

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785017

ACC

10000/109/1635

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CAVALIERI DELLA LIBERTA',
(KNIGHTS OF LIBERTY)
APR., MAY 1944

1928

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~~SECRET~~

FIGM/rj

Ref. CG/O/265.

4th. May, 1944.

MEMORANDUM;

SUBJECT: "Knights of Liberty."

TO: Headquarters, A. A. I..

1. In continuation of my 330/8/CA of 28th. April and reference your telegram O-2611 of 29th. April.
2. I informed Badoglio that the movement known as the "Knights of Liberty" in Sicily could not be permitted.
3. I have now received information from Badoglio that he has issued specific orders to this effect.

NOEL MASON MACFARLANE,
Lieutenant-General,
Chief Commissioner.

1928

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SECRET 3308

11 Recd

8321

CA Br.

NONE
SECRET
IMPORTANT

HQ AAI

ACTION APHQ INFO AGC (by ELB)

HEADQUARTERS
1 MAY 1944
A. C. C.

APR 29 2100

0-2511

NONE

INFORMATION HERE SHOWS FORMATION OF KNIGHTS OF LIBERTY MOVEMENT IN SICILY IS SPONSORED BY ITALIAN GOVT AND LEAD BY LT. COL. PAROLLI UMBERTO. IBS PALERMO STATE GOS YOUR HQ HAVE INSTRUCTED THEM TO ISSUE 150 UNIFORMS TO PROMOTE RECRUITMENT. NO PREVIOUS INTIMATION RECEIVED HERE. CINC AAI HAS INSTRUCTED GENERAL MASON MACPARLANE TO INFORM MARSHALL BADOGLIO THAT NO ENCOURAGEMENT OR ASSISTANCE WILL BE GIVEN BY ALLIED NATIONS AND THAT ITALIAN GOVT MUST TAKE STEPS TO STOP MOVEMENT. REQUEST YOU ISSUE ORDERS TO IBS NOT UT ISSUE UNIFORMS AND SUPPLY US WITH ALL INFORMATION YOU HAVE ON HOW THIS MOVEMENT WAS INITIATED.

ACC DIST

INFO: SECY GEN

POL SEC

DGC

CA BR

FILE

FLOAT

Ex Cam.
To see.
21/5

215

Copy by air to CM Hancock personally
for his personal information *NR 21/5/44*

SECRET

129

Doubtless
by Major
21/5/44
JSK

1930

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SECRET.

Ref: 530/8/GA.

28th April 1944.

Subject: Knights of Liberty.

To : Commander in Chief,
Headquarters,
Allied Armies in Italy.

1. I have to bring to your attention the formation of a movement in Sicily known as the Knights of Liberty.
2. The movement was brought to the notice of the Regional Commissioner in Sicily and G.O.C., No.1 District by the High Commissioner in Sicily and the Italian Corps Commander, General Mariotti.
3. The High Commissioner had received a communication from the Italian Government directing him to encourage the movement in Sicily. The object was stated to be the formation of volunteer units to fight side by side with the regular forces: the Italian Military authorities, according to the communication, intended to afford it assistance with a view to its eventual employment with the regular Italian army and the commander was to be a Regular Army Officer.
4. General Mariotti in reporting the matter to G.O.C. No.1 District, stated that the head of the organisation was a certain Lt.Col. Parolli (Alberto) (a prisoner of war believed to be on parole) who had declared that he had 12,000 volunteers and that the Allies had given their approval and had promised arms, uniforms, equipment and rations. General Mariotti asked the G.O.C. for instructions on the matter before sanctioning enrolment and asked the Italian High Commissioner to delay action.
5. I have received no previous information about this movement and the Regional Commissioner states that G.O.C., No.1 District has received no instructions. At the same time he tells me that I.R.S., Palermo, received telegraphic instructions from S.O.S., A.F.S.G., to issue 150 uniforms to members of the movement in order that they could promote recruitment throughout the Island. Reference to your G.S.I. Branch confirms that your Headquarters has no information.

1280/5/6
Noted
H

11931

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-2-

6. The movement is causing great uneasiness in official circles in Sicily where it is not unnaturally assumed to be connected with the separatist movement in the island. Unrest in the units of the Italian Army in Sicily has been caused by stories of high pay promised to recruits and a rival unauthorized volunteer movement has now started.

7. In principle I am strongly opposed to the movement. The Italian Government will be fully occupied in reorganizing and equipping their regular army. Subsidiary irregular forces are unnecessary and dangerous, particularly in Sicily.

