

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

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

105/831

DEFASCISM, ORG ITAL, EPURATION TRIALS,
COLONEL FRANÇOIS ARMANDO
APR. - JUNE 1945

TO: VP C.A. SECTION.

Reference minute 2. On reconsideration it seems that whatever our feelings in this particular case, we should maintain our attitude as a matter of principle, because if we waver in the FRASCO case, it is likely that the Expiration Commission may not comply with our requests in the future. I therefore recommend that the execution of the measure adopted by the Commission shall be suspended.

2. As regards COL. FRASCOIS himself, I have insufficient evidence to ask for his removal, but if at any time he shows an attitude contrary to the Allied policy and Allied interests, I shall ask the Italian Air Ministry to have him removed from his job.

3. In this connection it still seems to me that minute 4 applies, i.e. that the Expiration Commission has a flimsy case against FRASCOIS.

Air Forces Sub-Commission,
Allied Commission, Rome.
Date: 7th June, 1945.

[Signature]
I.E. BRODIE,
AIR VICE-MARSHAL,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING.

4824

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

785016

L. E. H. H. H.

L. E. H. H. H.
AIR VICE-MARSHAL,
AIR OFFICE COMMANDING.

4824

Air Forces Sub-Commission,
Allied Commission, Rome.
Date: 7th June, 1945.

[Reg. Conference 12/1/45]

MINUTES

V.P.

C

REFER 57.

THE REPLY IS SOMEWHAT DISCON-
CERTING SINCE GRIECO APPARENTLY
HAD SUFFICIENT NOTICE TO HAVE
AVOIDED THE TERMINATION OF
THE PROCEEDINGS. HOWEVER, SINCE
GRIECO INITIATED THE CASE, HE
CAN PRESUMABLY WITHDRAW IT.
HIS SUGGESTIONS SEEM SATIS-
FACTORY EXCEPT WITH RESPECT
TO THE APPEAL BY FRANCOIS.
SINCE THE MINISTER IS BEING
TOLD NOT TO EXECUTE THE DECISION
AND FRANCOIS IS NOT BEING
ADVISED, THERE IS NO PROPER BASIS
FOR AN APPEAL BY HIM.

6 JUNE 1945

L. J. Palmer
may

2

TO: Air Forces Sub-Commission.

Reference SA and Minute 8.

4520

FACTORY EXCEPT WITH RESPECT
TO THE APPEAL BY FRANCIS.
SINCE THE MINISTER IS BEING
TOLD NOT TO EXECUTE THE DECISION
AND FRANCIS IS NOT BEING
ADVISED, THERE IS NO PROPER BASIS
FOR AN APPEAL BY HIM.

E. J. Palmer
may

6 JUNE 1945

2

TO: Air Forces C-in-C, Commission.

Reference: SA and Minute 2.

I regret SA has disclosed a most unsatisfactory position and is still concerned to protect Col. Francis. I think we should ask ~~him~~ to withdraw the case. However, in view of what AWM Brodie said to me this morning, we may not consider it desirable to draw the matter any further.

SA does at last provide that while the Allie continues to be here, Col. Francis will not be informed of his suspension.

6 Jun 45,
Civil Affairs Section.

J. H. P. P.
C. J. UPPON, Brig.,
VP C A Section.

MINUTES

4820

4

see your minute 2.

The papers have been examined by me. I think the High Commissioner's case is flimsy indeed. The Minister did not defer Col P's case because of his outstanding service in the fight against the Germans. Col P. has actually taken part in operations against them and has been the leader of the Italian Fighter wing since the Armistice. Notwithstanding this the HC has brought his case to the Operations Commission for very unsubstantial reasons :-

- 1) Participation in the war in Spain - the accusation is couched in terms of a political accusation - such participation alone cannot constitute a basis for operation particularly when the person involved had no choice as appears to be the case here.
- 2) Title of Squadrista - conferred in 1938 - antedated to 1924 when Col P. was 14 years old. He never availed himself of the title in any way. It did not even appear in the officers' year book and he cashed all emoluments pertaining thereto.
- 3) Blackmarket transactions; use of Air Force trucks for this purpose in Calabria and Puglia. This was after Sept 8/43 and in liberated territory. It can have no proper bearing on a charge of "fascist corruption" under the operation law. Moreover these charges were squashed before the Italian Military Tribunal, the only proper Court to take jurisdiction. Col P. is important enough to warrant our intervention.

