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Reports TO British Ambassador on

may-July 1945

Reports TO British Ambassador on Italian P.W.

WMD/IPW

Sub Com

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July 1945

10th July, 1945.

6/35/45

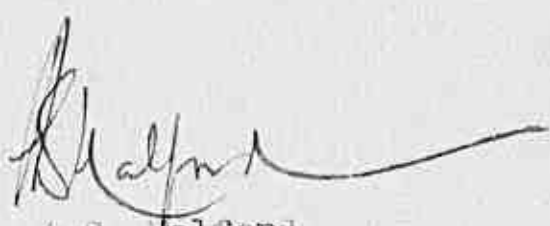
To: Lt. Colonel James E. Regis, Acting Director,
W.E.D. & I.P.O.W. Sub-Commission, Allied Commission.

From: Assistant Political Adviser (Br.)

Subject: Report on I.S.U.

I am very grateful to you for the excellent and comprehensive report dated 4th July which you kindly obtained for Sir Noel Charles about Italian prisoners of war at Leghorn.

2. The Ambassador will see it as soon as he returns from London.


A.S. Halford,
(Assistant Political
Adviser)

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IPW/61/2

6 July 1945

Subject : Report on I S U.

To : Assistant Political Advisor (br).

Attached herewith a report on above subject, as requested by
the British Ambassador.


JAMES E. REGIS
Lt.-Colonel OAC
Acting Director
WPD & IPOW Sub-Com.

3 Incl.- Report in duplicate.
Appendix A & B.

4. July 1945

SUBJECT: Report on I S U, 2694 Tech. Superv. Regt., Leghorn.

TO : Lieut. Colonel REGIS, Deputy Director, WMD & IPOW S/C
ALCOM.

1. In accordance with instructions, left Rome for Leghorn, 0900 hrs on 28 June, 1945.

2. At Leghorn, interviewed the following personnel, all of 2694th Tech. Superv. Regt (Ovhd), the unit controlling all American held Italian Co-operators in Italy:

- a) Col. S.T.SUTTON, Regimental C.O.
- b) Lt.Col. F.W.DAVIS, Regimental I.C.
- c) Maj. R.O.DRES, Regimental S=3
- d) Maj. H.J. KEGRESSE, Regimental A.C.
- e) Capt. J. DE STEFANO, Regimental S=2
- f) Capt. B.BAUM, Regimental J.A.
- g) Capt. E.S. JOUBERT, Regimental A.C. (Italian side)
- h) 3 Italian PW officers in charge of Italian PWs

(names not furnished, in order to assure anonymity)

3) All officers interviewed (except 2 (h) above) were allowed to read the report in question (ZM 2939/157/22 = P.I.D., Italian Region, Intellig. Sect. dated 22 May 1945 and entitled: "Prisoners of War returned by the Allies to Italy = a Social Problem") and were then asked to comment. Notes taken during

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the interviews form the basis for what follows, paralleling the outline of the subject report.

4. Reference: Introduction. ISU units total some 17,000 Italian PWs, scattered from Bari to Bologna, with 12,000 = 13,000 in the Leghorn area.

5. Reference: I, 1. All officers interviewed state that this charge is grossly untrue. Quite the opposite is the case: these PWs have been under American control since their capture - which for most was 2 years ago. When they were first taken prisoner, no large-scale organization had been prepared in advance to accommodate them so that food and living conditions were not good, there was no work for them; in general they felt neglected, though not "treated with some severity", as the basic report states. As soon as they were organized into units paralleling American Army organization, and work was provided, their attitude changed completely. Since coming to Italy from North Africa, they have been granted passes and furloughs.

It was stated by all 7 Allied officers interviewed that they had never heard El Alamein referred to once by any PW.

6. Reference: 2. There was unanimous agreement that the Germans were not considered as "brave Allies", that there was not admiration expressed for the Germans; no reference has ever been made by men or officers to the "Germans loyally carrying on."

