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REPORTS ON ITALIAN AIR FORCE
MAR. - NOV. 1945

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From: Air Forces Sub Commission, H.Q. Allied Commission.

To: Executive Commissioner.
Copy to: Political Adviser.

Ref: AFSC/INT/15

Date: 2nd November 1945

NOV 5 1945

Attached herewith for information is a translation of chapters 4 and 5 of a booklet issued by the Italian Air Ministry entitled "Situazione e Aspirazioni dell'Aeronautica Italiana".



D.H.G. Smith
Air Vice Marshal
Air Officer Commanding

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(ent 12/1/1946)

4. THE FUTURE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE AS LAID DOWN BY THE PEACE TREATY

Italy is confident that, according to the Peace Treaty arrangements, she would be allowed to dispose of:

- a) a Military Air Force for the defence of the country with an adequate number and type of aircraft for the task set out in Art. 51 of the San Francisco Treaty, for the defence of Italy's territory and coastal areas, pending the intervention of the International Forces, against an eventual aggressor;
- b) a fixed Military Air Force strength, to be included in the International Air Forces for general safeguard;
- c) a commercial aviation, adequately developed to meet the modern requirements of air routes and fast transport services in the country itself, between the main centres of the mainland, islands and colonies that will be left to Italy.

The participation of a few air lines or part of a European trans-continental airline according to Italy's Aeronautical potentialities in this respect.

Italy is particularly confident and is inclined to believe for various strong reasons, that she will be allowed to re-open the air route with South America, which was brilliantly operated by Italy before the war.

The following are the reasons in favour of the above mentioned requests:

- The Italian Air Force gave to the Allied cause a most wide and unconditional support, in every possible way; - the contribution to the war effort was both apparent and humble, but both high and heroic; technical and logistical contributions were more modest but not less strong tenacious and devoted. The Italian Air Force participation was facilitated as both Allied and National interests coincided; but it must always be remembered that the largest part of the Air Force was able to surmount the tragic crisis of the 8th September, 1943, due to her fidelity and devotion.

- Allied recognition did not limit itself to solely verbal and written declarations, but took a concrete form when the Italian Air Force was given Allied aircraft in order to form and maintain 5 organic groups (10 Flights - 90 A/C as well as training A/C and spare parts) which bore the maximum weight of war operations in the Balkans.

Due to unknown reasons no other types of A/C were released as provided in the initial programme.

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Old Italia bomber A/C of all types converted into transport A/C have since the end of the war, up to the present been usefully employed in several daily Allied Military Courier flights. These aircraft are still flying due to the constant and tenacious technical efforts of the fine Air Force specialists.

The existence of an Italian Military Air Force is necessitated by obvious exigencies for territorial defense which furthermore coincide with the fundamental basis for the eventual forming of the International Armed Forces which will enforce peace.

Italy, due to its geographical and political position and wide coastal area (approx. 8000 kms.) cannot guarantee its own integrity, and, therefore, the eventual useful use of its own air and naval bases, without an adequate Air Force and Navy to meet any possible aggression.

This statement is also undoubtedly true of any form of International Police which might, in the future interest the United Nations.

The existence of a Military Air Force is also necessitated by the existence of Land and Naval Forces, which would be unable to operate if deprived of the Air Force cooperation which today, and more so in the future, is absolutely indispensable. The eventual non-existence or deficiency of the Air Force would cause the other Armed Forces to be almost of no use.

The quantity and quality of the National Air Force should be stabilized in relation to the very difficult task of defending the immense coastal area of the Peninsula, and based on a just allotment in proportion to the Armed Forces which will be stabilized, enforced and controlled by the United Nations.

The above considerations on the international situation advise the existence of a suitable Military Air Force strength for the operations on an international police force under the direction of the United Nations.

In case the above provision is not made, it would certainly be necessary to permanently stabilize the strength of the United Nations Military Air Force in Italy, thus causing grave, oppressive and painful morale consequences as well as political, military and technical consequences which this solution will bring about.

The existence of a Commercial Aviation adequate to the air traffic requirements of the Nation in conjunction and, as far as possible, in participation in the international traffic is obvious. The reasons being that the total air activity, meteorological and technical assistance both in the air and on the ground, and the airport transit facilities are not only of interest to the country but also to all the nations interested in air routes to, or through, Italy.

Otherwise, the main flying activity as well as other ground services will never be usefully and efficiently carried out by foreign countries on Italian territory.

The re-opening of the air route with South America, would not only be a clear recognition of the Italian Air Forces' contribution, but also enable Italy to resume, more rapidly, direct contact with countries populated by a large number of Italians who have for years taken useful and active part in the economical life of the country. This would also enable the Italian pilots to refresh and employ their technical and professional qualities on long range air routes.