520-

CA Sec
3 May 45

R.L. PRINCE, Major

AIR FORCES S/C (Attn W/Comd ⁵ ~~Peace~~) 12/5/45

Re: see folio 3A for information

CA Sec
4 MAY 45

B/FH

92 Calverley Major

6

MINUTES

CA Sec

Thank you.

For P. Brooke
A.F.S.C.

18/5

A.F.S.C.

7

VP

Air S/C report that one of the 24 Franciscans has been separated. I think it might be worth having for the facts before we ask for an explanation or require any action to be taken. It is possible that they have the matter in hand before for sign of approval.

1822

22 May 1945

Handwritten signature/initials

Handwritten signature/initials

VP

This is a copy of Col Francis' statement as far as it is a defense to a charge of conspiracy to commit murder. The defense is that Col Francis was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and that he was charged with conspiracy to commit murder. The defense is that Col Francis was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and that he was charged with conspiracy to commit murder.

Col Francis has introduced testimony of conspiracy to commit murder. The defense is that Col Francis was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and that he was charged with conspiracy to commit murder. The defense is that Col Francis was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and that he was charged with conspiracy to commit murder.

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CA
23 APR 1965

Col White

4821

We can't judge this case merely by seeing the defense. We can't judge this case merely by seeing the defense.

Col Francis is a man of sufficient importance to justify a full trial.

Just as in the case of the other defendants, Col Francis is a man of sufficient importance to justify a full trial.

MINUTES

21 APR 1946

Can write

4821

We can't judge this case merely by
seeing the Defence. Now am I satisfied that
Col. Francisco is a man of sufficient importance to
justify us in taking strong steps as in Remondino
case. Please ask Major Palmeri to

Examine the case for the prosecution & let us
 have this view - Inform Air Force Sub-
 that this is being done. - No

20/11/22

CPN, Inc.

78/4/83/04V
TRANSLATION NO. 773

HIGH COMMISSION FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST FASCISM

ROME, 2 June 1945

Ref. No. 738

Dear General,

I received from the Assistant High Commissioner for epuration a letter which reads as follows:

"I have been informed that Col. Francois has been tried by the Commission of first instance a few days ago and has been dismissed from service.

"I know also that Col. Francois' file is at present with the Allied Commission, which requested it from the Commission of first instance.

"Thus being the situation, I would propose that:

1) I instruct the Ministry of the Air Force to suspend the execution of the measure adopted by the Commission of first instance;

2) You inform Brig. Upjohn of the above;

Meanwhile Col. Francois may appeal to the Central Commission.

"Let me know what your opinion is."

In my reply I have expressed my agreement with the proposal.

At the same time I have asked H.A. Gasparotto to suspend any measure and not to make an official communication to Col. Francois concerning the decision adopted by the Commission of first instance.

I shall keep you informed of further developments on this question.

Esteemed regards.

TO: BRIG. GEN. G.R. UPJOHN
ALLIED COMMISSION
ROME

4820

3130
Alla Commissione
per la sicurezza contro il fascismo
IL SEGRETARIO GENERALE

(54Y)
Roma, 2 giugno 1945

- 3 GIU. 1945

Caro Generale,

Dall'Alto Commissario aggiunto per l'epurazione
cinese ho ricevuto la seguente lettera:

" Sul caso del Col. François si viene comunicato che
" ormai or sono egli è stato giudicato dalla Commis-
" sione di epurazione di I grado e dispensato dal
" servizio.
" E' anche che l'incartamento del col. François si
" trova, in questo momento, nelle mani della Commis-
" sione Alleata, che ne ha fatto richiesta alla Com-
" missione di I grado.
" Quando così la cosa lo proporrà:
" 1) - di comunicare lo stesso al Ministero dell'Es-
" tero che sopprima l'esecuzione del provvedimento
" deciso dalla Commissione di I grado;
" 2) - di comunicare la decisione a ogni altro
" sopra.
" Intanto il col. François può fare ricorso alla Com-
" missione Centrale.
" Fatti sapere cosa ne pensi. "

Alla lettera ho risposto nel senso che convergo
sull'opportunità di aderire alla soluzione proposta.
Nello stesso tempo ho pregato S.E. Gasparotto

Al Brig. Gen. S.E. VIGNY
Commissione Alleata

= R O S A =

4819
(401)

di sospendere qualunque atto e di non effettuare
la comunicazione ufficiale al Col. Frappois del
provvedimento adottato dalla Commissione di 1° grado.

