

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

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opened

June

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6/30/5 Gruppi Reports.

opened June 23, 1945. Closed Aug. 10, 1945

June - Aug. 1945

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CONFIDENTIAL

Lt-Col. A.W. GIBSON
56 HLU. CEF.
DO

10 Aug 45.

Dear General

I have very little to add to my letter of 26 July. We are still in the same locations, and the very large majority of the Group are engaged on security duties. I think that on the whole things are going well, but I wish we could get more work out of the officers.

The Commander of 60 Sub Area spent a day last week with units of the Group, and was favourably impressed.

At long last my plan for withdrawing surplus equipment to a Group dump is about to be put into effect.

Vehicle maintenance is still bad. I have formed a maintenance inspectorate of a British officer and two NCO's, who tour the units and try to keep them up to the work. This will be easier when a proportion of vehicles have been withdrawn.

I am trying to fight the practice of carrying civilians in WD vehicles. The trouble is that I get no support from senior officers, who do it themselves.

I have sounded General Bologna on the question of whether the Italians will do their duty in a civil disturbance. He believes that they will, and I have no evidence to support a contrary view, but of course it remains to be seen.

Absence is low. 53 in June and 47 in July.

I am looking forward to the conference in ROME, and to hearing news of the future policy for the Groups.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Gibson

Major General L. Browning CB CBE MC
MGLA.

Copy to :-

Major General E.P. Nares CBE MC
Comd 2 District.

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DATE	16/5

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6503 (ED) _____
6504 (W) _____
6505 (AD) _____
6506 (GAA) _____
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785020

Dear

General

I am afraid this letter is overdue, but we have just made a move,

The Group is now under command 2 District. Locations are as

VARAZZE
PIACENZA
SAVONA
COMO

The Group is taking over a great number of guards, and is training for Internal Security duties. We are glad to have left RUMINI, and the depressing atmosphere of the PW Cages. Most of the men are well housed, near the sea or Lake COMO, and I am hoping that they will settle down happily.

The HLU is slowly reducing itself. Macnab, (Training Increment) has returned to his battalion, Pilkington, (Signals) has been posted, and Gentle, (RE) is at home on LIAP. We have two good villas by the sea, and are "multo contento".

I do not think that morale has altered much in the last few weeks. It is neither good nor bad. As always, such trouble as there is, is due far more to the officers than to the men.

We moved across Italy in our own MT. The road discipline of the 114 Inf Regt was appalling, that of the remainder was very good.

I hope to see you on August 5th.

Yours Sincerely

Major General L. Browning CB OBE MC
MMA.

7360
(Drafted by
Lt Col Gibbon)

An interesting intelligent report which
takes most of our blues with a little
-dictory in places. The weakness of the
report is that it looks at the question
through purely British eyes. It is
(because they don't do it their way)
it is wrong - sort of thing! & makes
little allowance for Latham's character
or background. It is also "dumb"
even after the event - which day
-one case by! However, it is useful
Keep it till we get down to the
-Garnison the real point - we will
draw. Then, as I see it, we will
put an official paper to Mr.
of W. Starting we already have
our proposal - to remedy -
Washington and the whole new
design between us.

A.B.
10 July 45

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design between us.

A.B.
10 July 45

[Signature]
10 July

G.I.(L) To Gen. B.
X B X 10/7.

held
10 July

(R) 10 July

7359

Subject :- Report on Combat Group MANTOVA.

SECRET

MMA. (6)

56 HLU
1 G

29 June 45

Copy to :- RTG ICF. (2)
1 District. (2)
DIT. (4)

Gen. - *[Signature]*

PART I - GENERAL

OBJECTS.

1. The objects of this report are :-

- (a) To estimate the degree of success achieved in preparing the Group for war.
- (b) To record any lessons which might be useful in the event of a similar enterprise being undertaken with some other army.
- (c) To assess the value of the Combat Group as a basis for the post war Italian Army.

BRIEF HISTORY.

