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REVIEW OF CIVILIAN INTERNEES
MAR. 1946

HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION ON
Public Safety Sub-Commission
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Tel : 473427

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SUBJECT : Review of Civilian Internees.

TO : Vice President,
Civil Affairs Section.

As the Allied armies advanced through Sicily and Italy it was necessary to intern many civilians, who by their actual deeds or potentiality for mischief, formed a threat to the security in forward and rear areas. The latter is extremely important as any disturbance or wilful sabotage of the war effort could have an adverse effect on the fighting, causing the Army Commander to direct troops to the rear. The arrests of these civilians were effected by units of F.S.S. and SIO advancing with the Armies, or by the Intelligence Sections of Districts and Base areas.

Naturally in the heat of battle and in the confusion of the numerous denunciations made by one Italian against another, some internments were made which could hardly be substantiated subsequently on the grounds of military security, which was the criterion for arrest. In the early part of 1944 all civilian internees were collected from various prisons, F.S.S. Camps and detention centres, and were concentrated in a large monastery at Padula, which became known as "A" Civilian Internee Camp.

It soon became apparent that these persons needed sifting, as some had arrived without any papers or documentation of any kind. The Supreme Command of the Allied Armies in Italy appealed to Allied Commission for assistance in providing experienced personnel to sort out these cases. Accordingly Major A.T. HARVEY, who in addition to being

a Detective Inspector in the Metropolitan Police in civilian life, where he had investigated "Fifth column" and espionage cases, had also been the Secretary of a Tribunal which dealt with over 1,500 Germans and Italians in London in the early days of the War, was deputed to assist.

In March 1944 Major HARVEY visited Padula with Lt. Col. MORSE of G-2, AFHQ, and a team of M. I. G. personnel and in a few days screened over 200 internees who had no documents whatever. The majority were discharged immediately, but some were detained as being too untrustworthy to be set at liberty.

Major HARVEY then stayed on alone to consider those cases where there were documents, and to make recommendations to G-2 AFHQ where he was of the opinion that the internee did not present a danger to the Allies. This was the first experiment of the kind, and there was no precedent for guidance. Gradually, by trial and error more and more recommendations for release were approved by AFHQ and after a month Major HARVEY passed on the work to Captains A. S. ELLIS and H. G. GRACH, who went down to relieve him.

Captain ELLIS also had much previous experience in espionage and undesirable alien activities whilst a Detective Sergeant in West Sussex Constabulary, and soon developed into a shrewd and penetrating examiner. Captain GRACH also a police officer in civilian life, by his meticulous attention to detail and innate common sense, quickly acquired the technique of interrogation and his judgment was rarely at fault.

The onward sweep of the Armies necessitated pulling Captain ELLIS away from this work, and for twelve months Captain GRACH carried on alone until shortly before the Camp closed in May 1945. Visits were made periodically by Major HARVEY and Captain ELLIS to review important cases and also to bring Captain GRACH up to date with conditions as they were in advanced areas.

In all the above officers reviewed over 1,500 cases at this Camp, and following their recommendations it was found possible to release 7,110 internees.

When the second civilian internee camp was opened at Ferni in December 1944 the procedure for reviewing was

arranged by Major HARVEY in conjunction with G-2 at AFHQ and as Captain HAZON was still engaged at Padula, Captain C. B. HAYES, assisted in the work at Terni, as a member of the Review Board. Circumstances were rather different here, as the bulk of internees were known enemy agents, while at Padula they were mainly Fascists who were potentially dangerous. Naturally G-2 AFHQ were very reluctant, and quite properly so too, agree to the release of any known or suspected enemy agent who, although the actual fighting had ceased, could still be of danger to Allied soldiers.

It is better, therefore, to summarize the results at this camp as:-

1451 cases reviewed
388 recommendations made for release

AFHQ did not always accept the recommendation.

Although each officer took turns at reviewing when his other duties allowed, the bulk of the cases at Terni were dealt with by Captain Ellis, who has displayed a general flair for this type of work.

The importance of this reviewing cannot be over-estimated. The security organisations responsible for intern-ing the men are perfectly satisfied that their actions are correct, and often, quite rightly, oppose the release of a certain individual to their particular area, knowing he may well be a menace.