Mi riservo di tenerla informato di tutto quanto
mi potrà risultare in questi giorni.

Distanti saluti

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'L. M. M.', is written below the typed text.

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

HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION
AFC 34
CIVIL AFFAIRS SECTION

Ha

Ref DF/4/13.2/CA

29 May 45

My dear Mr. Borri,

3a

I have to draw your attention to my letter DF/4/13.2/CA of the 4 May and to enquire what the position with regard to the Expiration proceedings against Col FRANCOIS is. I am very concerned as it has been reported to me that he has been exonerated. I hope to hear from you that I have been misinformed.

Yours truly

G. R. URJOHN
G.R. URJOHN Brig,
VP CA Section

Sig. C. Battista BORRI
Alto Commissariato per le Sanzioni
contro il Fascismo,
Palazzo del Viminale,
R O M A

B4 5

AB/or

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TRG

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

HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION
APO 394
CIVIL AFFAIRS SECTION

Tel : 489081 3A
Ext : 525

Ref D2/4/13.2/CA

4 May 45

My dear Mr. Boeri,

I wish to confirm the conversation we had yesterday 3 May 1945 in my office concerning the expiration proceedings against Col Armando FRANCOIS of the Italian Air Force.

After an investigation of the proceedings which were initiated by the Assistant High Commissioner I am satisfied that the case is one in which we must ask for their suspension. Col FRANCOIS has participated in recent military operations and has made a substantial contribution to the Allied war effort.

Will you please advise me at your earliest convenience that the proceedings against Col FRANCOIS have been suspended.

Yours truly

G.R. Upjohn
G.R. UPJOHN Brig,
VP CA Section

AP/11 11/11

Sig. G. Battista BOERI
Alto Commissariato per le Sanzioni
contro il Fascismo,
Palazzo del Viminale,
ROMA

4817
4834
1168

Translation

AIR MINISTRY
First Grade Commission for
Evaluation of Military Personnel.

23/12/1945

DEPOSITION

by
Colonel FRANCOIS Armando.

1. PRELIMINARY: The Minister for Air, in his letter of 23rd December 1944 addressed to the Office for Personnel (bearing the signature of M. H. the Minister Scialoja) excluded my name from the list of those submitted to the Commission "for Merit displayed in the struggle against the Nazi-fascists" (see letter included in the office file).

Instead the Supreme Commission has re-opened proceedings against me with the memorandum of 2/2/1945.

I would respectfully draw attention to the fact that, although the Supreme Commission, in common with all examining bodies, was under the obligation to bring together all the relative evidence - not only legally incriminating matter, but also all extenuating circumstances and facts - not a single line was contained in the above citation regarding the performance of units under my command after the armistice in the struggle against the enemy.

This inexplicable omission, partly lessened by the letter in which M. H. the Minister referred to me in honourable terms as "one of the leading builders in the reconstruction of the Air Force after the 8th September" (letter of 6th March 1945 from the Minister to the Commission), throws upon me the added burden of collecting and documenting all the evidence for my acquittal. I must record my history, not in order to whitewash my past - which as I shall demonstrate stands in no need of such treatment - but only to show the spirit in which I carried out my duty and served my country at a time when she was looking to her soldiers, or at least to those who had not lost their bearings, to multiply their efforts a hundredfold in order to cope with the unimaginable difficulties resulting from the general collapse.

2. PERIOD PRIOR TO THE PRESENT WAR.

Born in Marrara, 23rd December 1901, on completion of my high school

I would respectfully draw attention to the fact that, although the Supreme Commission, in common with all Examining Bodies, was under the obligation to bring together all the relative evidence - not only legally incriminating matter, but also all extenuating circumstances and facts - not a single line was contained in the above citation regarding the performance of units under my command after the armistice in the struggle against the enemy.

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2. PERIOD PRIOR TO THE PRESENT WAR.

Born in Ferrara 23rd December 1903, on completion of my Higher Course of studies I entered the Aeronautical Academy at the age of twenty years. This was in 1925.

In answer to the questionnaire then in force as to whether one belonged to any political faction, I could and did reply in the negative, never having taken any part in politics.

I passed out of the Academy at the end of the allotted four years. This was in 1929.

