

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785020

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6/31/8

Liaison Notes by G. I (L) - Lt Col. Howard -

MARCH 1945

SUBJECT: Liaison Tour to Combat Groups

TO : Land Forces Sub-Com. A.C.
(M. M. I. A.) (3)

Senior Liaison Officer
Land Forces Sub-Com. A.C.
(M.M.I.A.)

G/L
27 March 45

1. MIA LO was contacted on 17 March at Rear 8 Army and between 18 and 25 March FOLGORE, FRUILLI and CREMONA Groups were seen in that order. In each case GOC, C of S and all a available regimental Comds were seen as well as O.C. ELU the G2 and DAQMG. In addition, Brigadier AQ and GSO1 (Trg) 8 Army were visited. In the Combat Groups themselves I saw several Bn and Coy Comds and talked with a considerable number of men in the line.

2. In all three ELU's visited I got the impression that they felt out of touch with HQ MIA RWE and that although they were more than pleased with the efforts made on their behalf by the MIA LO EIGHTH Army they regarded the Mission as a whole as a distant and often unenthusiastic supporter. This state of affairs can be remedied by more frequent personal contacts between heads of Branches and Services or their deputies and the ELU's, and by liaison visits of the kind I have just completed.

3. My general impression of the Groups was as follows:-

(a) Morale was almost universally excellent. There were some complaints about cigarettes, soap, the inability to get equal NAAFI and Welfare treatment with British coloured troops, and widespread and well founded complaints about the slowness of mail, but by and large Officers and Men were in excellent spirits.

Not one of the many men talked to during my visit raised the usual complaint about leave.

(b) The fighting efficiency of the Groups appeared to vary according to the length of time they had had to settle down in the line, the amount of operational success so far achieved and the handling of the Group by its respective ELU. I should say that at the time of my visit their order of merit was CREMONA, FRUILLI, FOLGORE. Whatever their fighting efficiency is by Allied Standards, there is no doubt that the first two are more than holding their own in the line and personal bravery is nowhere lacking.

(c) The opinion of the British Corps commanding the GRUPPI was in each case sympathetic and laudatory. In the case of CREMONA and FRUILLI it is generally felt that they have exceeded expectations and more than fulfilled the role for which they were originally intended. The EIGHTH Army also...

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(c) The opinion of the British Corps commending the GRUPPI was in each case sympathetic and laudatory. In the case of CREMONA and FRIULI it is generally felt that they have exceeded expectations and more than fulfilled the role for which they were originally intended. The EIGHTH Army also appears to have become more "Italian minded" than ever before as the result of the considerable success achieved by the CREMONA and the minor successes of the FRIULI.

4. The FOLGORE Group appears to be at some disadvantage as against the other two owing to the personality of its GOC and the strange and (in the words of an Italian Officer) unwilling patrimony of the NEMBO and SAN MARCO Regiments. General MORICI is an ardent parachutist and I think there is a tendency on his part to favour the NEMBO at the expense of the sailors.

5. I have no doubt at all that the personality and behaviour of the O.C. the ELU - and therefore the behaviour of his staff and training increment - have an inestimable influence on the character and success of the Group itself. I believe that the successes achieved by the CREMONA after considerable initial difficulties

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can in very great measure be attributed to the way in which Lt. Col. WEBB-CARTER has handled his Group.

6. Discipline left something to be desired in all groups and it is essential that as many Groups as possible are furnished by the Ministry of War with a Procuratore del RE.

Two of these J.A.G. representatives at any rate are indispensable for the four Groups.

I understand that once this gentleman is available the Group itself can convoke a Special Tribunal presided over either by the GOC or his 2 i/c and try and sentence men charged with gross breaches of discipline within a very short time.

Without any doubt the first Procuratore available should be sent to the FOLCORE.

7. Absenteeism and desertion has been negligible in all Groups from the moment they entered the line. This problem will arise again however when the North is liberated or when the Groups come out of the line.

8. The only Group which has absorbed large quantities of local non CESANO trained patriots is the CREMONA.

In two Bns visited they constituted between 30% and 50% of their effectives. These patriots have fought extremely well but are indisciplined and unsoldierly.

9. None of the Group HQs or ELUs appeared to know anything about the RTC ICF or to have any confidence in it. The last arrivals from CESANO with the FRIULI were badly clothed and ill-trained.