7. Reference: 3 (a). It is said that there is no comparison between the genuine cooperation extended to ^{the} Allied cause by ISU personnel, and the attitude of the civilian populace. Leghorn is said to have been a stronghold of Fascism, still largely ~~unre-~~ ^{unre-}

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ciled to Allied victory. The great proportion of stealing which goes on in the port, is done by local citizens. The only stigma of "prostitute" applied to local Italian girls who are seen with Allied soldiers is applied by local teen-age hoodlums who have engaged in some slight "barber gang" activity. There is some intercourse between Italian girls and ISU personnel, as there is between the former and Allied soldiers. One officer described his attendance at a local concert, at which ISU personnel, civilians, and Allied soldiers were all present. There were no instances of any kind of discrimination.

8. Reference: 3 (b). The 3 Italian officers interviewed stated that they refer to the regular Italian Army units stationed in Leghorn as "Camici Verdi" (after the colour of their dyed British battle-dress) or "Monomani". One was of the opinion that this would be changed to "Farrini" after the new Premier.

It is said that the ISU personnel feel themselves superior to regular Italian Army personnel, in that they are better dressed, paid, fed, housed and treated than the latter. It was reported that the ISU personnel are better behaved, more responsive and more disciplined than the regular Italian standing army personnel. The AWOL rate is also considerably lower in ISU than among the latter. Many ISU personnel were formerly members of top Italian Army units - Alpini, Bersaglieri, Afrika Korps. Only one fight is said to have broken out between the two groups, when some ISU personnel walking down the street were called "traitors" by some passing Italian regulars. The crux of the conflict may be that the ISU soldier feels himself part of the American Army

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(instances were cited of requests for transfer to the American Army, inquiries regarding pensions etc.) and as such identifies himself with the Allies and thus looks down on his colleague in the Italian Army.

9. Reference: 4. The only truth in these allegations is what is said about Trieste. There have been no demonstrations, however. Their attitude is that they do not want to lose any part of their country.

Their interest is in the reconstruction of their country, and not in flag-moving speeches and political letting-off of steam, all of which are said to be favorite pursuits of the local citizenry. They want to rebuild their ruined country first. Their sincerity in this regard may be judged by the work they have done: the roads, bridges, railroads, docks and wharves they have rebuilt, the ports and quarries which they operate. Specific instances were cited: ISU personnel repaired 1/3 of the trackage between Pisa and Florence 20 days ahead of schedule; they have cut 6 1/2 million board feet of lumber in the royal forest at Pisa; nearly 1000 ISU personnel volunteered, on their own free time, to cooperate with AMG authorities to clean up Leghorn at a time when the young Livornese citizen was either lolling about the streets or engaging in the black-market; they volunteered to de-mine the Pisa and Florence staging areas with 3 resulting deaths. It is said that they have learned from American machinery and American methods a new point of view toward organization for production, and are anxious to see all of Italy import both methods and

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equipment when trade is resumed.

10. Reference: PARA 5. The only "party" which they have attempted to organize was a system of employment exchanges to help find jobs for ex-PWs, which is said to have begun to function. It is completely without political implications.

11. Reference: Para 6. The statements made in this section of the basic report were particularly resented and forcefully denied by the Allied officers interviewed. As evidence of the falseness of the statements made, it was pointed out that there has not been a single crime of violence committed by any of the 17,000 to 20,000 ISU personnel since their arrival in Italy, in November 1944. Most offenses have been petty stealing and AWOL. A general court has not been convened for the hearing of any case coming under such jurisdiction in 8 months. In this regard, ISU personnel have a better record than regular US Army units, it is said.

The JA knew nothing of the "City Memorial" incident. None of the officers interviewed was acquainted with local CLN activity to establish better relations between townspeople and IPWs. Standards of cleanliness and sanitation are said to be comparable to the best among Allied operating units. V.D. rate as of 1st June 45 was 31.7 per 1000 per annum: less than 1% per day. Out of 17,000 ISU personnel as of 3 May 1945, only 335 were AWOL, of whom 95% have since returned.

Since their arrival in Italy in Nov. 44, there has not been a single demonstration or strike. At the beginning of the Bologna push, ISU units followed less than 24 hours behind front-line troops, stringing wire, before mines had been cleaned.

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On 4 May 1945, almost coincidental with the filing of the basic report, the Regiment was awarded the Meritorious Service Plaque.

The safety record for ISU personnel compares favorably with regular U.S. Army installations: 6.66 to 10.23 (see attached Appendix "A").

