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P.W.B. PROPAGANDA REPORTS

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PUBLIC RELATIONS BRANCH
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Extract from Monthly Report on Sardinia.

14 July 45

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PUBLIC REACTION AND PUBLIC OPINION

1. In view of the forthcoming administrative elections all parties intensified their propaganda. The most aggressive are the Sard Action Party, the Communist Party and the Christian Democrat Party. The battle between the last two parties is always becoming more tenacious. The Sard Action Party still has the largest following. The Christian Democrat Party has had occasions to indirectly demonstrate its strength through religious manifestations. The strength of the Communist Party has been shown through its numerous meetings and indirectly through the Federation of Labor in which the party is widely represented among the directors and through the Partisan Movement whose Regional Federation, by public opinion, has sprung from the Party. This Federation has taken the initiative of putting up a Sard Republican-Democrat Front in Sardinia.
2. The arrest of the secretary of the Partisan Regional Federation, Porcu Giuseppe, has produced a strong reaction among the population and it has been a satisfaction to those who see in the Partisan Movement the embryo of violent factionists.

ITALIAN THEATRE HEADQUARTERS

Psychological Warfare Branch

Unit 12 - AFO 512

D Section, Liberated Italy

17 February 1945

REACTIONS TO ALLIED PROPAGANDA REPORT

I. General Summary

Taking a general review of present public opinion with regard to Allied propaganda, there is a sincere desire for better and more accurate knowledge of life in Britain and the United States. There is a great demand for books and publications reflecting life in England and America in normal times, with accent on civic pride, human solidarity in time of need, community activities, and family life. From the questions that are asked it is obvious that Italians are labouring under an amazing confusion of suppositions and misinformation which often results in harmful prejudice. British and American war power is recognized everywhere, but it has been reported that continued propaganda of Anglo-American war production constitutes a danger in that the present grateful recognition of Allied superiority may turn to resentment springing from the contradiction of two facts. Namely, that despite the overwhelming Anglo-American production of armaments only a very small part of the Italian Army has been permitted to take an active part in fighting the enemy, allegedly because of inadequate equipment; and that Anglo-American military superiority may give rise to the fear that these two powers intend either through direct or indirect pressure to impose their own terms and conditions upon European countries.

The Italians find it hard to realize the resources and the solidarity which are equally necessary in total war, and how this has affected the face and life of the Allied nations, their homes and their industry. They are unable, for the great part, to believe that production of, for example, silk and rubber articles for private consumption stopped when war broke out; that everybody, men and women of all classes are engaged in some kind of war work, and that consequently families are temporarily broken up; that this is a national policy endorsed and supported by the entire population, and that the best goes to the soldier.

From these reactions there would seem to be a need for the

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From these reactions there would seem to be a need for the presentation of Allied war production in terms of human values and the adjustments spontaneously made, illustrated with specific everyday experiences in family life as compared with prewar conditions and habits. Comparisons with prewar conditions are important as without them proper evaluation of changes would be impossible.

In the opinion of a responsible Italian the word "propaganda" should be interpreted, at least in liberated Italy, as the presentation of information to the Italian people by the Allies in order to provide them with guidance for the changes in political and social structures that are bound to take place.

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With regard to the recent meeting of the "Big Three", Italian press comment maintains the general opinion that this meeting was held primarily to discuss the problem of Germany. All the papers agree that the talks would also deal with the possibility of reviewing the United Nations' policy towards Italy. ITALIA NUOVA writes that the Anglo-Americans have made many promises in connection with Italy which have not been fulfilled and that while the Italian people are being asked to help in the war effort they are protesting strongly against the damage done to Italy and to her colonies. There is the usual statement that Italy would welcome enthusiastically an announcement of a provisional peace so that co-belligerence would become "alliance". The recent visit of Stettinius and Hopkins to Rome has in part revived this hope as in many Italian circles President Roosevelt is considered the most well-disposed of the "Three" towards Italy.

2. Press

During the last few days the press in Rome has reacted violently to the strong language used by a part of the London press, especially to a recent article on Italy appearing in the Daily Mail. This article stated that Italy is a conquered nation and that Italians have no right to ask for recognition of their contribution given to the war against Germany. The INDIPENDENTE issued a warning saying that the Daily Mail does not represent the allied policy towards Italy or the future of Italy, but that it is merely an expression of the conservative elements in Britain.

A leader in IL MOMENTO contains reactions to the above-mentioned article in the Daily Mail under the heading "Sudden reaction to our petulance - hard language towards Italy in the London Press. False statements." The remark was made that the Daily Mail is the same paper which supported Fascism at a time when Italian anti-Fascists were being persecuted under Mussolini. IL MOMENTO concludes by saying, "The Anglo-Americans came to us as liberators and were received as such. A nation cannot be liberated without first recognizing that it was in slavery. There is nothing more absurd and unjust than wanting to make the victim liable even morally for the deeds of his oppressors. The English really should not insist in such an error since it would be an insult to truth and justice more than to Italy herself."

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Arising out of the shortage of newsprint in Naples which resulted in the Naples newspapers being unable to go to press, when a meeting of the Italian Press Confederation met to discuss the situation it was suggested by Rossini, the director of the Italian Press Office, that the P.W.B.-controlled IL RISORGIMENTO had eaten up all the newsprint stocks. This suggestion was greeted by boos and whistles and the general reaction was one of deep resentment that IL RISORGIMENTO should be accused. When the following day there were no papers printed in Naples the P.W.B.-controlled paper did not publish either and news was disseminated by a larger distribution of wall sheets. This resulted in very favourable reactions of the Italian public towards the Allies.