2. In September 1945 the MANTOVA Division formed part of the garrison of CALABRIA. In November 1944 it was moved to the S. GIORGIO area, and 56 HLU was attached to it. By 1 Jan 45 it was nearly complete in personnel, a small training and maintenance scale of British equipment had been issued, a small of Italian officers and NCO's had been trained in British weapons. Serious training began with the New Year, but was hampered by bad weather, inadequate equipment, and poor living conditions. The equipping of the Group began early in March, and was almost complete by 15 April, when the Group moved to the area RAUDA near SIENA. By 2 May, when the war in Italy ended, the move had been completed, and the programme of training for a holding role had been finished except for two final exercises. It is thought that the Group could have been ready for battle a few weeks earlier if equipping had begun at the end of January.

SUMMARY OF TRAINING.

3. The operational roles for which the Group was to be trained were defined by the DIT as follows :-

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SUMMARY OF TRAINING.

3. The operational roles for which the Group was to be trained were defined by the DFT as follows :-
- (a) To take over a defensive sector on the Italian front, and carry out an active defence.
 - (b) After experience in that role to participate in attacks in conjunction with Allied troops.

4. Particulars of training by arms are shown below in the report on each arm. The policy of the HLU was to leave the Italian commanders to train their own troops by Italian Army methods.

The part played by the British officers was :-

- (a) To instruct in British methods when Italian methods were inapplicable with British equipment.

(b) To instruct in tactical and technical methods which were developed since 1945, when the majority of Italian officers lost contact with modern military thought.

(c) To advise Italian officers in overhauling such parts of the operational and administrative system as were found to be out of date and inefficient.

5. The "all arms" aspect of training was conducted as follows :-

(a) A series of cloth model discussions was held, to decide standard layouts and methods for :-

Tactical layout of the Group in defence.
Administrative layout of the Group in defence.
Signal Plans.
Layout of Main and Rear HQ.
Etc.

The conclusions reached were recorded and issued to the Group. The cloth model appeals to Italian officers and was most successful as a method of instruction.

(b) A series of exercises was held, with and without troops, including signals exercises based on the above layouts.

NOTE :- In view of the static role defined in para 3 above, mobile exercises were not practised above battalion level.

(c) The final exercise was to have been a defensive exercise, lasting four days, in which the whole Group was to take part, and in which reliefs in the field were to be carried out.

(d) In addition a good deal of miscellaneous training was carried out including :-

- (i) Recce and written orders by Group HQ.
- (ii) Lectures and training films.
- (iii) Demonstrations by the CMC.

6. The problem of instruction in driving and maintenance was a very big one. Several hundred drivers had to be trained, and the number of vehicles for instructional purposes was inadequate. Driving schools were formed, which visited units in turn. The policy was, first to "brush up" and "pass out" men with some previous experience, and afterwards to train beginners until they were safe on the road, leaving their final training to be carried out under unit arrangements.

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Layout of Main and Rear
Etc.

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7. Except for a small number of officers, the state of training in December 1944 was very low, but the great majority of all ranks worked with enthusiasm and the standard reached was satisfactory. It is thought that had the war continued through the summer the Group would have carried out a holding role with success. The short term policy of the BLU has not, however, eliminated the following weaknesses :-

- (a) Inability of senior Italian officers to grasp the fundamental defects in their military system.
- (b) Failure to delegate authority.
- (c) Failure to concentrate supporting arms and administrative resources.

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(d) "Rank consciousness". Examples :-

- (i) Senior officers consider it derogatory to take orders from staff officers of a higher formation who are junior to them in rank.
- (ii) Commanders will not accept technical advice from Medical Officers, Signal Officers etc.
- (iii) A competent British-trained officer is sometimes suddenly superseded by the posting of a senior officer who has no knowledge of British methods.
- (e) Failure to insist on adequate professional standards. Commanders sometimes show great reluctance to remove an inefficient subordinate.
- (f) Failure to insist on compliance with orders. An Italian commander is apt to think that his duty is done when he has issued an order. Officers rarely make thorough inspections to ensure that their orders are carried out.
- (g) Weak power of command of officers. Italian officers seldom understand that the way to treat men is to treat them well but strictly, and to arrange alternating periods of hard work and complete rest. Instead, they are apt to neglect their wants, and treat them softly.
- (h) The complete absence of a staff system as understood in the British Army.
- (i) Low standard of junior officers. The great majority are in every way inferior to those in the British Army.
- (j) Almost complete absence of good NCO's. There are a certain number of good technical NCO's, but nothing equivalent to the WO's and NCO's of the British Army.