8. I therefore ask your approval to tell Marshal Badoglio that no encouragement or assistance will be given to the movement by the Allied Nations and that these should be similarly withheld by the Italian Government who should take steps to stop the movement.

9. If you agree you will presumably take up with AMB the question of cancelling the instructions issued to I. A. S.

NOEL MARKIN MACPHERSON,
Lieutenant General,
Chief Commissioner.

Copy to: ACC LO, HQ AMB.

1932

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SUBJECT: Knights of Liberty.

27 April 1944.

TO : Executive Commissioner.

1. Region I forwards copy of an instruction from the High Commissioner of Sicily to the Prefects to facilitate this movement in all the Provinces in Sicily by broadcasting propaganda etc.
2. The "Knights of Liberty" appear to be volunteers of ~~an~~ political party who wish to fight the Germans. H.E. S. Musotto appears to think they may be useful as volunteer units to fight by the side of regular forces. The numbers at present are about 12,000.
3. They have nothing in the way of equipment and it is said that the Italian High Command say the Allies have given their approval and promised arms, uniforms, rations etc., if the movement is recognized by the Italian Government.
4. Col. Hancock appears very sceptical of the whole movement and I confess I am in agreement with him. The matter would appear to have been fostered by the U.S. Army, OSS and OES and it looks from para 5 of Col. Hancock's letter as if they have given some very doubtful cover to the movements of one of the agents of this Society.
5. The matter has now come to a head with the formulation of plans for a publicity campaign in the near future. It seems that the matter may be taken up with General Heydeman when he is here. Meanwhile I am making enquiries from GSI through Major Friend James as to what is known by them of this Society. | passed to
Eg. 5 order

G.W.I. Shipp
G.W.I. SHIPP
Lieut. Col.

Executive Commissioner:

Further enquiries by Major Friend James reveal that GSI know nothing of this society. In para. 9 on page 3, Colonel Hancock states that IBS received a signal from SOS, AFHQ, to issue certain official uniforms of the American Army to members of this society. This office confirmed this with Colonel Hancock on the phone yesterday.

G.W.I. Shipp
G.W.I. SHIPP
Lieut. Col. 126
28/4/44

1933

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5.

Dr. Col. Shapard

Before referring to Army Sp. for Army, and
to see the file & perhaps Ex. Plan.

Si 2664.

1934

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25 APR 1944 313 *C.A. Br (Ex. Office)*
SECRET

ALLIED CONTROL COMMISS. ON
SICILY REGION HEADQUARTERS
APO 394

FILE:RC/322

22 April 1944

SUBJECT: Cavalieri della Liberta'
(Knights of Liberty)

Action at 748

TO : Executive Commissioner
R.C. & M.G. Section
A. C. C.

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1. The attached copies of correspondence received from the High Commissioner for Sicily and from Generale Mariotti, Commander XII Italian Corps, will serve to introduce the military volunteer movement known as "Cavalieri della Liberta'".

2. Doubts about this movement have been expressed to me verbally by both the High Commissioner and by the Corps Commander, owing to the vague information they have so far received.

3. Neither G.O.C. 1 DISTRICT nor C.O. I.B.S. had received any official information up to a few days ago.

4. For some time I have known of a subterranean movement to recruit volunteers from SICILY: but always it has been wrapped in mystery.

5. Capitano DI BELLA, an ex-Italian air ace, to whom reference is made in Generale Mariotti's letter, made frequent visits to SICILY last winter. Each time a different project cloaked his real activity which was on behalf of this volunteer movement, which he claimed had the blessing of Generale MESSE and U.S. Army Secret Services.

6. After the transfer of SICILY to the Italian Administration and on the establishment of an Italian Air Force Group in SICILY, Capitano Di Bella was then in PALERMO and was placed under open arrest, eventually leaving the island by air under surveillance.

7. The matter has come to a head this week with the formulation of plans for a publicity campaign by manifesto, handbill and radio. From such information as I have collected this week I find that the movement was originated by *1st Lt.* Col. PAROLI, a P.W. believed to be on parole. He seems to have

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ingratiated himself with U.S. Army O.S.S. and O.E.S.

8. Previously, owing to the nature of the military tasks for which the recruits are to be trained, only limited publicity has been permitted. Now the proposal is to launch an island-wide campaign as stated above. It is further proposed that about 150 recruits should be issued with American Army uniforms but bearing a special badge or device. Recruits so dressed will then frequent parts of the island for propaganda purposes.

