

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

785020

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6/TR6/28 Guard Battalions

Jan. - May 1945

TOP SECRETSUBJECT: Liaison Visit Army Gp, Armies
and GRUPPI

SENIOR LIAISON OFFICER

LAND FORCES SUB-COM, A.C. (MATA)

G/4
18 May 1945TO : LAND FORCES SUB COMMISSION, A.C. (MATA) (3)

1. During the period 26 April 17 May the following Hqs were visited:
15 Army Gp, 5 Army, 8 Army, HQ MANTOVA, LEGNANO, CREMONA, FRIULI and FOLCORE
Gps, 56, 52, 51, 50 and 53 ELU's.

2. Generally speaking I found that morale was high in all of the GRUPPI with the possible exception of the MANTOVA whose officers felt depressed about the group not having entered the line. O.C. ELU's were not unduly worried about discipline, which still leaves a good deal to be desired, but they seemed to feel that it was necessary to take a strong disciplinary line now the battle was over, and this in many cases had not been done, failure being partly due to the fact that a great many men from the GRUPPI have been sent on leave to their homes in the North and also partly to the weak attitude of certain of the Commanders to enforcing discipline. All the groups did well in the final battle, but CREMONA and LEGNANO were outstanding.

All the groups were resting when visited except the LEGNANO which was carrying out an occupational role in the BERGAMO - BRESCIA Area with units dispersed from TURIN to EDILO.

The remaining groups were very anxious firstly to go North and secondly to find employment

Desertion, according to both the Italians and the ELU's, is negligible.

3. The following points were raised during my visit and are common to all the GRUPPI.

(a) The future of the GRUPPI when what might be called the second semi-operational phase (u/c Army or District) is over.

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3. The following points were raised during my visit and are common to all the GRUPPI.

- (a) The future of the GRUPPI when what might be called the second semi-operational phase (u/c Army or District) is over.
- (b) The disastrous effect that an order to move South (say to the NAPLES Area) would have on morale and discipline.
- (c) The disastrous effect on morale that any large scale "handing in" of British Arms, Equipment and M.T. would have.
- (d) Both GRUPPI and ELU's agreed that any proposal to turn the Gunner Regts into Inf Regts would be most undesirable now and into the foreseeable future. They are usually the most disciplined elements and at present the whole group would suffer if the Gunner Regts were converted with consequent loss of morale and prestige.
- (e) All Groups were worried about the possibility of finding loyal and adequate reinforcements if and when the older classes (1914-20) are demobilised and volunteers assert their prerogative of going home.
- (f) The future of the ELU's is worrying both the Italian and British HQ's.
- (g) The "leave problem" was not raised by either GRUPPI or ELU's and

- 2 -

I understand that by fair means or foul it is being satisfactorily dealt with.

4.

The following particular points for each GRUPPO were raised:-

(a) MANTOVA

This Group would benefit from a move North (see para 2) and Garrison employment. It is well trained, reasonably disciplined, and should make a good I.S. Division although it contains a fair quantity of volunteers and ex-partisans; I should say nearly a third; who might be an unstable element in case of civil disorder. As 2 District are not yet in the saddle it is difficult to foresee any immediate employment for the MANTOVA. See signal from 15 Army Group, for action 5 Army, SD 1627 of 13 May 45.

(b) LEGNANO

When I visited them the LEGNANO were fully employed in their occupational role under command 5 Army and their main concern was maintenance. Discipline in this Group is, I should say, on the whole better than in the other Groups, and this combined with the fact that it has a relatively small percentage of volunteers and Patriots in its ranks should make it an excellent and dependable formation for use in the case of civil disorders. Furthermore, it is well commanded. General UTILI did, however, stress that it would be difficult to use troops in case of civil disorder until ITALY had a properly elected Government whose orders would constitute the people's mandate for strong action against agitators or mob violence. The General also said that in the future greater attention would have to be paid to the recruits for the GRUPPI's moral qualifications (loyalty and discipline) and less to his technical qualifications.

He had no faith in CESSANO's ability to turn out good material for the Groups.

(c) CREMONA

The CREMONA has done exceptionally well in battle and is the only Group that 8 Army have retained under command for an occupational role in North Italy.