ORGANIZATION.

8. The Combat Group is thought in the main to have been suitably organized. A larger and more complex formation would have been difficult to manage. The following comments are not exhaustive, but are intended as a guide for any future enterprise of a similar nature.
- (a) The BLD was suitably organized. Certain additional personnel were required, and were obtained without difficulty through O2E.
 - (b) Though suitable for a holding role, the Group is too small to be the basic formation of a post war army. An army composed of Groups

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(a) The BLU was suitably organized. Certain additional personnel were required, and were obtained without difficulty through O2E.

(b) Though suitable for a holding role, the Group is too small to be the basic formation of a post war army. An army composed of Groups could never take on an army composed of normal formations. *I don't agree*

(c) The following were found to be sources of weakness :-

(i) Over centralized Group HQ staff.

(ii) Distribution of 6 pr Atk guns to inf regts and bns. It is thought that an Atk Regt of one battery of 3 - 17 prs and three 12 gun 6 pr batteries would have ensured better co-ordination.

Inf always wait for own Atk guns!

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- (iii) Organization of the 25 prs. Four 8 gun batteries supporting two infantry regiments is unsatisfactory, especially as there is no provision for artillery representation at Infantry Regiment HQ.
- (iv) Inclusion of the Signal Coy in the Engineer Battalion.
- (v) Organization of the Provost in two independent sections, with no Provost HQ, increases the difficulty of traffic control.

It is thought that the policy of ensuring simplicity by interfering as little as possible with the existing Italian organization was a sound short term policy. It is, however, thought that such serious weaknesses as those named above should not have been accepted.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Non sense I don't agree, the whole thing was a compromise

9. In December 1944 the administrative staff and units shared the general defects of the rest of the Combat Group. In particular they suffered from :-

- (a) Inability to organise on a divisional level.
- (b) Failure to appreciate the importance of concentrating their resources.
- (c) Refusal to accept responsibility.
- (d) Lack of "drive", in submitting indents or following up temporary non-availabilities.
- (e) The fact that the services units are regarded as **very inferior** to any of the arms.
- (f) In addition they were faced with a great problem due to the complete reorganization of nearly all the service units. The S & T Coy, Carabinieri Sections, Ordnance Field Park and the Medical Sections were all on a modified British establishment. The stores and equipment they were handling, the system of accounting, supply, replacement and evacuation were foreign and bore only a slight resemblance to their own far less adaptable organization.

10. Training was therefore directed to remedying the chief faults outlined above.

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- (b) Exercises were held for all ranks, and later, when vehicles and equipment were received, these took place on the ground.
- (c) Technical training of all kinds was started and courses held both inside and outside the Group. A great deal of outside assistance was readily forthcoming from the RASC, RAOC, REIT and RMC.
- (d) Unit administrative staffs and personnel of the infantry and artillery were all trained in the new methods of supply.

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- (e) Every effort was made to enhance the prestige of the service units in the eyes of the rest of the Group by a series of demonstrations.
- (f) By reorganization both of the Army HQ and Regimental Staffs it was possible to decentralize to some extent and to force junior officers to accept a greater amount of responsibility.

11. A good measure of success was attained in the service units themselves and these soon became capable of maintaining the Group with little difficulty. On the other hand it rapidly became obvious that it was well nigh impossible to train the administrative personnel of the arms (Artillery, Infantry and Engineers) in their duties. This was due to the fact that all "AQ" functions are regarded as rather degrading and for this reason are allotted to the less intelligent and able officers.

The role of Adjutant in a bn will be allotted to an inefficient Coy Commander. It is thought that to make a success of administration in the post war Italian Army the following points require to be stressed in training.