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3. Publications

The following reactions which have been received from a young Italian intellectual in Bari are based on his contacts in that city. The articles in issue No. 9 of IL MESE investigate certain fundamental aspects of international life. Two items which are of particular interest to the Italian public are one which deals with the relation between politics and religion and the attitude of the Fascists in regard to the church in general, and another which deals with the American elections quoting the various views of the leading London newspapers. These are subjects which have already been largely written about and discussed in certain intellectual circles with great interest. They have aroused much interest because they are concerned so much with those subjects which have been reserved in Italy almost always from a regional or at the most a national point of view, whereas their solution demands an awareness of results obtained in other countries where a regular exchange of views is customary. The opinions of Peter F. Druker on industrialization of the world are of particular interest as it is considered that there is, reading between the lines, a warning against the comfortable excuses of poverty and lack of resources when initiating schemes for reconstruction.

A review by Osbert Sitwell on Thomas Lawlinson supplies for art lovers a complete analysis of the superior personality of the satirical Anglo-Saxon painter with some brief comparisons with other authors, and this has been read with considerable interest.

The following reactions to Victory Volume III, No. 3 have been received from Taranto. This publication has without doubt made the greatest impression on the public. The wealth of resources and the vastness of the field which it embraces have made it the most valuable review of its kind a present circulating in liberated Italy. Contrary to previous issues it has been stated that this particular issue has run the risk of lapsing into those defects so common to the majority of illustrated papers, i.e. monotony and lack of vitality. The impression given by this number is that the review is based on a well defined plan and this threatens to deprive it of "that character of variety which made its contents so dynamic and which it is considered is indispensable if it is to maintain its present excellence. The reason for the lapsing is considered to be the fact that the articles are written from a pictorial point of view and almost none have a technical character." In previous issues this defect was avoided by the novelty of the publication,

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"Story of a Failure" by John Osborne - An article in LA NAZIONALE DEL POPOLO reviews this item which appeared in LIFE, explaining the reasons for which the allies were rapidly losing popularity in Italy. The Florentine paper remarks: "The intentions and policy pursued by the allies in regard to Italy are

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still obscure. How is it possible to explain the lack of knowledge of Anglo-Saxon trends of thought, of progress made in science, economics, literature and art which has been the result of Italy's long period of segregation. This lack of knowledge cannot be explained at this stage of the war by the military exigencies and lack of transport. All that our editors ask is for a supply of books and the authority to translate them. What the cultured Italian wants is to be able to read current books and publications on literary, technical, medical and scientific subjects. This heartfelt need is not being satisfied. How different has been the attitude of Russia on this matter who is willing to provide all possible facilities and encourage in all respects this work of dissemination of knowledge which is such a useful medium for mutual understanding between peoples. May the considerations published by a great periodical arouse in the Americans a greater interest in our situation and promote a better understanding of our people and their needs.

There has been a considerable demand in various classes of Italian society for an Italian translation of the "Constitution of the United States."

4. Radio

No reactions to Allied broadcast are available for inclusion in this fortnight's report.

5. Films

The following comments give some Italian reactions to certain American films seen in Rome and Bari :

"Afferrate quella donna" - this is a prewar American picture and certainly not one of the best. It is considered a third-rate film and was greeted by cat calls by the very small audience. The plot is silly and the acting worse than mediocre. This opinion is expressed unanimously in the press.

"The Shop around the Corner" - The dubbing of this film is considered to be very poor as the technicians in charge seem to have neglected the typical quality of the Italian language which is modulated according to the different states of mind. A grammatically correct sound track reproducing the wording with a foreign accent and neglecting the sensitivity of the Italian scale of emotions in pronouncing the words is considered bad production. This defect in the dubbing of English-speaking films has frustrated the designs of the allies to offer to a

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"Sisters in Arms" - This film has been classified as being quite definitely a propaganda production and many people found it distasteful because of its technical and artistic drawbacks. The greater part of the public however found it very interesting.

"West Point" - This film raised no great show of enthusiasm and it has been generally judged as being a very superficial reproduction of life in an American military academy.

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"Ziegfield Girl" was well received and thoroughly enjoyed all the way through, particularly the singing and dancing sequences. "Random Harvest" was very much appreciated and received a great ovation because it gave the Italians a film spoken in their own language.

"Across the Pacific" - The content was considered extremely good but the direction watered down the action somewhat. Films of this type one would like to see a second time and in general it may be stated that war and spy films are seen with the greatest pleasure.

"It started with Eve" - This film was particularly pleasing because of its good direction, still better acting on the part of the chief character and excellent humour. Such films shown alternately with war films and films which are psychologically gripping comprise the best chosen programmes.

"The Human Comedy" - Its sentimental and peculiarly American "mushiness" appeared to have no appeal whatsoever - in fact many people walked out during the performance. An occasional laugh was raised by comic incidents, but stony silence greeted most of the so-called humour. Most of the Allied audience at this performance appeared to be similarly bored.

6. Propaganda Shops

The propaganda shops continue to be as well patronized as ever. Of all the publications displayed, Victory and IL Mese continue to be the most popular. IL Mondo Libero sells as well as ever but it arouses only a relatively mild interest. Specific publications for which there is a great demand are "Orizzonti di Pace", "Il Pianto Beveridge", and "Le Elezioni negli Stati Uniti". Publications written in English and books on economics are constantly asked for.

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