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Their main problem is discipline and the possible reaction of their volunteer and Patriot element (50% of Group) in the case of civil disturbance, although the ECU are not as worried about this angle as the General. One Regimental Commander, Colonel FERRARA, should be relieved, and a stronger disciplinarian put in instead. General PRIMERI himself is too weak with his Regimental Commanders and doesn't see that his orders are carried out. The General who had just completed a brief visit to N.W. Italy when I saw him was very anxious that propaganda in favour of the Italian War Effort generally and particularly the good work done by the GRUPPI should be carried out throughout the North which thought only of the Partisan triumph. The CREMONA should make a good I.S. Division.

(d) FRIULI

This Group appears to be improving although I should say it was of less potential use as an I.S. Div than either the CREMONA, LEGNANO or MANTOVA, and I doubt if it has overcome the defects which have characterized its progress since its formation. Poor discipline is its main problem now and General SCATTINI told me that he could not count on the loyalty of his volunteer and Patriot element (33% of the Group) in case of civil disorder.

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(a) POLCORE

This Group is in a class by itself and although it did well in battle presents many and varied problems as a peace time formation. They can be stated as follows:-

(i) In view of the reactionary political nature of the Group as a whole, of its poor discipline, instability and general aggressiveness, should it be retained as an I.S. Division, given Garrison employment in a quiet part of Italy (SARDINIA?), or broken up altogether?

(ii) Should General MORICI retain command - I have stated my views in a DO letter to General BROWNING.

(iii) In view of the possibility that the sailors, especially the officers, in the SAN MARCO Regiment may want to return to naval employment is it wise to keep this unit on I.S. or guard duties for which it is not fitted?

O.C. 53 HJ is going to investigate the feeling in the SAN MARCO and inform MMIA of the results. Lt. Col. MARTINI COS to The Division suggested that it might be wise to disband the SAN MARCO Regiment form a BERSAGLIERE Regiment instead round the battalion now in the LEGNANO and give the latter another ALPINI Battalion to form an ALPINI Regiment.

Regarding the future employment of this Division Lt. Col. MARTINI stated that in his opinion it should either be disbanded or taken firmly in hand, disciplined and "formalized".

Should it be employed on garrison and I.S. duties, he considered there would be less risk of incidents if it was widely dispersed by battalion and company which would give the men a greater sense of responsibility and less chance to perpetuate the old "NEMBO" aggressiveness.

General MORICI stated that his Division was very anti-communist and that "sarebbe ideale all'impiego contra questi elementi scoccianti".

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5 Army complained that 2 BR-ITI S.T. Coys formed at AFRAGOLA and

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5. 5 ARMY

5 Army complained that 2 ER-ITI S.T. Coys formed at AFRAGOLA and mobilised North of Rome for 5 Army arrived up without their British increment and had drawn their vehicles and organized themselves at the mobilization centre without sufficient British supervision. It was felt that more care was needed in the formation of these units.

6. 8 ARMY

(a) The disbandment of the GARIBALDI Brigade and the LIBERO Company was in hand. 8 Army had made proposals to AFHQ regarding the demobilisation of "F" Recce Sqn and the MAIELLA Bde.

Lt. Col. SMUTS G-1 Ops 8 Army felt it would be ³³12 allow all except volunteers for service of these last two units to return home.

8 Army are very sensitive about the treatment of the personnel of "F" Recce now that the battle is over as they know that they are not popular with the War Ministry and especially over the fate of Capt GUY O.C. the Sqn. This officer has had high praise from every British formation he has served under. Will MOTA please take action to see that the members of this formation and of the MAIELLA are given special consideration by the War Ministry and that their demobilization or otherwise is handled tactfully.

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7. NUCLEO "I" 8 ARMY (COLCHOUNS CIRCUS)

I saw Major COLCHOUN and Lt. Col. VILLANOVA ESCLAPON O.C. NUCLEC "I". I understand that 8 Army are now desirous of breaking up this unit of about 140 Italian Liaison Officers and Lt. Col. ESCLAPON raised the following points:-

- (a) He has about 40 English speaking officers who might still be useful to the Allies. They are all captains or subalterns and all except about 10 are "di complemento". I suggest a list of these officers be requested from MIA LO 8 Army and that they join the pool of War Ministry Interpreters and are given indefinite leave until required. The balance should be demobilized.
- (b) Patriots should be disbanded and volunteers, after careful screening, accepted for the Army.
- (c) The problem of honorary ranks for Patriot Commanders.