In July 1933, following upon the Salustrocci Circular, I signed on at the Fascio of Udine, where I was posted, with the rank of lieutenant in the 1st Fighter Stormo.

In January 1937 I left for Spain with two Fighter Squadriglie that were formed in Turin and routed to join a third Squadriglia that was already located in the combat zone.

Members of the first Squadriglia left without being aware even of their destination; this fact did not prevent them from qualifying as volunteers however, by virtue of diplomatic non-intervention.

(2)

As regards myself, I was detained at Udine whilst I brought back fighter planes from Austria; in accordance with a telephone order from the Cabinet I was instructed to rejoin the Squadriglia that was being formed at Turin and was destined for Spain on the same day.

And this too, for the same reasons, has naturally been put forward as an example of volunteering.

Ignorant of the particular motives, which led the Fascist regime to undertake and the Western democracies to permit the Spanish expedition, I fought in a foreign country in obedience to an expressed order received.

Until September 1936 I remained in Spain, where in accordance with the orders of my superior officers (Generals Velardi and Bernasconi), I sought only to do my duty as laid down by military law which for me, a soldier by vocation education and profession, is the law of honour.

In the execution of my duty I always followed the maxim, valid for fighting men of all countries and of all eras, of "dare per non prenderle" ("Obey without question"), which is taught even to children. No one can blame me for not choosing to commit suicide in front of the opposing combat Squadriglie, for not backing up a cause, which though it might appear unjust was not for a soldier to decide, in just the same way that I have not attempted to judge the cause, however unjust it might appear, in whose right I was ordered to fight against the United Nations, or the cause in whose right I was commanded to fight against the Germans.

A strict education has made us accept as an axiom the principle that "...when the first rifle shot is fired a nation must sink its differences in a common will for the defence and victory of the fatherland which, right or wrong, is always the fatherland and must unite to achieve a proper dignity through military duty and enforce the respect of her adversaries." (M. Croce - Address to Congress at Bari.)

For these very reasons I have always been very opposed to any political interference in military affairs especially when, as so often happens, it is purely of a reclaimist, propagandist nature now or ever specious.

Precisely on account of the stupid propaganda devised about myself and my Squadriglia, I reached the point of forbidding the Journalist Artieri to enter the airfield, as Major Roberto Fassi will bear witness.

In the execution of my duty I always followed the maxim, valid for fighting men of all countries and of all eras, of "dare per non prenderle" ("Obey without question"), which is taught even to children. No one can blame me for not choosing to commit suicide in front of the opposing combat squadriglie, for not backing up a cause, which though it might appear unjust was not for a soldier to decide, in just the same way that I have not attempted to judge the cause, however unjust it might appear, in whose right I was ordered to fight against the United Nations, or the cause in whose right I was commanded to fight against the Germans.

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Precisely on account of the stupid propaganda devised about myself and my squadriglia, I reached the point of forbidding the Journalist Artieri to enter the airfield, as Major Roberto Fassi will bear witness.

The ulterior motive of reward for valour, with which the Supreme Commissariat thinks it can discredit my activities and behaviour (what a poor trumped-up story!) is merely the usual contrast about motives of self-interest, which certainly will not stand the test of investigation.

On my return from Spain I was invited to a dinner at Ferrara given by my previous colleagues amongst whom was the Federal Secretary. During the dinner I was presented with a fascio card bearing the "Squadrista" stamp, which I was naturally unable to refuse under the circumstances since it was intended as an act of courtesy.

Since the qualification with which I had been nominally invested was merely a formal one, I abstained - as it lay in my power to do - from taking any advantage therefrom in the way of gains, promotion, seniority etc.

For this reason did not even figure beside my name in the Officer's Year-book.

I have held it rightful to denounce the fact today for the

(3)

first time in the interests of the truth.

in the light of this revelation of the true facts of the case any blame which might otherwise be attached to me for holding fascist titles or qualifications falls to the ground.

It is not a fascist title to have taken part in the Spanish war because that act is not included amongst the strict and thorough ordinances laid down for epuration by the Allies, in the legislation of 27th July 1944, by which standards the rights of my case will have to be decided.

Nor is it a fascist title to have the qualification of "Squadrista" under the particular circumstances which apply in my case.

"The standard laid down in Article 14 is not applicable to cases where it can be shown that the qualification does not in fact correspond to a true interpretation of the term - as, for example, when the "squadrist" has taken no part in squadrist activities, especially if the qualification was not sought for out of self-interest and was moreover a source of no advantage." (Circular of M.E. the High Commissioner Biorra).

