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

10000/120/3277

A/244/200 "Welfare" Reports

4p. 1945

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Ministry of War
Office of the welfare of the troops

Memorandum for the Minister

Report of the activity of the a/m Office during December 1945

1. Moral and material assistance:

Strong increase of the assistance under various forms (advices given, money grants, approaching other branches)

Persons received : 345

Extraordinary grant of money: L. 40.500 .

Extraordinary grants of money to various organs working for the welfare of the troops and their families .

2. Recreation assistance .

1) Theater shows: two of variety in Rome (the Mil. Territorial Commands have also provided for other shows by themselves;).

2) Film shows effected at Units being far from the towns, by autocinema and sound equipped trailer.

3) Instruments and clothing distributed to the military companies of art of the mil. territorial Commands

4) No. 10 receiving radio sets and film projectors salvaged, have been repaired;

5) 19 radios, 4 film projectors and 22 accordeons, have been distributed;

6) we have given various games (for Rest Centres, Transit Camps and as individual gifts), (bowls, draughts, Games of chess, play_cards, ping_pong and so on : total 239.

7) we have assigned sport instruments and games (42 footballs,

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Transit Camps and as individual gifts), (bowls, draughts, games of chess, play cards, ping_pong and so on: total 239.

7) we have assigned sport instruments and games (42 footballs, olympic javelins, 10 boxing gloves;

8) we have assigned reading books (2 small libraries with 134 books)

9) we have required and partially obtained free and reduced price tickets of the cinematographs, for the soldiers .

The a/m assistance was given by us; similar activity was done by the Welfare Offices of the Territorial H.Q.s and of the Pile Formations.

A/C

COL. FERRARA

MINISTERO DELLA GUERRA
Ufficio Benessere del Soldato alle Armi

Roma, li

PROMEMORIA PER IL SIGNOR MINISTRO

Sintesi sull'attività dell'Ufficio Benessere del Soldato alle Armi
nel mese di dicembre 1945

I°) - ASSISTENZA MORALE E MATERIALE:

Forte incremento della assistenza sotto varie forme (consulenza, sussidi, intervento presso altri Enti).

Persone ricevute: 345;
sussidi straordinari per £. 40.500;
contributi straordinari a vari Enti che operano a favore di militari o delle loro famiglie: £.44.000.

II°) - ASSISTENZA RICREATIVA.

- 1°) - Rappresentazioni teatrali: due di arte varia in Roma (i C.M.T. hanno inoltre provveduto ad altre per proprio conto);
- 2°) - effettuati spettacoli cinematografici presso reparti lontani dai grandi centri a mezzo di autocinema e rimorchio cine-sonoro;
- 3°) - distribuiti strumenti, vestiario per le compagnie artistiche militari dei vari Comandi Militari Territoriali;
- 4°) - riparazioni di 10 apparati radio riceventi e di apparati cinematografici recuperati;
- 5°) - distribuiti 19 apparecchi radio, 4 apparati cinematografici e 22 fisarmoniche;
- 6°) - assegnati giochi vari (per case del soldato, posti di ristoro, o per regali individuali) (bocce, dama, scacchi, carte da gioco, tennis da tavolo, ecc.: complessivamente 239);
- 7°) - assegnati giochi ed attrezzi sportivi (42 palloni foot-ball, 10 giavellotti olimpionici, 10 guanti da pugilato);
- 8°) - assegnati libri di lettura (due bibliotechine con 134 libri);
- 9°) - richieste ed in parte ottenute agevolazioni per i militari nelle sale cinematografiche (biglietti gratuiti ed a riduzione).

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Quanto sopra indipendentemente dalla analoga attività degli

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Quanto sopra indipendentemente dalla analoga attività degli Uffici ~~nesseri~~ dei Comandi Militari Territoriali e delle Grandi Unità.-

IL COLONNELLO
E/to Arturo Ferrara
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REPORT ON WELFARE TOUR
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A. MILAN TERRITORIAL HEADQUARTERS.

Personnel.