The O.C. commanding the GARIBOLDI Bde has been called Lt. Col. "EULO" for some considerable time by both the British and the Italians but no official confirmation of this rank has yet arrived from the War Ministry. The whole question is a delicate one, as I pointed out to ESCLAPON, because apart from undoubted merit and British recognition Patriot Coy Comds had some 30 men only in a Coy, with no other weapons than small arms, and a Bn Comd had about 150 men under his orders. Will MIA please take up the matter with the War Ministry.

8. The following various points were raised during my liaison tour:-

(a) GRUPPI

- (i) The proposed "Officers Shop" is not functioning and the problem of officer's clothes is acute.
- (ii) The pay question generally and in particular the question for specialist pay should be re-examined. Also the question of family allowances.
- (iii) A great effort should be made to get an allotment of British Sports Equipment for the Gps now that certain large formations are about to leave the country. The possibility of acquiring or making Italian footballs etc in the North should be investigated by the War Ministry.
- (iv) Replacements for non regular officers now wishing to go home is not an urgent problem but should be studied by the War

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- (iv) Replacements for non regular officers now wishing to go home is not an urgent problem but should be studied by the War Ministry. Medical officers especially are affected.
- (v) There is some divergence of view over the usefulness or suitability of the 8 Army "Donne d'Italia" Canteen workers. On the whole comment is more favourable than otherwise.
- (vi) In order to relieve boredom I feel sure great attention should now be paid in the CRUPPI to the organization of games and courses, battle schools etc for the Officers and 3011
- (b) Training
- Up to the present there has been little or no coordination over the translation and publication of training manuals, pamphlets, amendments, etc. This can now be done through G-1 Trg MIA and the War Ministry.

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- 5 -

(c) CESANO

A series of lectures by GRUEPI Officers on their own Gp's operations should be arranged for officers and OR's at CESANO. *W*

(d) PATRIOTS

Colonel SCARPA O.C. Special Regiment LEGNARO told me that he could raise a battalion of volunteers from the ex ALPINI Partisans Brigade known as the FLAMME VERDI. I have seen some of these men in the EDOLO - SONDRIO Areas and they are of a good type and, I believe, apolitical.

Lt. Col. The Hon. H.A.C. HOWARD
Senior Liaison Officer
M. M. I. A.

Typed & MMA

Authenticated L.M.G.
Hr. cl
22 May

WS

A good report
4/15
24 May

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

785020

Typed at MM/A
Authenticated *[Signature]*
Jr. cl
22 May

A good report
d/B
24 May

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 3/4
NOTES ON MEETING RE MMIA HOME 1800 hrs 12 MARCH 45

(Following S.A.C. visit to RTO CESANO)

PRESENT : Major General BROWNING, (GOC, MMIA)
 Brig SHOSMITH and Lt Col WATTS (DMT)
 Brig ANDERSON and Maj BARNES (OS Org)
 Col PINSLEY and Lt COLINLEDEX (MMIA)

1.

2. R.E.'s (TRAINING)

- (a) All officers, men and vehicles of B.T.U. at CESANO will be kept by D.M.I. for transfer to Trg branch MMIA when W.E. is approved.
- (b) D.M.I. will try to find a good G.S.O. I (Trg) for MMIA and attach until posting is authorized by W.E.
- (c) Agreed that, pending amalgamation or disbanding of trg increments and BLU's, each trg increment would work under orders of its O i/c BLU.
- (d) D.M.I. will try and send a G.S.O. II (trg) to "F" BLU from those surplus to Combat Groups and notify MMIA his name.
- (e) Special Section MMIA will take care of training matters till G.S.O. I (Trg) arrives.

3. REPatriation OF ITALIAN P.W. OFFICERS from U.K. for duty with RTO, having been agreed in principle by S.A.C., MMIA will send names, numbers and conditions to C 3 (Org) soonest. AFHQ will request repatriation by AIR (S.A.O. offered to ask 3 of 3 personally if necessary).

4. S.A.C. having agreed to examine application for Local rank of Colonel for O i/c "F" BLU., MMIA to submit recommendation.

5. S.A.C. having supported the request for extra battle dress or denim for rfts at R.T.C. G3 (Org) will take up the question of a pool of 20,000 suits and notify MMIA result

6. G3 (Org) will take up at AFHQ S.A.C.'s decision to re-examine Italian Army ration scale.

7. MMIA strong recommendations for division of responsibilities of R.T.C. CESANO were considered and have been submitted to AFHQ in writing.