It is a fact that I have never sought to make it a source of advantage to myself, and indeed I did not even make the point known. And in any case it was a good deal later before my promotion occurred.

Here and now the charge that I have received advancement in my career by virtue of fascist titles falls to the ground, and the definition is clearly stated in the law (Article 12 No. 2) "through party favour or through the fascist hierarchy" to be interpreted as "intervention which exerted an influence, if not the only influence then at least a deciding factor."

This passage excludes, therefore any nominations which may have been occasioned "by special merit or qualification displayed in the carrying-out of duties in routine or operations."

The promotion to Colonel, which put me a rank above my companions in the service, resulted purely from such selection, that is through normal channels.

(continued on next sheet)

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(continued on
next sheet)

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3. PRESENT WAR - PERIOD BEFORE THE ARMISTICE.

I took part in the present war as Commander of a Gruppo in Sicily from the outbreak of hostilities until October 1940. I then was sent to Guidonia for tests on the new fighter Me. 202 and afterwards went to the General Staff to superintend the mass-production of this aircraft.

Appointed to command of the 4th Fighter Stormo in January 1942, at the beginning of April I was transferred to Sicily for operations against Malta. At the beginning of May I went to North Africa where I remained until the fall of Tripoli (January 1943).

Having returned to Italy for reforming, the following May the Stormo went into operation again in various localities ending in Sicily where it remained until the end of August 1943.

Once again having been sent into operations in view of my technical training and because of my obligation to do so, having taken a formal oath not to have myself taken off them under any pretext, I endeavoured to fulfil my duties to the utmost as my ex-adversaries recognised with gallant and flattering objectivity when later they found me fighting at their side. ~~As~~ I shall explain later.

4. PERIOD AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

At the declaration of the Armistice and the brief proclamation of Badoglio, I was in command of the 4th Stormo, located at Castrovillari and Gioia del Colle.

In the midst of this nervousness and understandable confusion which followed it, with no direct orders and with, as sole guide, that short proclamation which, if it was sufficiently indicative of the course to follow with the Germans, gave no indication of the course to be followed with the allies, I decided without hesitation to follow the only line ~~maximum~~ of conduct possible for a soldier, that is to remain loyal to his service.

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I succeeded in keeping the Stormo intact, heartening those who, in moments of bewilderment, ~~intended~~ intended to give up the game and those who, ~~in the name of military honour in its~~ ^{and having} misplaced sense, ~~intended~~ intended with a propaganda rich in conventional ideals, intended to destroy the material rather than hand it over to the ex-enemy. I moreover succeeded in eluding repeated German attempts ~~to~~ encircle the Stormo and remove it to safety.

When active participation in the campaign against the Germans began under the direct control of the Allies, I undertook the work of reorganising and exploiting war material.

W.K. a. in con-4813

material. This I was able to carry out successfully notwithstanding the obvious and serious difficulties of that time.

Thus, when an important political personality in April 1944 at Naples asked for "the collaboration of all members of the Forces with technical ability who are ready to fight against the Germans and the traitors to the country" (Togliatti - report to the officials of the Communist organization), I considered the recent past and had the satisfaction of having given to the limit of my powers and without reserve or ulterior motives, the desired collaboration.

For further particulars of my operational activity after 8th September, apart from making enquiries at the appropriate Allied authorities and among all ranks of the 4th Fighter Stormo, the following documents may be consulted:

a) Letter from the Air Sub Commission (A.S.C.), signed by General R.M. Forster, commanding the Desert Army and dated 18th March 1944 (ad. 1), in which the Minister at that time, Sandalli, was urged to reward certain Italian officers, given by name, "for the excellent work done during the last six months".

And there could not be a more calm and dispassionate judge than the allied commander under whom I fought.

b) Extract from the report of Major Pilot Carlo Ruspoli who states in the part which concerns me:
"I declare that if the 4th Stormo and 21st Gruppo continued to function in an exemplary manner and immediately commenced operations against the Germans, this is due to the attitude, good sense and sense of duty of the Commander, Col. Francois to whom everybody looked in those first hours of bewilderment, for guidance even in their own personal attitude. He knew how to re-arouse the lost morale of these magnificent people and it was around this very modest nucleus and due to him and the line of conduct adopted by them that it was possible to reconstruct the basis of the Air

5th September, apart from making enquiries at the appropriate Allied authorities and among all ranks of the 4th Fighter Stormo, the following documents may be consulted:

a) Letter from the Air Sub Commission (A.C.C.), signed by General R.M. Forster, commanding the Desert Army and dated 16th March 1944 (ad.1), in which the Minister at that time, Sandalli, was urged to reward certain Italian officers, given by name, "for the excellent work done during the last six months".