- 3 -

The condition of flying equipment both in number and quality, at present being used, are very precarious, are deteriorating rapidly, and will become non-existent after a year or so.

The biggest part of the Aeronautical industries are serviceable and, if provided with the necessary material, could reactivate the production which has been partly resumed, for old as well as new constructions especially engines.

The transfer of old to new equipment could be facilitated by an eventual release of part of the United Nations equipment which is today being dismantled or recovered as it is above their peace requirements. This should be applied to both the Military Air Force as well as Commercial Aviation.

For the time being and for the first few years, Italy, hopes that she will be allowed to keep the Military Air Force Units which since the armistice joined more or less successfully, the Allied Forces of occupation.

This earnest hope is strengthened by obvious morale reasons, of essential importance to the service and the country.

There are 3 Fighter Wings, 3 Light Bomber Wings and 2 Seaplane Wings; with a total of 19 Squadrons, 38 Flights and 542 aircraft.

If the financial position of the country is unable at first to maintain these aircraft, it could gradually be reached in a few years time without detriment to the technical qualities of the aircraft and personnel, who will have to be brought up to and kept at the same height of standard of the United Nations.

If immediately following, as we would like to believe, Italy will be allowed to participate in the overall security activity, the development of its Military Air Force could be conformed to the demands imposed by the competent superior organization of the United Nations.

In order to enable the Commercial Aviation to resume its activity it would be of great initial help if a certain number of aircraft adequate to the internal traffic requirements are released. Suitable aircraft for transoceanic air lines are being constructed and also in project.

The question of air bases and their indispensable installations would be gradually solved according to the importance and urgency of their use and according to national financial resources.

If urgent international ^{interests} which could not be disregarded, should advise and necessitate arrangements of an exceptional nature, the requirements of the States concerned could still be met in the best way, by providing for what is considered indispensable financial aid.

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5. THE FUTURE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE IN THE CIRCLE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS STATUS

In the past 20 months of cobelligerency, as well as for the future, the Italian Air Force is certain that it will gain and keep the appreciation and esteem of the United Nations, and will value this essential basis as a recognition to its slow and gradual development, according to the demands of the country and international security.

The limits which in the future, might be imposed on the matter, will not harm its spirit or its technical and professional efficiency, as long as these limits are dictated according to its just demands for existence, in the scheme of general armaments and their use.

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HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMM ON
APO 394
Office of the Executive Commissioner

NEF/brd
30 March 1945

Memo:

To : Chief Commissioner

This is the first report by Lt. Col. Baldrige on the Italian Air Force. You will note that he has been directed to report personally to General Eaker every ten days, after clearing through your office. The report is interesting as a cursory survey and you may wish to glance over it for information.

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NORMAN E. FISKE
Colonel
Acting Executive Commissioner

At/Exec Comm.
Noted.

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From : LT. COL. H.M. BALDRICE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR AIR FORCES SUB COMMISSION, H.Q. A.C.

To : MAJ. GEN. JOHN K. CANNON
AIR COMMANDER IN CHIEF H.A.A.F.

Date : 30th March 1945

Subject : FIRST REPORT ON ITALIAN AIR FORCE

MAR 31 1945

1.- My Directive and Instructions :-

On 7th March '45 Lt. Gen. I.C. Baker informed me I was to be transferred to the Allied Commission H.Q. in Rome to be Deputy to A.V.M. Bowen-Buscalet in the Air Forces Sub Commission. He expressed a new interest in the Italian Air Force and directed me

- a) To report to him personally every ten days after clearing thru Rear Admiral Stone's office;
- b) To make a thorough study of the Air Forces Sub Commission office;
- c) To visit all the installations;
- d) To give him all information and recommendations but with the complete knowledge of Rear Admiral Stone and thru his office.-

2.- Preparation :-

My first week in Rome was spent reading all the files and correspondence in the offices of the Air Forces Sub Commission and calling on the Italian Air Ministry. The Italians were most cordial and stated that they had been worried about the lack of interest of the Americans and were pleased to see an American officer as Deputy in the Sub Commission. All thru my trip I heard this same expression many times.-

3.- Inspection Trip :-

I left Rome on 16th March '45 with Lt. Col. Adrower, an Italian Officer for my visit to the Italian Units.

