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ACC

10000/142/866

DISTURBAN
SAILORS
OCT. - DEC. 1

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DISTURBANCES AT TARANTO BETWEEN FRENCH & ITALIAN
SAILORS
OCT. - DEC. 1944

FILE CLOSED 12 December 1944

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785016

Legal Sub-Comm.

HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION
Public Safety Sub-Commission
APO 394

Tel : 489081 - 365

12 December, 1944.

AC/14030/2/PS

SUBJECT : Taranto Disturbances.

TO : General X. de Sevin,
French Representative Allied Commission.

(1A)

1. Reference your JN/3 dated 19 October 44 and our reply of even number dated 30th October 1944.

2. The following is a report by the Questore, Taranto, on the subject of the disturbance at Taranto. It is a copy of a telegram sent by him to various interested parties.

"Last night at about 2000 hrs French and Italian sailors quarrelled at the Lungomare because of unknown reasons.

"An Italian Military patrol intervened to quell the riot and it seems that a rifle shot was discharged into the air. The French sailors flung themselves against members of the Italian patrol and disarmed them of their muskets, then turned in a provoking manner toward the civilians who crowded the Lungomare for their customary walk. Italian sailors intervened and came into conflict with the French sailors. At a certain moment two bombs were thrown, it is not clear by whom. When the Italian Police and the British Police arrived on the spot, fire arms were used by the Italian and French sailors, with the results as follows : two civilian killed, one about to die, three seriously wounded, an Italian marine officer seriously wounded, three sailors slightly wounded, French casualties are unknown. The authorities concerned have forbidden the French and Italian sailors to come on land. Military patrols will go around disarmed."

Signed : LENTINI, Questore.

3. Enquiry has been made by the Zone Police Officer, Taranto and information obtained from files in HQ 52 Area. The Z.P.O's report is as follows :-

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"Neither the Zone Commissioner nor myself were serving here at the time of the occurrence, viz, 30 July 44, and I must rely on very scanty and patchy information for the following account, compiled from files in HQ, 52 Area.

It would appear that at about 2000 hrs on date mentioned a party of French Marines were walking along the Lungomare, (sea front) Taranto singing the Marseillaise. One is alleged to have been brandishing a rifle. Reports differ as to where it was obtained, some say from a British Coloured sentry, others say from a Carabinieri, and others from Italian sailors. In view of other disturbances in vicinity of Taranto district around this date an effort was made by Italian sailors to disarm him and this started a general melee.

The British M.P. and 10 Italian M.P. moved on the scene in a lorry and a grenade was thrown exploding near the lorry. It is not known who threw it. Thereupon the Italian M.Ps in the lorry opened fire indiscriminately and without orders.

Order was eventually restored but not before the following casualties had occurred :

Civvies	2 killed	4 wounded
Italian Sailors	1 killed	3 wounded (incl. 2 Offrs)
British soldiers	-	1 slightly wounded
American sailors	-	1 seriously wounded
French Military Pers.	3 killed	2 wounded.

The 10 Italian M.Ps were placed in custody at disposal of Allied Command, presumably for using the firearms, but in the absence of any evidence they were released after one month. (They could not be dealt with on the firearms charges mentioned as they were properly in possession.)

As a personal opinion (I was serving in Brindisi at the time where there were also disturbances of a like nature) It would have been unfair to have tried these Italians for offences unless it was clear that it could be proved. Feeling was running high on both sides and blame was fairly well distributed amongst French and Italian Military and Italian civilians. As an example, one Italian sailor was arraigned before an Allied Military Court at Taranto recently on a charge of murdering a French soldier during the disturbances and the Court had no difficulty in coming to a "not guilty" decision owing to the conflicting nature of evidence as to how the brawl started."

H. Strand Capt.,
Zone Public Safety Officer, Taranto."

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4. It will be noted that the 10 Italians arrested in connection with this incident were detained for 1 month, but no charge was preferred against them owing to lack of evidence.

Sgt John W Chapman
JOHN W. CHAPMAN
Colonel, J.A.G.D.
Director Public Safety
Sub-Commission.

FJW/G.

Copy to : Legal Sub-Commission ✓
(Letter even number dated 30 Oct. 44 refers).

LEGAL SUB-COMMISSION	
SIO	
SOLO	
Chief Counsel	
CJ	
Station Section	
CL RKS	
12 DEC 1944	

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HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION
Public Safety Sub-Commission
AFG 394

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ACC/14030/PS

30 October, 1944.

SUBJECT : Taranto Disturbances.

TO : Regional Commissioner - Southern Region.

1. On 31 July 44 disturbances occurred in TARANTO between French and Italian sailors. As a result 2 French sailors were killed and 10 wounded. Casualties were also suffered by the Italians.

2. The following is a report by the Questore, Taranto, on the subject:-

"Last night at about 2000 hrs French and Italian sailors quarrelled at the lungomare because of unknown reasons.

"An Italian Military patrol intervened to quell the riot and it seems that a rifle shot was discharged into the air. The French sailors flung themselves against members of the Italian patrol and disarmed them of their weapons, then turned in a provoking manner toward the civilians who crowded the lungomare for their customary walk. Italian sailors intervened and came into conflict with the French sailors. At a certain moment two bombs were thrown, it is not clear by whom. When the Italian Police and the British Police arrived on the spot, fire arms were used by the Italian and French sailors, with the results as follows: two civilians killed, one about to die, three seriously wounded, an Italian marine officer seriously wounded, three sailors slightly wounded, French casualties are unknown. The authorities concerned have forbidden the French and Italian sailors to come on land. Military patrols will go around disarmed."

Signed: LENTINI, Questore.

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3. It is understood that the Italian sailors who took part in the disturbances were dealt with at court and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. The charge was one of "Carrying fire arms" as there was no evidence that those found in possession of arms had in fact caused the death of the French sailors.

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4. This matter is engaging the attention of General de Sevin, French representative to A.C. and he has asked that such information as is available on this matter should be supplied to him. It is thought by General de Sevin that the sentence of one month was particularly light, bearing in mind the fact that two French sailors were killed.

5. It is assumed at this Headquarters that the offence charged against the Italian sailors was dictated by the facts of the case. No information as to the trial by the Italian Court is available here.

6. It is asked that your representative in Taranto supply such particulars as may be available concerning this case, and also the Court hearing. This has been agreed with the Legal Sub-Commission.

John G. Chapman MAJ.
JOHN G. CHAPMAN
Colonel, J.A.G.D.
Director Public Safety
Sub-Commission.

Copy to : Legal Sub-Commission.

RJH/G.

REC. SUB-COMMISSION

ALO

DOLO

Chief Counsel

CJO

Italian Section

CL RKS

31 OCT 1944

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