- (a) A complete reorganization of the system of supply which eliminates the present rigid Regimental Depot system.
- (b) The importance of all service units, and the fact that without them the fighting troops are as helpless as if they were disarmed.
- (c) The importance of the staff and commanders accepting and putting into effect the advice of the technical officers e.g. Medical, ETC.
- (d) A complete clean up of the Commissariat Corps. This Corps appears to be very out of date and slack and is further tied down by an endless amount of paper work. It deals with nearly all articles both of permanent and consumable supply with the exception of ammunition, vehicles and weapons. From the experience gained with this Combat Group it would appear that this system is unsatisfactory and that the Commissariat Corps should be broken down into clearly defined sections in order to deal with the various commodities and stores handled. The old system of ammunition supply through the Artillery has been superseded in this Group, but only a temporary method is now in use which is not altogether satisfactory, and will obviously require amendment. The Ordnance Corps has had immense success and the British system of supply of vehicles and stores has both interested and been understood by the Italians.

- (e) The training of all officers of the services who are to occupy important positions on Divisional, Corps etc staffs at a school where the principles of war and the problems of the various arms are taught and discussed with members of the fighting arms present. This should overcome the system, only partly amended in this Group, where a service unit officer

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- (f) The formation of a large reserve of technicians. It has been found that very few of the Italian officers or NCO's have the mechanical sense which can now be associated with nearly all Allied officers and NCO's. They lack not only the knowledge, but also the desire to acquire the skills necessary to operate and maintain the instruments and machines now at their disposal.

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(g) Lastly impressing on the services that their responsibility is not only supply, but in an emergency they must be prepared to assist the fighting troops in combat. For this reason every man must be kept in touch with the up to date situation and be trained to use his weapons effectively. On the other hand the officers of the various arms must be made to realise their administrative responsibility towards their men and be taught to accept only the best possible living conditions. They must also be made to demand the highest possible standards of hygiene, cleanliness, and care of arms and equipment from the soldiers under their command.

CONCLUSIONS.

12. It is believed that battle would have proved that the Group is now trained for the operational role given in para 3.

13. It is thought that apart from the comments in para 8 (c), the plan for organizing and training the Group was sound.

14. It is thought that the Group is not a sound basis for the post war Italian Army for the following reasons :-

Conclusions
(a) The Group is not a Division, and is unsuitable for the "general purposes" of war. (It is, however, thought that Italian officers are not at present capable of training and handling full size divisions).
(b) The weaknesses in para 8 (c) are fundamental faults of organization and cannot be accepted in a modern army.

15. The real weakness of the Italian Army is its officers. There is good material in Italy, but for a long term policy, the following steps are thought to be essential :-

- (a) A thorough "purge" of the senior ranks.
- (b) A Staff College which will introduce vigorous modern military thought in to the army.
- (c) A cadet school to build up a supply of young officers of a good type.
- (d) A complete overhaul of the administration and Staff system of the army.

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PART II - LESSONS BY ARMS

16. Artillery.

Proficiency. Considering the paucity of training equipment in the early stages, the proportion of untrained recruits and the late arrival of vehicles, the personnel of this Regiment have shown a high degree of enthusiasm to reach their present state of training.

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No. 10 RA Training Team before the formation of the Combat Group, and the School of Artillery since, have made it possible for them to adopt British weapons and to a certain degree British methods.

Experience alone will teach co-operation with the infantry, and speed in producing fire. Fire has been produced quickly and accurately, but the old Italian traditions die hard, and the urgency of well timed and adequately concentrated fire is not appreciated.

The ability of the anti-tank and anti-aircraft detachments is reasonably good but their respective co-ordinations have not been tested.

A firm and impartial discipline and the punishment of officers and NCO's rather than men for avoidable mistakes and losses has reflected itself unmistakably in this Regiment. A fair standard of welfare has resulted, also a negligible degree of loss of clothing and equipment, a fair standard of discipline on the roads, and a reasonably low proportion of absentees.

The most serious defect in the organization is the failure of the WE to provide any mechanics for repair of and fault finding in vehicles, other than the regiment's LAD.

17. Engineers.

(a) Standard of Training Achieved.