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3.- Inspection Trip :-

I left Rome on 16th March '45 with Lt. Col. Adrower, an Italian Officer for my visit to the Italian Units.

a) Naples : With Col. Walters and Lt. Col. Carlberg I visited Gen. C. Lama who is the C.G. of the 205 Italian Division. This is the administrative Unit for the Italian Service troops allocated to the A.A.F. and Br. A.F. Units and has the direct responsibility of processing and administration of all Italians with the A.A.F. Units. I obtained location of these units and discussed all the supply and morale problems with Brig. Gen. C. Lama. He is a fine officer and I was impressed with his efforts to meet our demands.

b) Foggia : Around this vicinity we have several Companies of Italians allocated to our A.F. Units. They work as guards, mechanics and laborers on the airfields and buildings. I personally inspected these units, as to clothing, food, living quarters and discussed their value to us with the

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American officers in charge. Later in this report, under "Service Troops", are the details.

c) Bari : I had expressly asked to have the officer in charge of the Bari Air Forces Sub Commission office there to meet me, but I found that he had left the day before and would not be back for two days. The same thing happened at Taranto. This really turned into a blessing in disguise as the Italians were much more free with me alone. Bari is the H.Q. for all Italian operational units. It is called *Unità Aerea* and is under the Command of Brig. Gen. Gaeta and Chief of Staff Col. François. Here is a H.Q. of 30 officers and 50 E.M.'s who have nothing to do because all operations are under the Balcan Air Force and *Unità Aerea* is not informed of any action until after it has happened. This system is correct however as it ensures much more efficient operations directly under the British control. *Unità Aerea* has its value however because as long as this skeleton top echelon exists the Italian Air Force personnel realize that they have an air force of their own. It is interesting to note that even today Gen. Gaeta has never personally met A.V.M. Elliott, C.G. of the Balcan Air Force. This disregard of the Italians by the British is a bitter pill to the Italian Air Force.

d) Taranto : There is the location of the Sea Plane Base with Lt. Col. Corsini as C.O. This Command consists of 1,400 E.M., 60 pilots and 40 administrative officers. On that day 30 planes were ready to take off and 25 more that needed extra spare parts and 50 hrs. of work done on them.

Their greatest need is plywood and they complain that a very good plywood factory complete with machinery is now at Naples being used as a store-house.

Their mission is sea-rescue, mine spotting, patrolling and transporting personnel.

From Sept. 8th to date :

1) Total hours flown	415,715	3084
2) Total flights	1,112	
3) Rescue flight attempts	270	
4) Actual rescues	39	

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e) Lecce : There is the H.Q. for the 5 Fighter Plane Groups under Lt. Col. Fanale. They have 230 pilots, 150 officers and 2,000 enlisted men stationed at Lecce and Canne.

Equipment :

MACCHI

Could fly that day	48
Need parts and 50 hrs. of work	20

P. 39's

Could fly that day	45
Good condition but no tyres	38

SPITFIRES

Could fly that day	10
Need parts and 50 hrs work	5

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I visited, slept and ate with these young fighter pilots for two days and was very much impressed by their intelligence and high morale in spite of difficulties.

Here also is located the H.Q. for the 4 Bomber Squadrons. Two at Lecce and two at Melfo under Col. Leone with personnel of 270 pilots, 18 administrative and technical officers and 2,500 E.M.

Equipment :

Could fly that day 49

Need spare parts and
50 hrs. of work 28

They work entirely over Yugoslavia carrying supplies to the partisans and bombing enemy installations. They fly Baltimore and are very much pleased with this type of plane.

f) Prindisi : Here is the salvage repairs shop for the MACCHI fighter planes. It has 100 skilled mechanics that overhaul and make new engines. Here I saw old salvaged planes from the fields of Africa, Sardinia, Sicily etc brought into the salvage yard and cannibalized of everything for parts for the MACCHI. All the aeroplane factories are in the North of Italy in German hands, so the Italians are making their own tools and getting what parts they can.

g) Canne : Here are 3 Fighter Groups. Two P. 39 and one Spitfire Group that escort the bombers into Yugoslavian territory and go on strafing and light bombing missions. It is part of the Unit at Lecce referred to above.

h) Melfo : Here are located two of the squadrons of bombers referred to above. They are under the Lecce H.Q. I was present when they returned from a mission to bomb the R.E. installation and airfield at Sarajevo. I saw the pictures developed after that raid and results were good. These bomber pilots appeared eager aggressive and intelligent.

4. - General Remarks : -

a) Service Troops - U.S. I.T.I.'s

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29

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4. - General Remarks : -

a) Service Troops - U.S. I.T.I.'s

On March 18 the full quota of 6,000 Air Corps Italians were furnished and have been now allocated to various A.A.F. Units.

The morale, food and equipment among these Italians who have been with us for some time is good, but among the new-comers it is very bad. All shoes are worn out. They have only one uniform to work and live in. They get no soap or cigarettes whatsoever. Some places had no water with which to wash. I found that in the Units where the C.O. paid any attention to his I.T.I.'s they were very helpful. They released our own men for more valuable work and considerable construction and repairs were obtained that could not have been, otherwise.

But in other units I found no use being made of them

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and valuable specialists being used as guards and labourers with many desertions taking place. This help should be utilised more, but our C.O.'s must pay attention to the Italians' welfare if they expect any good from them.