And there could not be a more calm and dispassionate judge than the allied commander under whom I fought.

b) Extract from the report of Major Pilot Carlo Ruspoli who states in the part which concerns me:

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c) Report of Major Pilot Roterio Fassi on the events of 8th September and the following days (encl. 3) which states as follows in the part which concerns me:

4812

In the circumstances described above I can only praise the conduct of all the officers, without making any distinction, of all the officers who were far more than intelligent, cooperative and full of initiative, and also the few U.C.O.'s and about 20 men. Their names were sent to the H.C. of the Stormo at the time. Of this period of misfortune in which everything seemed to have collapsed with no hope of revival and during which even the strongest will was sometimes badly shaken and doubt crept into the spirit of almost everyone, Colonel Francoisi never faltered and was never undecided. At all costs he wanted to save his aircraft, at all costs he wanted to save the Air Force from perishing. Now that that period is far away and it is possible to judge without being influenced by sentiment or passion I can say that all his actions; all his efforts were directed towards saving the life of our Service and removing the difficulties and complications which made everyone tremble and despair of a rebirth. But for his actions and the way he handled the situation I do not know what would now remain of the I.A.S. I can say this with honesty and conviction and with the certainty that I am not flattering Colonel Francoisi."

d) Details of the operational flights carried out by me since 8th September with the Fighter Command. (encl. 4)

e) Report by Colonel Francoisi on his actions as C.O. on 8th September and presented to the Commission for Personnel, (encl. 5).

f) Intelligence reports reviewed by the Ex-Minister Sandalli and the then Commander of the Air Forces, General Piacentini (to be obtained at the appropriate offices).

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUREAUCRATIC ACTIVITY.

Strangely enough the High Commissioner has not deigned to show the slightest recognition of my operational activity since the armistice in spite of the precise instructions of the law (Art. 16) for discrimination: "who, after the 8th September 1943, has distinguished himself in the struggle against the Germans". On the contrary the High Commissioner

actions; all his efforts were directed towards saving the life of our Service and removing the difficulties and complications which made everyone tremble and despair of a rebirth. But for his actions and the way he handled the situation I do not know what would now remain of the I.A.F. I can say this with honesty and conviction and with the certainty that I am not flattering Colonel Francoisi."

d) Details of the operational flights carried out by me since 8th September with the Fighter Command. (encl. 4)

e) Report by Colonel Francoisi on his actions as C.O. on 8th September and presented to the Commission for Personnel, (encl. 5).

f) Intelligence reports reviewed by the Ex-Minister Sandelli and the then Commander of the Air Forces, General Piacentini (to be obtained at the appropriate offices).

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The law on Expiration refers in spirit and letter to actions and conduct during twenty years of Fascism and with especial relation to Fascism; it does not refer to actions and conduct after the fall of Fascism by those who were fighting against fascism.

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As there has been no accusation of censure of sedition or incorrect behaviour made against me for the whole of the period prior to 8th September, my activities and conduct afterwards have no political character and do not come within the scope of the High Commissioner or of this Commission. Instead they came within the scope of the normal disciplinary and legal organs which, as far as I am concerned and as I shall show, have already pronounced judgement and acquitted me.

One can look in vain for this result in the reports of the Carabinieri due to the bitterness which remains in the mind of Lt. Montemurro, as he himself confessed in the report dated 8th March 1944, as a result of the unjustified and unjustifiable (only for those who do not know that Major Rizzi still suffers as the result of a bad head-wound) attitude of the Major in this connection.

a) IRREGULARITIES CONTINUED IN THE SO-CALLED AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT OF THE 4 TH STORMO.

Preoccupied by the deficiencies in the food rations issued to the personnel and to the increasing difficulties, in agreement with the Commander of the 4th Stormo, Major Fassi, I ordered that this should be dealt with by making direct purchases.

When I found out that irregular practices were going on I ordered an enquiry.