On the other hand the persons are interned without a trial, the informants may not have been unbiased, the conditions obtaining at the time of arrest may not apply six months later, and it becomes necessary to have some independent mind, trained in, but not dominated by, security matters, to consider the possibility of their release.

Extracts from the monthly reports show how carefully and conscientiously the officers of Security Division have discharged their duties, and kept these principles in mind. Later examples are:-

MARCH 1945 "In a short time it will also have been possible to pass on some of his, (Capt. GRACH) experience in reviewing as will enable him to be withdrawn for other duties. Before

this is done it is hoped to establish a liberal interpretation of the potential danger aspect in regard to persons resident in liberated Italy, to correspond more with the policy of withdrawal of Allied personnel from the territory, and the assumption of greater responsibilities by the Italian Government".

MAY 1945 "With the end of the fighting in Italy and the relaxing of the Rear Army control line it has been possible to apply a much more liberal policy towards release. During the month officers from this Division have visited the Camp for one day per week, and have reviewed 164 cases. In 111 instances recommendations have been made for release.

It is not anticipated that ARD will adopt any plan of wholesale releases in regard to civilian internees, but that they will be reviewed as at present individually, and released or kept in detention according to circumstances. Any sudden release of a large number of former fascists might have a disturbing influence on local morale, and lead to unpleasant incidents".

JUNE 1945 "An increased number of appeals has been received, as the relatives of many internees cannot see why they should continue to be detained now that the fighting has ceased. It has been possible to recommend that many of the persons whose cases have been reviewed at "A" Internee Camp should be released, in fact 16 out of 23 cases considered have been so recommended. The population of the camp is 94 males and 15 females".

JULY 1945 "The usual constant flow of appeals came through this office, as well as requests from the Italian Government to try or to interview certain internees. With the changed military situation a much more liberal policy of release was followed, especially with so much territory now controlled by the Italian Government".

AUGUST 1945 "Practically all former fascists who were interned as "potentially dangerous" have now been released, and those at present detained represent saboteurs, enemy agents, Germans who held high posts in the Nazi Party, dangerous political persons, etc. It is not expected that many more

recommendations for release can be made, but the cases will be studied thoroughly to see if they do constitute a threat".

DECEMBER 1945 "The cases of internees reviewed by members of this Division during December were 46, and the present population is 137, of whom 240 are women. A large number of these are enemy agents whose release at present cannot be countenanced, and reviewing is necessarily slow, but it has constantly to be borne in mind that persons who formed a threat to our security in war conditions are not of the same importance now that the enemy is broken and disorganized. The final word, however, remains with G-2 AFHQ, and we can only recommend in the light of our experience and knowledge of the particular case".

One of the most satisfactory features of the review and releases is that there has never been the slightest suggestion of undue influence or bribery having effected the decisions. This says much for the standard of integrity and impartiality of the officers concerned when it is remembered that some of Italy's richest men were interned and it is a well known Italian method to "buy one's freedom".

Another noteworthy tribute is that very few (probably under 10) persons were re-arrested for anti-Allied acts or sentiments following their release, and that no disturbance occurred in the rear areas which could be said to be due to premature release. This must have been exceptionally gratifying to the military commanders not to have to direct front line troops. At the same time it must be borne in mind that the careful consideration of individual cases from the humanitarian viewpoint resulted in an exceptionally large number of releases.

In view of the changed conditions affecting release and the possibility of large numbers of internees being liberated en bloc, authority has now been given by AFHQ for the review board to sit only once a month. We may therefore regard the work of reviewing as it has been done previously as being virtually concluded.

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It will be appreciated that all the officers in the Security Division who have been engaged with this work have given very excellent service, above what might normally be expected of them.

This is especially so in the case of Major HARVEY who, in the initial stages, by sheer hard work, laid the foundation for an effective reviewing machinery which, under his supervision and guidance, has functioned smoothly and without hitch until the present time.

His work throughout has been outstanding and, it is suggested, merits some tangible reward.

FJB/sc

F. J. BYE, Colonel
Deputy Director.

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