The officer trained in Welfare for this HQ has been sent "in congedo": his place has been taken by Major I.D. de Baisio, a Regular officer. He seems to have a very firm grasp of the situation, understands what he should do, and has the support of his G.O.C. (General Marras)

Major de Baisio's time is fully occupied with Welfare, and he is assisted by two civilian clerks.

Clubs, Canteens etc.

A bar and rest room is open at the Central Station. A club is being prepared in the city, premises having already been secured, and a rest camp is projected at the lakes. Securing suitable premises for the latter is difficult in view of Allied requirements, but the Carabinieri are assisting in this.

Funds.

The progress of all work is hampered by shortage of funds: what there are appear to have been wisely employed.

Discharged Soldiers.

This problem is keenly felt, and some attempt has been made to meet it. General Marras has personally asked for a grant of 15,000 for each discharged soldier: Major de Baisio runs a small employment agency, and takes whatever steps he can to assist these men to get work and accommodation etc.

General.

The co-ordinating function of the Ufficio Benessere at the War Ministry is felt and appreciated, and it is clearly understood that the ^{same} office is for all Italian towns and there is no "unit only" complex.

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REPORT ON WELFARE TOUR (continued)

B. "LA PATRIA" - MILAN

Personnel.

The Editorial Staff consists of 4: the Military Editor, and three civilians. It was claimed that the whole paper is written by these people, and that there is no outside work at all. This was a matter of some pride, and attention was drawn to a series of cartoons of the Rome Editorial Staff, numbering about twelve. I pointed out two or three different names to articles in one Milan edition, and was told that they were all the same man.

Syndication.

Articles were received from Rome, and printed; it was darkly hinted that these were written by Col. Maraldi's friends. Communication with Rome was necessarily limited to one telephone call a day, which does not appear to worry them in the least.

Pictures.

Instructions had been received from Rome to restrict the number of photographs and drawings: this is contrary to the Milan Editorial's conception of the requirements of a soldier's paper, and they said that the order was given because the Vatican thought the edition immoral.

They asked if more photographs could be made available as they had used all they had, I agreed to take this matter up.

General.

The Editorial Staff at Milan are somewhat independent, and are inclined to regard Rome control as unnecessary and aimed at lowering their edition to the dull level of Florence.

They asked that I should represent their views in the appropriate quarter.

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REPORT ON WELFARE TOUR (continued)

C. FOLGOSE COMBAT GROUP.

Personnel.

The Officer trained in Welfare duties, Lt. Cianci, has been discharged. His duties has been taken by a Captain, also due for release, assisted by a 2/Lt.

Clubs, Canteens etc.

There is attached one Mobile Canteen, provided by 8th Army, staffed by two ladies of the 8th Army Group. This is quite a good canteen, and they manage to obtain fairly good stocks of toilet requisites, stationery, etc., from Milan; these are priced quite reasonably. They have, however, great difficulty in rationing it, and while they appreciate that the allocation is necessarily small, they stated that the last allotment comprised four items only of the six authorized. I agreed to take this up with L.O. 1 District.

In Bressanone is established a rest room, but the need is not greatly felt, as the division is deployed and local inhabitants are very helpful.

Cinema Shows.

They have a mobile projector, but have recently experienced difficulty in procuring films: this is probably due to the recent change over from P.W.B. to U.S.I.S., and I shall enquire of the latter service as to the present position.

General.

The division want games and sports equipment of all kinds. I explained the position and they realize the difficulties.

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REPORT ON WELFARE TOUR (continued)

D. VENICE.

Personnel.

228 Div. HQ is at Padua, but Col. Rossi - Passevanti has prudently taken up his quarters at the Officers Hotel in Venice. In this hotel is a Captain as military manager, and two C/Lt's as military managers of the OR's clubs.

Officers Hotel.

An excellent hotel, run by its civilian staff and four soldiers including one manager. There is accommodation for 60 + officers, and the whole place is of very good standard. It is not peculiarly for 218 Div., but for the whole Army. Doubtless some wangling of rations is going on, but everyone seems quite happy.