- (e) Special Section MMIA will take care of training matters till G.S.O. I (Trg) arrives.

3. REPARATION OF ITALIAN P.W. OFFICERS from S.A. for duty with PT, having been agreed in principle by S.A.C., MMIA will send names, numbers and conditions to G 3 (Org) soonest. AFHQ will request repatriation by AIN (S.A.C. offered to ask 2 of 8 personally if necessary).
4. S.A.C. having agreed to examine application for Local rank of Colonel for O 1/c "F" H.U., MMIA to submit recommendation.
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6. G 3 (Org) will take up at AFHQ S.A.C.'s decision to re-examine Italian Army ration scale.
7. MMIA strong recommendations for division of responsibilities of R.T.C. CESSANO were considered and have been submitted to AFHQ in writing.
8. AFHQ awaits views of 15 Army Group before giving a ruling on MMIA proposals for the formation of patriot rescue units. It was agreed that the main object of this scheme was "to take the heat out of the problem," and that the organization should achieve that object, which has as much a political as a military flavour.
9. G 3 (Org) was asked to ensure that MMIA was kept informed of any discussions on post war Italian Army matters.
10. G 3 (Org) agreed to ensure that the GSO II (Liaison) appointment which E.E.C. proposed to transfer from MMIA to "F" H.U. as D.A.A.-MO referred only to the person of Major GILARDI and NOT to the appointment on the V.L. of MMIA, who is still required.
11. G 3 (Org) will define the new trg responsibilities of MMIA in relation to D.M.T. D.M.T. will initiate action in this respect.
12. Man management courses being organised by MMIA will be in line with similar courses at CMTC and RTC. Action MMIA to produce definite proposals for AFHQ to issue.
13. G 3 (Org) was asked to let MMIA have the revised "priority list" as soon as possible.

COPIES TO: G 3 (Org)

D.M.T.

INT: MMIA.

SECRET

Subject: M.M.I.A. - Future Planning.

Land Forces Sub Com., AG.
(M.M.I.A.)

12/5/13

Jan 45

A.F.H.Q. for G-3(Grp)

1. In addition to daily routine duties under my present charter, it is now becoming necessary to plan ahead for eventualities during the concluding phases of the war in ITALY and for the post-hostilities period. These problems, which require constant liaison with outside authorities and other post-war planning staffs cannot adequately be dealt with by M.M.I.A. Staff as at present organised or allowed me by W.S.

2. To ease the burden on my staff I have been doing a great deal of this myself, but cannot continue to do so without detriment to other commitments. I consider I need a small post-war planning section, proportionately comparable to those at other Headquarters, whose principle problems would be:-

- (a) Future liaison and relationship with Italian Military authorities.
- (b) Post-war organisation and strength of Italian Army.
- (c) Contemplated changes in administration and status of the Italian Army.
- (d) Repatriation of Italian Prisoners of War from all over the world. (See also 3(c) below).

These include a multitude of associated details which should be studied now but with which I am quite unable to deal.

3. (a) This section should stand in relation to the rest of my staff in much the same way as the ad hoc Special Section has stood over the organisation of the Combat Groups, which arrangement has worked extremely well.

(b) I should like it to be composed of regular officers who already have a knowledge of these matters and who are less likely to be affected by demobilisation.

If approved, I would particularly like to have:-

Colonel FIDLEY - who is completely au courant M.M.I.A. organisation, procedure and problems; and who has organised the Italian Combat Groups.

Major GIBSON - who similarly has a full knowledge of the working of M.M.I.A. from A/S aspect.

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This would ensure continuity. When the time came to implement their plans, the staff would become executive and continue as part of whatever post-war establishment M.M.I.A. is to have when M.M.I.A. is transformed, presumably, into a Disarmament Commission.

(c) By taking over the P.W. Section of A.C. (as already proposed by the Chief Commissioner) and other officers loaned to me by A.C. there need hardly be any overall increase in personnel.

4. I request approval in principle so that I can:-

- (a) Begin tentative reorganisation on the lines suggested.
- (b) Make formal application for a R.E.

and thus anticipate future possibilities relieving my present staff of functions not strictly within their orbit and with which they have not the time to deal.

5. I have discussed this with H.Q. Allied Commission who are in entire agreement with me.

Major General,
M.M.I.A.

3607

SECRET

Subject:- M.M.I.A. - Future Planning.

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(M.M.I.A.)

21/3/13
Jan 45

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