and the Italian people.

Excellent work on the massing problem has been done by your Minister of Agriculture and others. The Minister's trips into the Provinces, his speeches and his interest are having a good effect and I hope that similar activities can be extended in this and other fields by members of your government who can thereby get into touch with the responsible Italian Provincial officials personally as well as with a wider public.

Again I want to assure you that we here in the Commission will do everything we can to help.

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Yours very truly,

By SAC Secy Sec.
DISPATCHED
Date-Time 12 Aug 16 15
Via Hqs
Initials PRR

MURRY S. STONE
Captain, USMC
Acting Chief Commissioner

His Excellency Ivanoe Bonomi
The President of Council of Ministers
Italian Government

cc: Political Sec.
Economic Section
Admin. Sec.
RC & MG Sec.

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REPUBLICAN
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE

13/15

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3/11/44

2nd August 1944

subject: Grain collection in Sicily.Some points of interest following recent visit.1. The officials.

(a) Sicilian officials are in many cases energetically doing their best to secure the maximum grain collection. The majority however are not sufficiently interested or aware of their responsibilities. They seem reluctant to display firmness towards Sicilians and appear to regard popularity of greater importance than duty.

(b) The communal Agricultural Committees have generally been most disappointing in the work done and in their appreciation of the importance of their function. Procrastination and indecision are both common.

2. The ration.

Such misunderstanding still exists not only in the minds of the public but also in the minds of the officials regarding the stability of the bread and/or pasta ration.

Early in July the ration was temporarily raised to 300 grs. only to be reduced to 200 after a few days. Catania province has been promised a pasta supplement but this has not yet been issued. The local situation in Sicily does not at present justify a supplementary pasta ration although in other regions this is being given. I am of the opinion that if it be possible, a great advantage would be obtained in assuring the public of a minimum ration for a season in advance and making such standard throughout the whole of liberated Italy.

3. The grain.

To feed Sicily for a year upon the 300 grs. ration, approximately 5,100,000 quintals are needed. Those who are qualified to judge are of the opinion that an amount of grain approximate to this has been grown in the island this year. Up to the 27th July only 196,275 quintals or 6.3% has been collected. Of this total more than half had been received in the preceding eight days. There is no doubt that the curve of the rate of collection is rising steadily but not until the end of July did it exceed that of consumption. 499

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I believe that many Sicilians still are of the opinion that the Allied grain shipments are inexhaustible and will continue indefinitely.

There is a good deal to justify criticism of the price level of 1000 lire per quintal but in my view a higher price would have only ameliorated and not by itself have solved the difficulty of grain collection.

Many farmers still hope for a better price and are holding back either for this or for the opportunity to sell a substantial proportion on the black market. I have been assured that all producers feel morally entitled to sell grain on the black market provided they surrender the substantial part of their crop in the proper way.

It is yet too early to predict results, but by the end of this month I believe it will be much easier to forecast the eventual position.

4. Law enforcement.

To collect the grain entirely by force of law is, of course not possible, the proportion of force to be applied is therefore a matter of great importance. The policy prevailing is one of regarding the situation of having two phases. The first is which the producers must be persuaded by all means possible to surrender their crops and the second to enforce the law against offenders but this to be applied only after persuasion has failed.

At the present time the law enforcement agencies are concentrated upon two principles. One, to scrutinise the workings of the administrative machinery, i.e., the Agricultural Committee, the U.S. and to report any shortcomings to authorities who can see that the job is properly done and the other to prevent grain being transported or transferred to unlawful destinations.

At all times special attention will be paid to the middle-man speculator who will be brought to justice as speedily as possible.

I am more than satisfied with these arrangements and in particular cannot praise the work of the Carabinieri too highly. They are being assisted in their work by detachments of Italian military forces placed at their disposal by the Italian Military commander who has proved extremely co-operative and helpful.

Transport is still a cogent difficulty of law enforcement units but recently the situation has been slightly improved by giving the Carabinieri authority to requisition motor transport.

Courts are dealing with offenders expeditiously and firmly but at present the majority of culprits have not been charged with particularly serious breaches of the law.

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5. General.

I am entirely satisfied with the measures which have already been taken and that the officials have been properly impressed with the priority and importance of their task.

During the month of June however, three events have taken place, all of which have tended to embarrass the success of grain collection.

(a) The ration having been increased to 300 gm. was reduced to 200 after only a few days, creating an impression of uncertainty and instability.

(b) The newspaper in Catania announced that the Italian Police forces were being re-organized and that after the end of August those now serving may not be required for further service. This was related as an official statement from the Minister of the Interior and therefore did much to prejudice the morale of law enforcement agencies.

(c) The replacement of the High Commissioner, Mussetto, which by some is interpreted as dissatisfaction with his handling of the grain situation and by others as a mistake of "changing horses in midstream".

In general, I observed no causes for anxiety either with regard to public order or to unified resistance to grain collection. Such faults as were apparent were in my view indicative of the low standard of Sicilian administration only, and not of any particular desire to sabotage the grain collection scheme. The efficiency of Sicily local government and of Sicilian officials is a limited factor. The sense of public spirit and of disinterestedness is not high. Until these fundamental components are themselves improved, I do not believe there is much more that can be done. The means are limited but undoubtedly they are fully employed.

Alzouy

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A. S. YOUNG
DIRECTOR

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