ORs Clubs.

Another hotel, run by four soldiers and civilian staff. There are beds for 26 transit personnel, in double rooms: these are first class. There are the usual bar and lounge facilities, and a cinema showing four times a week. The restaurant serves meals to 200 + men per day.

There is another club at the Lido, which is similar to this one, with the exception of the cinema.

Women Volunteers.

Some of the 8th Army elements are employed in the OR's clubs, and are thought of well. My impression is that with the departure of 8th Army, the imminent discharge of Col. R.P., and the forthcoming absorption into C.A.F., that few, if any, of this group will continue to serve.

Officers Hotel.

An excellent hotel, run by its civilian staff and four soldiers including one manager. There is accommodation for 60 + officers, and the whole place is of very good standard. It is not peculiarly for 208 Div., but for the whole Army. Doubtless some wangling of rations is going on, but everyone seems quite happy.

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REPORT ON WELFARE TOUR (continued)

E. GENERAL POINTS.

1. Women Volunteers doing a very valuable service to the army. Everything possible must be done to grant them some form of charter and regularize their position.
2. Concern for the well being of demobilized persons is expressed everywhere by British and Italian officers.
3. It is very evident that the logical operative agency for Army Welfare is the Terr. HQ.
British Welfare is handled largely on such a basis, and it is scarcely to be expected that a unit will work conscientiously any further than its own requirements.
If we are to have a limited number of Staff Officers Welfare, they will be far more effective at Static HQs., where they can organize the resources of the locality to the advantage of all troops.
4. The Welfare Training Centre should now concentrate on the training of Regular Officers as they are posted in as a matter of first priority. I think that there should be a trained Regular Officer of field rank at every Terr.HQ. and at large depots.

D. J. P.
S. Capt.,
Welfare,
M.M.I.A.

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Aug'45.

SUBJECT: RAVISCANINA B.R.D.

A/244
Land Forces Sub Comm. A.C.
(M.M.I.A.) ROME.
WEL/V.
18 Apr '45.

Ministry of War
Ufficio Benessere del Soldato.

Copy to :- ADAWS. 3 District.
MMIA. L.O. 3 District.

1. Attached is a copy of a report by a member of this HQ. following a visit to Raviscanina B.R.D.
2. It is forwarded in order that you may take action, and so that your representative at 227 Div. may receive your instructions as soon as possible.
3. Your attention is invited to the suggestions embodied in para.9. of the report, and you will appreciate that the execution of these should be a matter of the highest priority.

[Signature]
Lt. Col.
A.D.A.W.S.
M.M.I.A.

Internal:- "A" Branch.

REPORT ON RAVISCANINA BRD.

1. General Survey

- (a) This camp was originally laid out by the South Africans, and is excellently situated. It is intended that it shall be fully tented; there are a considerable number of Missen and Flambean Huts, but these will not be used for sleeping accommodation.
- (b) Water pipes are laid throughout the area, and there is an efficient pumping system. There are twenty hot showers, and a number of ordinary baths in addition.
- (c) A 12 KW. generator has been installed and will supply light to a portion of the camp.
- (d) The intention is to lay the camp in three well-defined battalion areas: a fourth area will be used at first as a field hospital. The ceiling will be 6,000 approx.

2. Towns and Villages

The nearest town is Capua, 20 (?) miles away. The local villages of Raviscanina and Vairano have no possibilities. Transport could probably be arranged to a very limited extent to Capua for recreational purposes, but it is not thought that it will be advisable in the early stages.

3. Local Inhabitants

There is little possibility of obtaining much help from local inhabitants; they are purely of the farming type, and even if they were willing, they can have little to offer.

4. Canteens, Rest Rooms, etc.

In the original plans (S.A.), 13 Missen huts distributed through the area are earmarked for Welfare; in addition a small group of three Missens and a large Romney in the HQ Company area^{are} marked.