All Group HQ wanted to run their own reinforcement centre just in rear of Divisional Area. I told them that there could be no question of this but I strongly recommend that CESANO be run on the lines of an IRTD with a Bn for each Group and one Naval Coy (for the SAN MARCO) commanded by an officer designated by the GOC Group with whom he would be in direct contact regarding officer and other reinforcements.

As in my own Guard's IRTD this would foster unit esprit de corps and would in no way affect specialist or other courses nor would it mean that if an officer of the FRIULI Bn was needed with the LEGNANO he would not be posted there.

If a Group was about to undertake offensive operation involving greater expected losses than could be replaced by the normal calling forward of reinforcements from CESANO it should form its own LOB to deal with the situation.

10. The problem of replacing indifferent officers or officer casualties is very serious.

It can be solved only by bringing back to ITALY a certain number of POW Officers or calling for volunteers from IS Divisions and other ER-ITI and ITI-ITI Units.

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At the moment it is almost impossible to give an inefficient officer "the sack" as there is no guarantee of early replacement by someone better.

11. I attach as Appendix "A" a list of queries and recommendations which require action.

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H. A. C. Howard

Lt. Col., G. S.
Military Mission Italian Army

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VARIOUS PROBLEMS OF GRUPPI DI COMBATTIMENTO
REQUIRING ACTION BY M.M.I.A.

G. SD

- (a) FRIULI do not require any more reinforcements from CESANO at present.
- (b) 51 BLU put up a letter to Canadian Corps some time ago regarding the unsuitability of whereby a man can be made to pay for loss or damage to equipment up to 100% by the Ita consider that since the man would be unable to pay for certain valuable equipment only years this would deter him in his carelessness and therefore the regulations fall in loss or damage to valuable equipment. A copy of this letter was NOT sent to MIA but examined please.
- (c) A Staff Capt Q for each ELU is recommended. This has been proposed before and turned -tion be reopened please. FOLGORE have been lent one by 13 Corps.

"G"

- (a) The quality of the Italian "Macedonia" cigarettes was loudly complained of. Would it soldiers first priority over civilians with better cigarettes such as "Milit".
- (b) The cigarette and soap position is better but needs watching on the 5 Army Front. T distribution of 2 cigarettes per head for the first seven days it was in the line. had no soap issue for 52 days.
- (c) I strongly recommend that officers be allowed to retain their one suit of battle-dress -ing is withdrawn. They have almost universally taken great pains to have their ba -usted and I feel they should be allowed to keep them (against payment if necessary) 1 suffer the indignity of having to hand them in. I have suggested this to MIA LO 8 up to Corps.
- (d) Are FOLGORE and LEGNAND indenting on 231 Div for caps badges of rank etc? If not could Increment 5 Army understand the channels and inform all concerned.

"A"

- (a) I strongly recommend that Major MONICO be allowed to remain with the FOLGORE Gp indefinitely and delicate situation existing in the Gp. I will report on the situation after my n
- (b) Major CAREW HUNT is likely to request the following additions to his staff in the near
 - (i) Capt NEWTON to 13 Corps at a later date and as a result of likely British Increment 5 Army.
 - (ii) Another LO for assignment 5 Corps when latter moves.
 - (iii) Another clerk.

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785020VARIOUS PROBLEMS OF GRUPPI DI COMBATTIMENTO
REQUIRING ACTION BY M.M.I.A.Appendix "A" to MMIA Senior LOs
letter G/L of _____ March 45

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Canadian Corps some time ago regarding the unsuitability of the present regulations to pay for loss or damage to equipment up to 100% by the Italian Government. They would be unable to pay for certain valuable equipment only over a period of many years in his carelessness and therefore the regulations fail in their object of preventing the equipment. A copy of this letter was NOT sent to MMIA but may the position be

*We have
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"A" (Contd.)

- (c) There appears to be a discrepancy between British Directive No. 13 (Combat Groups). The former strikes a man off the posted strength after 15 days absence and the latter checked please.
- (d) ✓ May the "rail problem" be examined thoroughly please. The bottleneck appears to be in the censorship office in NAPLES.

Have

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tvb.

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Sheet

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NAILES.

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