All supplies and equipment for the U.S. I.T.I.'s are gathered by M.M.I.A. from Italian stocks. This is turn is handed to M.T.O.U.S.A. who delivers it to P.E.S. and the Adriatic Depot from where it is requisitioned by the Italian 205th Regt. and sent to the Italians. On my return I conferred with Col. Kerr of M.M.I.A. who said that sufficient supplies were given to M.T.O.U.S.A. I then sent word to Gen. C. Lana to be sure and make the proper requisitions. The use of this Italian personnel can be helpful if properly watched.

b) Morale of Italian Pilots and Crews

This situation is very unusual. These men keep going for two reasons. First, they have a great desire to keep in practice and continue their daily flights. They are specialists and there is no place for them to go at present. Without their flying they would be lost. Second, they have been sold the idea that the future of the Italian Air Corps depends entirely on their faithful and loyal service. If they do good work they are convinced the Italian Air Corps will be allowed to continue. I talked to many of them and every one wants to fly more and to have more planes. Their great desire is to fly in Northern Italy and show the Italian partisans that their Air Corps still exists. They all know by heart part of Churchill's speech in which he said: "24th May 44. - The loyal Italian Air Force has fought so well that I am making special efforts to equip it with modern planes of British make."

This has lulled them into a feeling of security and they deplore lack of planes parts and important missions. They even express the thought that they are being purposely held back from effective combat.

Their handicaps are many. Lack of parts for the Balti

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Their handicaps are many. Lack of parts for the Balti motors and tyres for the P. 39's. Improper clothing, poor shoes and no flying suits. They get no soap, few cigarettes and no P.X. supplies. They have no fresh meat for a long time. The pay of a top pilot is 4,000 lire a month and the second pilot gets 3,000 lire. The private gets 500 lire. This low pay means family worries and inability to buy anything with the pre sent high prices. Most of them come from Northern Italy and have not heard from their families for a long time. In spite of all this they have caused no trouble, have no desertions and ask only to fly and fight.

5. - Reduction of the Italian Air Force :-

On 23rd Feb. 45 a letter from Air Marshal Sir John Slesser

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to A.V.M. Bowen-Buscarlet made a drastic cut in the Italian Air Force.

- 1) It took all the MACCHI fighters out of combat and made them training planes in O.T.U.
- 2) It ordered the destruction of all the various and diverse aircraft now being used as odds and ends. These planes are in communication squadrons, autonomous squadrons, schools and for transport. The total number to be destroyed is 180, this leaves 121 Italian planes in use with about 50 held in reserve but not useable because of lack of parts.

The Italian Air Ministry immediately objected as did A.V.M. Bowen-Buscarlet. These letters were forwarded to M.A.A.F. by Rear Admiral Stone.

On 28th of March the answer came from A.V.M. Fogarty of M.A.A.F. refusing to ease up on the order.

The reason given in the refusal letter are

- 1) Difficulties in supply of aircraft and equipment.
- 2) Deficiencies of trained personnel for operational Units.

The Italians although asking for more planes and parts will carry on just the same if no more equipment is given them. There is no deficiency in trained personnel. In fact the Italian Air Corps has a surplus of pilots and crews.

This directive is a tremendous blow to the I.A.F. If the policy is to slowly strangle or to end this organization the directive will accomplish it. These old planes will shortly die by themselves because of no spare parts. Also a definite policy for the I.A.F. should be formed shortly after the close of the war with Germany which will solve this problem.

The following solution would satisfy the Italians :

- 1) Let the MACCHI's go out of the front line into training units.
- 2) Cannibalize about 50 of the poorest planes.

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The following solution would satisfy the Italians :

- 1) Let the MACCHI's go out of the front line into training units. 300!
- 2) Cannibalize about 50 of the poorest planes.
- 3) Let the Italians work along with the other planes until the definite policy on their Air Force is established.

6.- Conclusion :-

Today the Italian Air Force is hanging on a thin thread for the following reasons :

1. Uncertainty as to its future aggravated by recent attempt to reduce it.
2. Political unrest and uncertainty as to stability of its top officers.
3. Personal family problems of each man due to low pay, high cost of living and families in Northern Italy occupied by Germans.
4. Poor living conditions.

- (1)
5. Continued fight for spare parts and equipment.
 6. Lack of recognition and appreciation for its efforts.
- If the Italians could be told the final decision of their Air Force future it would be a great source of satisfaction. If the combat work is not of enough value to the Allies to properly support the Italian Air Force it should be told and they should all be changed to transport and supply squadrons with just enough training for the fighters to keep their hand in. An organization to help return Italian War Prisoners from Albania, the Balkans and Africa would be a great moral builder.

LT. COL. H.M. BALDRICE

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