- (i) Policy. The engineer training policy laid down by AFHQ was that the engineer units should receive training only in the use of British equipment with which they were not familiar and that they were not to be trained in RT, Mechanical Equipment or Wet Bridging. In other respects the units were to be considered as trained. In practice the task was much more difficult and by the time the units were reorganized to the new WE they were virtually new and had to be trained from scratch.

- (ii) Method. Training was carried out by Italian officers and NCO's who had attended courses at the School of Mechanical Engineering. The number of trained instructors were not considered suitable for Combat Group Engineers, showing that the original selection had not been done with sufficient thoroughness.

- (iii) Syllabus. Training carried out was :-

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- (iii) Syllabus. Training carried out was :-

1. Line Warfare.
2. Elementary Dry Bailey Bridging.
3. Fieldworks and Roadworks.
4. Demolitions and use of British Service Explosives.
5. Driving and Maintenance of Vehicles.
6. General Military Training including Weapon Training.

- (iv) Conclusion. It is considered that the task of training the engineers has been achieved i.e. they are trained sufficiently to be able to operate in a defensive role. They are not capable of mobile operations.

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(b) Suggested Improvements in Training for the Future.

- (i) Discipline. The principle cause of the shortcomings of the engineer units is bad discipline, resulting in bad organization in training and works. Any future training must be designed to obviate this fundamental failing.
- (ii) Training. Generally the Italian officer has very little idea of how to train his men. Officers and NCO's will have to be more thoroughly trained at Military Training Establishments before this can be improved.
- (iii) Junior Officers and NCO's. The present standard is poor. Junior officers are quite well informed but they lack the drive to put their ideas into practice. NCO's are very poor. Steps should be taken to produce a much improved type of Junior officer and NCO.

(c) Engineers in Post War Italian Army.

The present organization is unsuitable for divisional engineers. Suggested improvements are :-

- (i) Engineers and Signals should be completely separate.
- (ii) CRE should have adequate staff.
- (iii) Transport of Field Coys should be increased to equal the British scale to make them completely mobile.
- (iv) Field Coys should be equipped and trained in RT and Mechanical Equipment.
- (v) Training should commence from the beginning with individual training. Sappers must learn to be soldiers first.

18. Signals.

(a) Degree of Success Achieved in Preparing the Group for War.

- (i) Training. It was found that the majority of Signal personnel (Signal Coy personnel and Regimental Signallers) were already partially technically trained. The training undertaken consisted therefore for the major part, of training in the use of British equipment.

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- (ii) Equipment. All individual training was successfully completed and on exercises held to date communications have proved satisfactory.

(b) Equipment.

Equipping of the Group with Signal equipment, was satisfactorily completed.

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(c) Lessons Learned.

- (i) The major change considered essential is the splitting of the Signal Coy from the Engineer Battalion. The Signal Coy can never function properly in action as a coy of the Engineer Battalion, nor can one officer be expected to cope with the work of a CRE and a Comd Signals.
- (ii) The Combat Group staff are not sufficiently signal minded. They do not understand the correct use of the signal communications at their disposal. Consequently liaison between staff and signals has been poor. It is felt however that this would have greatly improved after a period in the line.
- (iii) The question of repair of signal equipment has been very pressing throughout owing to the shortage of trained instrument mechanics. It is thought that if the Group had gone into action it would have been necessary to call upon a RME Telecom Section to assist with the repair of Signal equipment.

(d) Value as a Basis for the Post War Italian Army.

- (i) It is thought that the training given to the Signal Coys in the various Combat Groups and the experienced gained by those that have been in operations will prove invaluable after the war.
- (ii) Before the signals in the post war Italian Army can however be satisfactory it is considered that the under mentioned are essential :-

The formation of a separate Signal Corps and the setting up of a Signal Training Centre for training officers and OR's. It is thought that the best of the officers from the Signal Coys of the five Combat Groups could form a cadre of instructors for the Signal Training Centre.

The organization of the Signal Corps on British lines e.g. Divisional Signals, I of C Signals, etc.

A complete revision of the present train of thought as regards signal communications in the field.

The latest views of signals in the field should be taught

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The organization of the Signal Corps on British lines e.g. Divisional Signals, L of C Signals, etc.

A complete revision of the present train of thought as regards signal communications in the field.