9. Earlier this week I.B.S. received a signal from S.O.S. A.F.H.Q. to issue these uniforms.

10. At the same time, as a result of uncertainty, another unauthorized volunteer recruiting movement has got under way with the title of "BANDE di SICILIA e SARDINIA". At its head is an undesirable GIUSEPPE FILIBERTO here in PALERMO who is said to have been a fervent Fascist and an officer of the Milizia Volontaria Sicurezza Nazionale (M.V.S.N.). This operates mainly among university students.

11. Furthermore, unrest in the Italian Army has been caused by rumours that special daily pay rates are being offered for volunteers of 100 lire for soldiers, 200 lire for N.C.Os and 300 lire for Officers.

12. No official information, instructions or directives, other than A.F.H.Q. S.O.S. uniform instruction to I.B.S. have been received by Region I A.C.C. or by 1 DISTRICT or I.B.S. Uneasiness exists in Italian circles here, and Allied commands are uncertain of the action required of them.

13. The necessary co-ordination of action by the authorities concerned appears lacking. May the necessary inquiries please be instituted so that if this movement be considered a military necessity the appropriate Allied Force assistance may be given.

14. In addition it is recommended strongly that any decisions on the matter be relayed by the Italian authorities to the High Commissioner and to the Italian Corps Commander. It would be seemly for such movement to be placed under the latter's command.

COPY TO: 1DISTRICT
I.B.S.
Pub.Saf.Div.

A. N. Hancock
A.N. HANCOCK
Lt. Colonel,
Regional Commissioner

1936

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Palermo 12 April 1944

SUBJECT: Knights of Liberty

TO : Their Excellencies the Prefects of Sicily
" A.C.C. - Regional H.Q. - Palermo
Regional Press Bureau

The following communication of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council n 2526 dated 29 March is transmitted for your knowledge and guidance:

"This Presidency has heard of a movement in Sicily called "Knights of Liberty" having highly patriotic and national ends, tending only to fight for the liberation of the Mother-Country with no political colour or purpose.

"As this movement may prove useful for the formation of volunteer units to fight by the side of regular forces, the Military Authorities intend to afford it all assistance towards constitution and training of such units, and successively towards their employ with regular Italian Army fighting units. The Commander in Chief of volunteers will be an Army officer with special qualifications for the work and he will be notified in due course to the Executive Committee by the High Command.

"In view of the above I beg your Excellency to instruct dependent Authorities to facilitate this movement in all Provinces of the Island. It will be necessary for this purpose to make use of the press, of broadcasting etc. for propaganda purposes."

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

sgd. Musotto

1937

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COMBAND XII ARMY CORPS
Ops & Organization O lce

Palermo 15 April 1944

SUBJECT: Knights of Liberty movement

TO : General Heydemann - G.O.C. 1 District - Catania
" Col. Stubblebine - G.O. I.B.S. - Palermo
" Col. Hancock - Regional Commissioner A.O.C. - Palermo
Copy to High Commissioner for Sicily - Palermo

1) The Italian High Command informs me that a volunteer movement known as "Knights of Liberty" is developing in Sicily, for enrollment of volunteers of any political party who wish to fight the Germans.

Head of the organization is Lt. Col. Paroli Umberto of the Bersaglieri and Deputy Head Capt. Di Bella Francesco Aurelio, Res. Pilot. It appears that there are about 12,000 volunteers.

2) Lt. Col. Paroli has recently informed the Italian High Command that the Allies have given their approval and promised arms, uniforms, equipment and rations if the movement should be recognized by the Italian Govt. and therefore subsequently afford a regular and effective contribution towards operations.

3) The Head of the Govt. is not unfavourable, naturally, always provided that the Allies confirm their approval, and the possibility of supplying all necessary, food, uniforms, equipment and arms to this mass of volunteers.

4) As I am informed that the organizers of the movement are preparing their notice for enrollment, I beg to be informed as to your intentions in this connection.

5) Until the Anglo-American Authorities will have informed me as to their intentions and conditions of enrollment have been decided, I do not feel that I can begin enlistment.

I therefore beg the High Commissioner to withhold, until further notice, his consent to publication of enrollment notices.

THE G.O.C.
sgt. A. Mariotti

*What's wrong with
the Italian Army?*

| 1 9 3 8 |