I then found out that the defence of those responsible, ~~with the exception of~~ against whom penal proceedings had already started, tried to excuse them by shifting the responsibility on to the commanders of the unit, a proceeding which, although I was not the Commander of the Stormo, also started penal proceedings in my case.

In a note of 28th June 1944 (encl. 6) H.E. Minister Piacentini thanking me for my upright attitude (ignored by the Carabinieri) on a question which only concerned me indirectly, sent me copies of a letter to Admiral De Zeva (encl. 7) in which, taking into account my refusal to lend the course of justice.

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In a note of 23th June 1944 (encl. 6) H.E. Minister Placentini thanking me for my upright attitude (ignored by the Carabinieri) on a question which only concerned me indirectly, sent me copies of a letter to Admiral De Zeva (encl. 7) in which, taking into account my refusal to lend my name to anything which would impede the course of justice, ordered that the proceedings ~~should be~~ ~~opened against me~~ ~~proceedings~~ which closed with a complete judicial acquittal (ignored by the Carabinieri). (encl. 6).

b) REMOVAL OF GOODS FROM WAGGONS AT BRINDISI STATION.

The Ministerial Commission, having examined the facts, recognised that they reflected no personal interest and could be explained by the bad conditions under which the personnel of the Stormo had to live, ~~and~~ in that exceptional period, as a consequence of the disbanding which took place after the 8th September; it therefore confined itself to

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a simple disciplinary admonition (Cf. report of 24.3.44 attached to the file).

H.E. Sandalli. In his letter of 6th June 1944 (encl. 9), having examined the matter, concluded by giving me a disciplinary admonition.

Following my declarations and my explanations (ignored by the Carabinieri) and the report of Major Fassi (ignored by the Carabinieri) (encl. 10) H.E. the Minister arranged to revoke the punishment (ignored by the Carabinieri).

OMISSION TO REPORT A THEFT.

Following a legal report made directly by the Carabinieri without questioning ~~my superiors~~ or informing my superiors as they should have done, penal proceedings were opened against me for having omitted to report certain matters concerning a theft to the P.S. except, as by law for ~~the importance of~~ the Commander of the Naval Base ~~in which I was~~ at Taranto ~~who advised it~~

Upon learning the real truth of this affair Admiral D'Azava declared that he was nauseated by the method of procedure adopted in my case and forbade the authorisation (once again ignored by the Carabinieri) (encl. 11).

H.E. Sandalli, for his part, arranged for the removal from the airport at Lecce of Lt. Montemurro of the Carabinieri who had shown himself rebellious and tendentious towards me on every occasion.

d) VARIOUS INSINUATIONS AND GOSSIP.

These refer to what I did in August 1943, when I was preoccupied about sending as large an amount of material as possible to Pescara where the last half of my Stormo was.

This served to feed and maintain the personnel of the depot during the German domination and is confirmed by the report of Mar. Di Giulio (encl. 12) who succeeded Captain Paraldi (who was killed by the Germans) as C.O. of the unit and also by the declaration of Aviere Pacalali (encl. 13) one of the few

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These last documents were transmitted by H.E. Piacentini to the Carabiniere at Bari who took care not to mention them in their reports.

e) For further details and explanations the undersigned would prefer to be interrogated personally.

(r) CONCLUSION.

It is a simple and facile enough thing to express opinions today on what one ought and what one ought not to have done in the period following immediately upon the armistice.

As commander of a Stormo, which was in retreat from El Alamein and which was accustomed to a life of order and regulation, in that profitable moment of "every man for himself", having to make the best of whatever could be found abandoned or discarded by the way-side, without a semblance of normal organization, with urgent requirements in the midst of unimaginable difficulties of keeping together and also of feeding the Stormo, which for a thousand reasons tended to disband and for whom the spectacle of the comfortable conditions enjoyed by the Allied troops was a reason for even further dissatisfaction, without the means of administering adequate punishments for breaches of discipline with the object of discouraging more serious ones, - notwithstanding all this, I did not shrink but boldly shouldered all the responsibilities of Commanding Officer.

It is a simple enough thing to describe as improper behaviour or evidence of bad character those irregularities, which in the special circumstances of time, place and personalities involved, it was humanly impossible to avoid.

The mere circumstance that no accusation of improper behaviour or irregularity can be brought against me during the period of the whole of my career prior to the 6th September ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ should be enough to convince any fair-minded person that any irregularities committed after that date (of which moreover I was guiltless) cannot be ascribed to my own habits, inclinations or propensities, but only to the exceptional circumstances prevailing at the time.