The latest views of signals in the field should be taught at the Italian Staff College. Signal training should be an integral part of all officers' training.

Development of signal equipment for the Italian army. The Italian signal equipment for field use is in many cases cumbersome and obsolete.

19. Infantry.

(a) Standard Achieved.

(i) The Group has reached the standard laid down in IWT directive. It is now sufficiently trained to take over and hold a sector, and would, after battle experience be capable of participation in attacks with limited objectives.

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- (ii) Defence has been much emphasized during training. Commanders have been taught to think along safe lines. Glaring weaknesses of the Italian systems have been eradicated.
- (iii) Senior officers are slow to convince and retain a sneaking regard for Italian methods.
- (iv) Junior officers are generally bright and keen and anxious to demonstrate that Italians are just as good soldiers as the British. They realise (the senior officers do not) that antiquated methods and lack of foresight and planning contributed more to their defeat than antiquated equipment and lack of tanks and guns.
- (v) NCO's are poor compared with British equivalents, they have no disciplinary control over their men. Much time is wasted in chatter and argument on parade. Off parade NCO's fraternise with inevitable "loss of face".
- (vi) The rank and file are extremely hardy. They are mostly witty and keen. They show interest in their new weapons and equipment. Technically they learn fast. Mortars, wireless etc are great hobbies to the men and they work excellently to perfect themselves. They show the normal soldiers aversion to drill but are none the less capable of enormous feats of labour on very little food.

(b) Methods.

- (i) The system adopted in training has proved a success. The six majors were each charged with a battalion and in addition each major was put at the head of a school or department i.e. Carrier School, Mortar School, Subalterns TWTS, Senior officers TWTS, Junior Leaders Course etc. In this way there was continuity of thought and action between the specialists and the battalions.
- (ii) Group schools were run for specialists, with the object of obtaining a level standard of training in the group, to instruct officers and ON's in the weapon and to teach the Italian instructors to use British instructional methods. All these objects have been achieved. Group schools were supervised by British officers and sergeants.

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- (iii) At a later stage the Group schools were divided into regimental schools, where advanced and tactical handling was taught.
- (iv) Finally when senior officers were considered competent all training was done at battalion level, under direct Italian supervision. The high standard of the anti-tank, mortar and carrier personnel has justified this policy.

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- (v) British NCO's were invaluable in the schools, particularly for smartening drills and for supervising care and maintenance periods.

(c) Basis for Post War Army.

- (i) The regiment is not a tactically sound organization. The HQ as at present constituted is not sound. Too much 'A' & 'Q' work is thrown on the HQ as these subjects are barely touched at Battalion HQ.

- (ii) The three company infantry battalion is unsound. Four coys could be formed from existing strength. 'A' & 'Q' must be considered at battalion level and staffs provided for this purpose.

20. Supply & Transport.

(a) Standard of Training achieved.

- (i) It is considered that the 104 Supply & Transport Coy has been trained and had developed sufficiently on British lines and system to carry out its role under active service conditions.

The biggest problem in training is to ensure that the company maintains its level at a high enough standard to enable the company to meet all commitments allotted to it.

The RASC system of vehicle maintenance and inspection, and the 16 task system has been adopted.

Technical instruction on supplies has been implemented by means of courses at the RASCWD and also by daily handling of commodities whilst engaged in the normal role of div maintenance.

It is considered that both officers and OR's of the company responded well to instruction and have displayed a high degree of enthusiasm, but a lack of initiative on the part of junior officers and NCO's, tends to produce a weakness in the unit as a whole. This weakness is principally displayed in interior economy, discipline and man management, and failure to ensure that system and drill when taught is carried out with the utmost efficiency. The OC Company, a regular soldier, has shown excellent insight and clarity in understanding

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(ii)

518 Field Bakery has had very little opportunity to work completely on British methods owing to lack of equipment and essential vehicles. The unit, however, has always functioned, by using requisitioned civilian premises, and the technical quality of their work is high.

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(b) Lessons Learned.