12. Reference : Para 7. The statement in the basic report is correct that there is a fundamental lack of political conviction, or interest. However, they are not therefore to be described necessarily as monarchist, either officers or men. The 3 Italian officers interviewed confirmed statements made by Allied officers that the Christian Democrat Party had the largest following among those with any political feeling. These 3 stated, in response to a question, that they would sooner accept as final the results of an election which endorsed the Monarchy than one which brought a left-wing coalition to power. This was followed by a statement that their greatest support would be thrown behind a Republic, with a centrist majority. The greatest value of the Monarchy, one explained, was in the continuity it promised - this was the original reason why Mazzini had compromised with his principles during the Risorgimento: to accept the House of Savoy for the sake of the unity it would assure to the nation. Another added that continuity and stability could better be attained by the assurance of honest elections - the resultant confidence of the Italian people in the democratic process would result in a stable republican form of government. To this end, the holding of elections as soon as possible was the most important single problem confronting the Italian people today.

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The 3 Italian officers volunteered the opinion that Bonomi was old, without the power to govern, and tainted by having held a post in the first Fascist government. Along this line, it was the belief that if the young people were Fascist, that is all they have known: only those 50 or older knew any alternative to Fascism; it is they who failed to oppose it when opposition had some chance of success.

Parri is described as a calm, honest person, of good judgment, no genius as a statesman, perhaps, but the kind of man needed at this hour.

Some dissatisfaction was experienced over the fact that Vatican influence is brought to bear for the release of certain co-operators. This is viewed with cynicism.

It is stated that some resentment exists toward the Italian government, based on the following: their families are poorly provided for, transport is not made available after release, jobs have not been provided, etc. This resentment has not been carried over into demonstrations of any kind, however.

It is not accurate to state, as in the subject report, that ISU personnel are not acquainted with conditions in other parts of Italy: they go home on visits, and they are engaged in helping to restore the destruction wrought by war.

13. Conclusion:

a) Based on the foregoing, the subject report appears to give a false and distorted picture of Italian co-operator units in Leghorn under American supervision.

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b) The opinions of all those questioned separately were unanimous in condemning the allegations contained in the report as untrue.

c) It is entirely likely that the subject report was motivated by the fact that ISU personnel have resisted attempts on the part of local political groups to influence or enroll them. Three incidents were related in this regard: Handbills signed "A Group of Prisoners" were tossed into their area at night and arouse no reaction. Advertisement in the local paper inviting ISU personnel to attend dances held under political party auspices fail to bring a response. ISU personnel reported that a group from the town had approached them with an offer to purchase arms and ammunitions, with no result.

d) The extreme discrepancy between the allegations made in the subject document and the situation as reported to the undersigned raises the suspicion that some motive other than a desire to report accurately prompted the sources which furnished the basic materials. Coming as it did, at the time when transfer of ISU personnel to the Italian Army was in progress, it appears to be an attempt to smear and discredit a sizable body of Italian citizens who fought for their country when she was at war, were captured under honorable conditions, and who have since rendered loyal and valuable service to the Allied cause.

14. Arrived Rome 2130 hrs, 29 June, 1945

Benedict S. Alper
BENEDICT S. ALPER
Major AUS

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Attached: Appendix "A" MTOUSA Safety Bulletin, N° 9 of 16 June, 1945;

Appendix "B" "Domani" ISU BLM publication, for 24 June 1945.

Copy to: Colonel S.T. SUTTON, C.O. 2694 Tech. Superv. Regt.,
APO 782, U.S. Army.

110.

Lieut. Colonel Regis,
WFO & PW Sub-Commission

The British Ambassador would be grateful after all for a written report from the Sub-Commission on the statements made in the attached copy of a Political Intelligence Department report on Italian "co-operator" prisoners at Leghorn.

2. Will you please put this in hand?

16.vi.45

Sharon
Asst. Political
Advisor (BR)

IPW

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(Z: 2932/157/22)

SECRETP.I.D., Italian Region,
Intelligence Section.

22nd May 1945

Prisoners of War returned by the Allies to Italy: A Social
problem.

