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

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G1101 Gruppi-Weekly St reps

MARCH 1945

Subject: Weekly Situation Report.

To :- Land Forces Sub Comm A.C. (MILA)

53 B.L.U.
Ref. G1/Rep/1
25 Mar 45

Herewith is weekly situation report to cover the activities of FOLGORE Group up to week ending 24 Mar 45.

1. Move to forward area. The move to forward area was satisfactory on the whole. Chief faults were as follows -

(a) Very little thought had been given to loading tables for vehicles and the Group had very little idea of what it could carry. The final result was that although eleven transport platoons were provided, a quantity of first line ammunition and other stores were left behind. The short period between the receipt of vehicles and the move was partly responsible for this.

(b) Italian kit and equipment surplus to G.1098 is still in possession of units. This and their home comforts such as beds make a tidy move impossible and unauthorised ferrying is always resorted to.

(c) Single vehicles and small parties moved separately from the authorised convoys.

(d) A final check to ensure that all vehicles have arrived is difficult and one carrier was left at ORTONA with its driver. The first information about this came from the sub area after the carrier had been there for about 10 days. Other vehicles may well be broken down in other places and a further report has just been received that six carriers of the SAN MARCO Regt are in AREZZO although the Combat Group has reported all carriers are present.

2. Take over in the line. The take over in the line went off according to plan and no difficulty was experienced. Full recon and advanced parties were sent on ahead. 6 Arm Div expressed appreciation of the way the relief was carried out.

3. Administration. Administration, as expected, proved to be the chief worry. The sector taken over was a very difficult one as the Group is divided up two difficult roads, both of which are restricted by timings, and there are no lateral communications except for one Jeep track which is for minimum essential recon and not for maintenance. Some difficulties experienced are as follows -

(a) The organisation of Group HQ again showed that the Italian General Staff would do well to reorganise on the British system. A competent 'G' rep was required at Group HQ to obtain returns of requirements of units and another equally efficient officer was required 35 miles South at Rear HQ to obtain and send forward supplies. The Group failed to do this. A complete breakdown was prevented by the efforts of the D.L. and the G.1098.

(b) Italian kit and equipment surplus to G.1098 is still in possession of units. This and their home comforts such as beds make a tidy move impossible and unauthorised ferrying is always resorted to.

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Some difficulties experienced are as follows -

(a) The organisation of Group HQ again showed that the Italian General Staff would do well to reorganise on the British system. A competent 'Q' rep was required at Group HQ to obtain returns of requirements of units and another equally efficient officer was required 35 miles South at Rear HQ to obtain and send forward supplies. The Group failed to do this. A complete breakdown was prevented by the efforts of the DADST and DADST of the HLU and the help and cooperation of 13 Corps.

(b) Returns of all kinds were difficult to obtain from the Group and were as usual quite inaccurate. 19,000 rations were overrun on ACE Route alone in the first ten days although the troops in the front line complained of shortages.

(c) G.1098 scale of cooking equipment and containers had not been completed before the Group moved into the line. Containers, especially of the one gallon size are very essential if troops are to receive any hot meals in forward positions. The Italian ration and method of cooking add to the importance of containers. Catering advisor 13 Corps was most helpful and produced a special Italian Compo ration to help with the most isolated positions in the mountains. These rations are now becoming unnecessary. The Group did not give much help in the matter, as they did little to help themselves and either ignored the situation or provided an utterly false picture of conditions in their P.D.Ls. SAN MARCO Regt were much better than ~~MEMO~~ in this matter. The latter seemed to be particularly helpless.

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4. Activities in the line. The task of the Group is to hold a wide frontage with four battalions in the line and two in reserve. Regt.-groups are based on each road and the sector which is not on the Group HQ axis, is commanded by the Group 2nd i/c. Activity consists mostly of patrolling and no organized attacks have been put in by us. The enemy have put in some minor attacks which have been beaten off.

Patrolling at present is not very vigorous and in consequence not very much information has been gained. Both Army and Corps Commanders have pressed for more activity but General Morigi's reactions are that deep patrolling can only be carried out by savages, like the Indians who have been brought up in forests and that the morale of his troops has suffered through the failure of the British authorities to equip the Group according to promises. I think, however, the matter will gradually improve as the troops gain more confidence and I consider that the lack of good officers is probably the chief reason for this failure as it is for many other faults. Four prisoners have been taken up to date, two as the result of an attack on a post held by the CAORLE Bn and two who infiltrated on a patrol behind our P.D.Ls. in the NEMBO sector.

5. Discipline. Discipline in the rear areas has been bad. Riots have occurred at ASCOLI PICENO, FOLIGNO, MARRADI and BORGO SAN LORENZO. At ASCOLI the re-inforcements of the NEMBO Regt took part with Communists in releasing agitators from prison as well as other disturbances. At the other places all incidents were against Italian women who either worked for the British or consorted with British officers or soldiers. In all cases any officers present were unable to take any effective action and in every case the first information of the incidents came through British sources. The matter has been taken up in the strongest manner with the Group Commander and it is believed that satisfactory disciplinary action will be taken. It is interesting to note that, although it must have been well known to Senior officers of the Group that incidents were likely, the means to punish offenders was lacking. A military tribunal has now been asked for.

6. Conclusion. This rather gloomy picture is due entirely, in my opinion, to the poor quality of officers, and I can never see any big improvement possible without a drastic comb out and several years of training on British lines. The Group has, however, fulfilled its commitments by taking over a very difficult portion of the line and holding it successfully. A more offensive spirit which is at present somewhat lacking, will no doubt become more evident after further experience. With regard to the BLU, the 'Q' side has been overworked and unless 13 Corps had produced a Staff Captain 'Q' and a rep from S & T the DAA&T could not have competed. A permanent Staff Captain is essential. Clerks are also below W.E. and are insufficient to cope with the flood of paper from all sides.

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Lt.Col.
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