According to the Carrabinieri: "my system" was too "ill-considered". But it was solely by virtue of that system that I was able to tackle confidently and successfully manage a most difficult emergency. If every officer invested with powers of command had followed "my system" the destiny of our country would certainly have been different.

ROME 19th April 1945.

Colonel Armando FRANCOIS.

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

FROM: AIR FORCE OF COMMISSION,
ALLIED COMMISSION, ROCE.
TO: LEGAL SUB-COMMISSION,
E.C. ALLIED COMMISSION, ROCE.
DATE: 17TH APRIL, 1945.
REF: AFSC/141/141/7.

10/4/1945

10 APR 1945

SECRET.

Attached herewith are copies of correspondence relating to COLONEL FRANCIS, ARMANDO, who is apparently to be brought before the Espionage Tribunal.

2. This is a parallel case to that of COLONEL REMONDINO, in which you will remember that we gave a direct order that he was not to be tried.

3. COLONEL FRANCIS has rendered very loyal service, both to the Italians before the Armistice, and to the Allies since the Armistice. He commanded a fighter wing in North Africa and brought the whole wing back from EL ALAMEIN, through TRIPOLI, UNITS and BIRMI to ITALY, fighting all the way at a time when he was completely deserted by the Italian supply services. He even brought his mobile workshops with him. His methods of obtaining supplies might have been unorthodox, but he kept his wing in action.

4. Since the Armistice he has commanded the Italian Fighter Wing, taking part himself in active operations against the enemy, and since then he has been employed as a Staff Officer in various capacities.

5. You will be aware that it is our considered view that certain political elements are trying to get rid of the best and most efficient personnel in the Italian Air Force, and one of the mediums for this is through the Espionage and Military tribunals.

6. It is our opinion that the proceedings against COLONEL FRANCIS should be stopped at once, as they would undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the morale and efficiency of the Italian Air Force.

W. A. B. Bower-Barnes

W. A. B. BOWER-BARNES,
AIR VICE-MARSHAL,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING.

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It is brought to the notice of this Commission that Colonel (pilot) FRANCIS ARANDA has been nominated by the Supreme Espionage Commission for degradation and subsequent dismissal from the service, for obtaining promotions through fascist channels (Spanish War,) for sedition abroad in the Spanish war, and improper behaviour.

As a direct result of the operation in progress they are trying, by limit, and illicit means, to get rid of the best of the Regia Aeronautica personnel. In fact, among the papers put before the above-named Commission against Colonel FRANCIS are statements made by elements who, after the date of 8th September, found themselves under his command and were dissatisfied with the disciplinary measures which he imposed, and above all with combat operations for which he was personally responsible.

Chief amongst the accusations against him is a declaration by Colonel FRANCIS in which he frankly admits to being in possession of a "Squadrist" card, which had been made out for him by some old Ferrara friends after their return from Spain, but of which the said officer had never made any use; in fact the document had never even been registered at Air Ministry, he had gained no advantage from it, and only his conscience as a citizen and as a soldier had prompted him to bring it to the notice of General Pietro Piacentini, Commander of the combined Air Force. Today this voluntary admission, which was previously known only to the above-mentioned General, and which evidences the rectitude of Colonel FRANCIS, is used against him at the request of espionage.

Embodied in the accusation are many papers referring to irregularities allegedly committed by Colonel FRANCIS in order to keep in favour with the 4th Stormo after the 8th September, notably with regard to organization for the fighter squadron men.

These papers are negative sources from the evidence already collected at the Espionage Commission are only documents of accusation. Everything that would serve to prove the utter falsity of the charges has been omitted.

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Resumé of letter from Col. Francisco to Air Ministry.

The following information is forwarded for information and guidance in the operation proceedings:

1. In my letter of 24 February 1944 to General Piacentini, C.O. of Air Force, I clarified my political status and imputations of being "Squadrista".
2. The title of "Squadrista" (dated 1924) was offered to me at Ferrara during a luncheon to which I had been invited by former colleagues on their return from Spain, under circumstances which made it difficult to refuse.
3. Since the title was merely an honorary one, I never informed Air Ministry and the entry never figured after my name in the R.A. Year Book.
4. I have never received any benefits whatever, by virtue of the above-mentioned title of Squadrista.

(Sgd). Colonel (Pilot) Armando
Franciosa.

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

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