INTRODUCTION: According to an Allied report from Livorno (Leghorn) of 21.4.45, there are in Leghorn from 10,000 to 12,000 Italian PWs mostly returned from Africa, and an unspecified but much smaller number of recently conscripted Italian regular soldiers. The PWs are differentiated from the regulars by wearing American uniform, with a shoulder badge shaped like Italy, while the regulars wear British battle-dress dyed dark green.

It is evident that the PWs have caused considerable anxiety to Italians on the spot, and the question has been studied in some detail by a City Councillor and other educated Italians of various political parties in Leghorn, whose opinion is regarded as balanced and reliable.

I. Attitude of the returned
prisoners1. The PWs and the Allies

The PWs, whether officers or men, hate the Allies.

Most of them come from North-African camps, where they seem to have been treated with some severity. They expected that on return to Italy their status as PWs would come to an end, and much resent that this is not so.

They still talk of El Alamein, as the place where they fell short of complete victory over England.

2. The PWs and the Germans

The PWs all think of the Germans as "their brave Allies". They know nothing of what German occupation has meant for Italy.

They consider Germany as having loyally carried on her war after Badoglio had betrayed the Axis armies by signing the Armistice.

3. PWs and Collaborators.(a) Civilians.

The PWs denigrate Italian civilians for their sincere collaboration with the Allies. They refuse to mix with the local populace and stigmatise the women as prostitutes to the Allied soldiers.

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(b) Military

The P's despise the new Italian regulars, who they call Baderiani, and are dubbed Mussoliniani in return.

4. Nationalism.

The P's are still strongly nationalistic, and their feelings are ably stimulated by their officers, among whom the higher ranks are strongly monarchical, nationalistic and imperialistic.

They resent the loss of the war far more than the civilian populace, which, after two years of warfare in Italy, a long period of German occupation and actual experience of house-to-house fighting, has shelved its nationalistic feelings and put reconstruction first.

They work themselves into a frenzy whenever Trieste is mentioned, and do everything to foment Italian intransigence on the question of both Trieste and Istria. They have won some support among the Gruppo Giuliano, a nationalist group which stands for the maintenance of Italian frontiers as in 1940.

5. Lack of cohesion.

The P's have tried to organize a party of their own, under their own officers. This appears to have been a complete failure.

6. Lack of social conscience.

The conduct and behavior of the P's are considered bad by the local populace, which blames them for Fascist propaganda and for every kind of crime or misdeed; for example, the disfigurement of the City Memorial to Fallen Partisans, from which they were later exonerated. The local CM has made strenuous but unavailing efforts to reconcile the local populace to the P's.

More specific criticism maintains that eight to nine years' army service has turned them into soldiers of fortune. They are ready to follow anyone who pays them. They steal anything they can lay hands upon, whether Allied or Italian property. They take a prominent part in robberies with violence. They have lost the habit of decent social life.

7. Lack of political conviction.

The P's mostly belong to no political Party and follow no particular political tendency. It is, however, observed that their officers are mostly Right-Wing Monarchists by conviction, and that many P's are Monarchists by declaration. They are therefore regarded as potential material for a Right-Wing com d'Etat, particularly in view of their mercenary attitude described above.

The Communist Party has made great efforts to divert some of the men from Nationalism, but without success, while the Republican Party also launched a campaign to train them to think and act with civilian mentality, but with very disappointing results.

2. Contrast with the regular soldiers.

The new conscripts in the regular army are a much more quiet element than the PVs. They are the product of the existing political situation, and most of them have little interest in Italy's future territorial claims, and are devoid of ideals or ambition. They are very much like sheep.

II. Local Comment upon the returned prisoners.

The bad local repute of the prisoners has been accompanied by some attempt on the part of the sources noted above to analyze the causes of their behaviour and attitude, as follows:

- (a) Long service in the army has caused them to lose the habit of decent social life;
- (b) They are segregated from the civilian population and still treated as prisoners of war, which they find more humiliating in their own country;
- (c) They do not know anything about the German occupation or what it has meant in Italy;
- (d) They remember the Germans as their brave Allies;
- (e) They consider the Germans as having loyally maintained their obligations in the face of Badoglio's betrayal;
- (f) They left Italy at the peak of her success and now find the country at its lowest ebb, without having witnessed or felt or suffered or understood the intermediate stages.

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