- (i) At first the Italians did not appreciate very clearly the true need for thorough and systemised MT maintenance. However it is now thought that the Italians are beginning to appreciate the need of such a system in relation to their own responsibilities and war role.
- (ii) It is considered that the training in British methods will not have been in vain, and if the future Italian Army is to be based on British Army principles, 104 Supply & Transport Coy will have a firm foundation on which to develop.

21. Medical.

(a) Equipping.

Equipping was complete to scale and sufficient to enable medical services to function efficiently in the field.

(b) Medical Officers.

The majority had war experience, but suffered from an inferiority complex and were considered by officers of other services to represent only a "Doctor" and not an officer capable of performing regimental duties.

The ADMS previously had very little authority and played very little part in organizing his units e.g. siting unit locations. Regimental Medical Officers lacked sufficient authority to advise regiment and battalion commanders. Appeal to the ADMS in cases where regimental commanders refused advice made very little difference.

Taking into account the short time available, attempts to increase the authority of the ADMS and MO's generally, were satisfactory and promising. Satisfactory progress in instructing officers was also made in the following subjects :-

- (i) Tactical considerations in siting units.
- (ii) Map reading.
- (iii) Interior economy.
- (iv) Welfare of men.
- (v) The officers responsibility for the care, maintenance and inspection of unit vehicles and weapons.

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(c) Hygiene and Sanitation.

This at first was bad and it was found necessary to take the following steps :-

- (i) To bring home the necessity for stringent rules for hygiene and sanitation where large bodies of men are concerned.
- (ii) To instruct all concerned in even the most elementary precautions.

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- (iii) To ensure that regimental officers realise their responsibility to the CO for all hygiene and sanitation orders issued by the ADMS through the Group HQ.
- (iv) To ensure that the ADMS had sufficient authority on the HQ staff to enforce orders.

Very satisfactory progress was made in this direction. The present ADMS understands the need for stringent precautions and has succeeded in raising the standard of hygiene and sanitation in the Group to a satisfactory standard.

(d) Medical OR's.

The majority have had war experience, and in most cases little training was necessary to bring them to a satisfactory standard. The average soldier was found to be an enthusiastic trainee. At first they were content to live under very bad conditions. They have now been shown a new standard comparable to that existing in the British Army, but it is thought that they will retain this standard only if they are forced to do so by the presence of British trained officers.

(e) General Medical Organization.

The organization is now such that the medical units could support the Group satisfactorily and efficiently in the field.

(f) Lessons Learned.

- (i) Ranks of Medical Officers. It is thought that the rank of the ADMS could well be increased to that of Lt-Col, and the SMO's to regiments, OC's Medical Section and hospitals should carry the rank of major.
- (ii) The OR's are capable and willing, provided they have a good type of officer.
- (iii) It is thought that MO's should receive current publications in same form similar to the British "Army Medical Bulletin".
- (iv) At present senior medical officers are not staff trained and until they are no real progress can be expected.
- (v) It is thought that instead of a hygiene and anti-malaria platoon attached to the medical section, a separate hygiene and anti-malaria section should be formed commanded by a major.

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(g) Value as Basis for Post War Italian Army.

It is thought that the majority of medical officers, especially the ADMS have learned about and appreciate British methods. If the post war Italian Army is to be based on the British Army it is felt that with further staff college experience these officers would be of value in forming such an army.

Similarly the medical units who have absorbed to a certain extent British methods, should have their value in forming the new army.

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22.

Ordnance.

Standard of Training Achieved.

- (a) The training of the OPF has proceeded satisfactorily and it is considered that they could function reasonably well in an operational role.
- (b) Officers, clerks and storemen attended a 14 day course at the RAOC School of Instruction, the results being most beneficial.
- (c) In the event of a similar enterprise being undertaken in future it is essential that two officers be trained in administrative duties, similar to those of DAPOS, one being responsible for Vote 9 Stores, the other for Vote 7 & 8 Stores.
- (d) Great stress has been placed on interior economy, unit sanitation, care and maintenance of arms and equipment and it is felt that this, with the British system of supply in the field will be of value in the formation of the post war Italian Army.

23.

Mechanical Engineers.