On the initiative of the Camp Commandant (Col. Busso) a canteen has already been opened in the Romney Hut. It is suggested that this should continue as a Depot Canteen -- it is an extension to the main hut, with a bar opening into the hall, and has cooking facilities.

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3. Local Inhabitants

There is little possibility of obtaining much help from local inhabitants; they are purely of the farming type, and even if they were willing, they can have little to offer.

4. Canteens, Rest Rooms, etc.

In the original plans (S.A.), 13 Nissen huts distributed through the area are earmarked for Welfare: in addition a small group of three Nissens and a large Romney in the HQ Company area ^{are} marked.

On the initiative of the Camp Commandant (Col. Busse) a canteen has already been opened in the Romney Hut. It is suggested that this should continue as a Depot Canteen - it is an extension to the main hut, with a bar opening into the hall, and has cooking facilities. It would not interfere with the proposed use of the hut as a cinema/theatre.

In addition there is ample butting for one Canteen one Rest and 5602 Reading room, and one Writing Room in each battalion area. As far as furnishing goes, much could be improvised; could requisitioning be considered?

(2)

4. (b) Cinema/Theatre.

The large Romney hut (V. Supaa) will make an excellent cinema/theatre for about 500/600. A screen is already fitted and all that is wanted is the projector, and probably a generator. Although the hut will come within the limited lighting scheme of the camp, the voltage etc. may not be suitable. Forms are required, but can probably be made in the camp.

The construction of a stage here will be a simple matter: materials can be found in the camp. If required, a Nissen hut immediately adjacent can be fitted up as dressing rooms.

Open Air Theatre.

There are several sites naturally suited to this purpose, and there are no difficulties at all.

(c) Sports Grounds.

There are two stretches of ground which are suitable. In the plans they are referred to as sports grounds, and what is mostly required is clearing work, the ground being very stoney. This is just a matter of labour and items such as goal posts can be fitted up from local materials.

5. Bathing and Swimming.

The camp is quite close to the Volturno River, and it is possible that, with the agreement of the Medical authorities, a bathing pool might be constructed there.

6. Welfare Stores.

A few old footballs are held - the exact number is indeterminate - and nothing else. The requirements, therefore, are anything and everything: the same facilities for improvisation exist as anywhere else, but anything at all will be exceeding valuable.

7. Newspapers.

It will be difficult for the camp to provide transport if they are to be collected from Naples. If arrangements can be made for them to be available at Capua it will greatly simplify matters.

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8. Welfare Officer.

There is not a full time Welfare Officer, although an officer has been appointed to deal with the matter. It was urged that a trained Welfare Officer should be attached, if only during the early stages.

9. Suggestions.

(3)

(i) Welfare is an absolute necessity in this camp, not only because of its isolated situation, and because it is dealing with recruits, but because it is the successor of Afragola. It is strongly urged that a trained Welfare Officer, a really live one, be attached: this backed by G-1 3 District, O.C. British Cadre, and by the O.C. Movement, at present in the camp.

(ii) The Welfare Officer of 227 Division should be instructed to take a very active interest in the camp: it is the largest single body of troops in his area, and yet everyone was surprised to learn of his existence.

(iii) The officer appointed should commence work immediately as the following:-

- (a) Canteens, Rest and Reading Rooms, Writing Rooms.
- (b) Stage for theatre.
- (c) Obtaining live shows from Naples and if possible, free, on the patriotic/advertisement basis.
- (d) Cleaning up and fitting sports fields.
- (e) Laying on newspapers.

(iv) The Directorate of Welfare should make every effort to send this camp whatever is possible in the way of amenities, writing materials, games, sports gear etc. A cinema projector should be obtained at all costs; it is understood that 227 Division have one (there was not time to check) and if so, then this is the place for it.

10. Conclusion.

The possibilities here are better than at Cesano as far as accommodation goes. It is a great chance for Italian Welfare to do something really good: the necessities exist, the opportunities exist, all that is wanted is a man with drive. He would be able to start level with the rest of the camp, and he would have the backing of his own Commanding Officer, of the British Cadre, and of 3 District.

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