- (a) The Mechanical Engineer units have been mobilised to approximately 90% of personnel, the main deficiencies being skilled technicians who are not available from any source at present, e.g. Radio Mechanics, Electricians, Instrument Mechanics etc. The remaining personnel have adapted themselves easily to British equipment and methods.
- (b) British equipment, tools and machinery lorrys have been received practically to scale, the only serious substitution is 30 cwt breakdown vehicles in lieu of the 5 ton type.
- (c) The lack of experienced engineering and workshop officers and warrant officers is apparent and a strong OC workshop would ease the responsibility of the Group Chief Mechanical Engineer.
- (d) The LAD's have not been mobilised any length of time but given the necessary information, as the workshops of their respective regiments and units, they should function satisfactorily.

24.

Cerebiniere.

- (a) Of all the units of the Combat Group the Cerebiniere are probably the unit which responded the most to British methods of organization, discipline and training. The Cerebiniere Regiment is the equivalent to our Corps of Military Police, but was not formerly responsible for traffic control, only for discipline and field security. Traffic control was the task of the Cerebiniere.

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- (b) Training was therefore directed to the following points :-
- (i) Traffic control and route signing.
 - (ii) Disciplinary duties.
 - (iii) The achievement of a high standard of turn out and discipline.

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(b) contd. The sections were instructed by a Cpl of the QIP lent by the Provost Marshal's office AMB and this NCO stayed with sections for six weeks. A high standard of training was achieved especially in (i) and (ii) and the units were inspected by a representative of the Provost Marshal who rendered a very satisfactory report.

(c) The chief faults noticed were :-

- (i) Lack of interest in the maintenance of vehicles and weapons.
- (ii) Lack of drive in checking soldiers for minor faults e.g. saluting.
- (iii) Lower standard of intelligence in signing roads. Signs often placed in stupid places or where they are not easily seen.

On the other hand the sections maintained a high standard of :-

- (iv) Shepherding convoys along difficult routes by use of motor cyclists.
- (v) Initiative in clearing up traffic jams.

Further they command the respect of the soldiers of the Group and their presence is a big factor in maintaining good order when difficulties arise.

(d) Finally it is considered that the Carabinieri are capable of carrying out the role of British Provost in the post war Italian Army providing that :-

- (i) A higher standard of intelligence is demanded for entry into the Corps.
- (ii) That their training is brought up to date and concentrated on traffic control and disciplinary duties. At the present moment the issue is confused by the fact that they are often called on to investigate matters which could be dealt with by the SM or PSS. This type of work is too specialised to be handled efficiently by Group police and should not be included in their duties.

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Lt-Col A.W. GIBSON
56 HLJ
DO

23 June 45

Dear *General*

I have had a letter from Howard asking me to write to you once a fortnight. I wrote to Col Pidsley on 14 June, and gave him an account of our doings.

2. The Group is located in the area RIMINI - CESENA. HQ's are located as follows :- (Ref ITALY Road Map 1:200,000, Sheet 12)

Group HQ	CERVIA M6920
HQ 155 Arty Regt	SAN VITTORE 5603
HQ 76 Inf Regt	CERVIA M6920
HQ 114 Inf Regt	SANTARCANGELO 7597
56 HLJ	CERVIA M6920

3. The Group is employed on PW Guard duties, under the administrative command of 1 District, and the operational command of 21 Tr Bde Force.

4. After some initial difficulties, the Group is settling down to guard duty, and the British authorities appear to be satisfied. Discipline and morale have deteriorated since the end of the war, but things could be much worse. I think the Italians are finding British control irksome. The Group was bitterly disappointed at missing the battle, and is going through a period of reaction.

5. The two main problems are :-

(a) Equipment. The Group is overburdened with a mass of war equipment which will now never be used. I have taken up through official channels the question of withdrawing it, and I hope to receive orders in the near future.

(b) Manpower. The best contribution we can now make is to relieve the maximum number of British troops from guard duty. To do this we require reinforcements to replace men who are being demobilized. I am sending Monica to Rome to discuss this question at NATO and CESAW.

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6. Owing to the pressure of guard duties, very little training is possible.

Yours

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Major General, L. Browning CB OBE MC
MMIA.

MMIA
FILE: 6/36/5
D.T. 28/6

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