

785016

ACC

10000/143/1692

04721

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

785016

10000/143/1692

ARREST OF DAMIANI GIUSEPPE
AUG. - OCT. 1944

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
PUBLIC SAFETY SUB COMMISSION
SECURITY DIVISION
A.P.O. 394

Ref : ACC/14760/74/PS


6 October 1944

Subject : DAMIANI Giuseppe arrested at ELBA

To : Capt. Geach 371 P.O.W. Camp.

1. Please find attached a report from
Public Safety Officer attached to Elba. The other
documents have not been copied.

2. In case only meagre details reach
you, this report might implement the arrest report.


JOHN W. CHAPMAN,
Colonel J.A.C.D.,
Director Public Safety,
Sub Commission.

CONFIDENTIAL

ALLIED MILITARY GOVERNMENT
ISLAND OF ELBA

New York
14760/74 *th*
Rio Marina,
27 August 1944.

SUBJECT: Arrest of Damiani Giuseppe.

TO: Public Safety Division,
Headquarters, Allied Control Commission.

1. After the occupation of the island of Elba many denouncements were made of the various people who, it was stated, were not only members of the Republican Fascist Party but were also violently anti-British.

2. Many denouncements were received in respect of a certain Damiani Giuseppe di Michele. This man is a native of the island and for a considerable time was employed in the administration of the Penal Colony on the island of Pianosa. Most of the complaints were made respecting his activities on Pianosa.

3. He was called into military service in 1940 but did service on the island of Pianosa and still carried out his duties at the prison. During this period he showed strong anti-British feeling which showed itself in futile firing with his rifle at Allied aircraft which passed overhead.

4. When the Germans occupied the islands of Elba and Pianosa, Damiani quickly ingratiated himself with them and he collaborated fully with them. He held the position of Secretary of the Republican Fascist Party and he forced all the Prison Guards to sign into the Party. Some worked with him but the majority had no wish to participate.

5. During the occupation by the Germans Damiani started a campaign against the Director of the Penal Colony. It is stated, both by Prison Guards and by prisoners, that he informed the Germans that the Director was sending carrier pigeons to Corsica, and that he had willingly assisted British aviators who had landed on the island. This resulted in the Germans deporting the Director to the mainland of Italy. Damiani then set himself up in the position of Director. It is stated that he forced the prison guards to dig trenches to resist any landing by Allied Forces.

6. Just before the occupation of Pianosa and Elba he left Pianosa and returned with the Germans to Elba. He went to live with his brother at Procchio and kept himself very quiet. There has been so many complaints received of his former conduct that I instructed the Commissario di Pubblico Sicurizza to make a report on him. I attach herewith copy of the report submitted. It will be seen that he confirms Damiani's anti-British tendencies.

7. When I visited the island of Pianosa I made some enquiries and both prison guards and prisoners confirmed the information given in paras 3, 4, and 5. I was also told that when an American aircraft made a forced landing on the island Damiani wanted to shoot the members of the crew. I attach herewith a copy of a statement made by a former prisoner who was present at the time.

8. It is a very strange fact that Damiani Giuseppe is one of a family, the remainder of whom are pro-allied, in fact three other brothers all married English women. These other brothers, details of whom may be seen on the report by Commissario di Pubblico Sicurizza are all anti-Fascist and one in particular took part in the resistance against German occupation at Procchio. I attach herewith a letter sent in on behalf of Damiani by his sister-in-law. **1038** this she alleges that the complaints are all of a personal nature, but this is not true.

-2-

9. I have been informed by the French Security Police that this Damiani was the informer causing the arrest of a Dr. Matteo an anti-Fascist who was taken to Florence.

10. In view of the above facts I arrested Damiani and detained him in the Fondamentale Prison at Porto Longone. As we have no contact now with Sardinia where we were instructed to send detainees I have contacted C.I.C. at Piombino and am transferring Damiani through them to the P.O.W. Camp.

Public Safety Sub-Commission

Folio

for action information

	DATE
D.P.S.	
D.D.P.S.	
E. Officer	
M. E.	
Prisons	
Int & C.D.	
Reg. & Licensing	
Adm. Officer	
Security	
File	

T. CO. DACE,
Major,
Public Safety Officer,
ELBA.

PORTOFERRAIO /8/1944

DAMIANI GIUSEPPE di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 18/1/1900, possidente, domiciliato a Campo Elba, coniugato con Caprilli Annunziata fu Angelo e di Trabison Adele, nata il 28/1/1896 a Portoferraio.- Egli ha fondato il fascio repubblicano di Pianosa, dove prestava servizio, in quel penitenziario, quale operaio specializzato.- In qualita' di segretario del fascio repubblicano, durante il dominio nazi-fascista, si dice che egli abbia, cola', instaurato il regno del terrore, commettendo angherie ed abusi di ogni genere.-

Ha obbligato quasi tutti gli Agenti di Custodia ad iscriversi al fascio repubblicano, costringendoli a costruire delle trincee per combattere contro gli inglesi, in caso di sbarco.- Si dice, inoltre, che lo stesso, abbia inoltrato denunce calunniose ai fascisti e ai tedeschi, contro il Direttore del Penitenziario di Pianosa che e' stato poscia arrestato e condotto in continente, del quale non si hanno avuto piu' notizie.-

Il DAMIANI si e' comportato, in modo, da dare la sensazione, di essersi venduto, anima e corpo, ai tedeschi.-

Vuolsi che, col DAMIANI, abbiano collaborato alcuni Agenti di Custodia, non identificati, nonche' l'Ufficiale Postale di Pianosa, particolarmente, in merito all'attivita' spiegata dal DAMIANI stesso contro il Direttore del Penitenziario.- Quest'ultima notizia non e' stata controllata.-

Vuolsi che, la piu' grave accusa, fatta dal DAMIANI al Direttore del Penitenziario, sia stata l'attivita' che questi avrebbe esplicato a favore degli Alleati.-

Si dice che, secondo il DAMIANI, il Direttore del Penitenziario, avrebbe tentato di mettersi in rapporti con la Corsica, a mezzo dei colombi viaggiatori, che ¹⁰³⁷ sembra siano stati poscia portati via

da tedeschi.-

Il predetto ha i seguenti fratelli:-

1) - Francesco di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 13/12/1909 enotecnico; trasferitosi a Roma nel 1938, coniugato con Fois Iginia di Iginio e di Cesarina Daddi, nata a Livorno il 14/3/1909. Quest'ultimo e' stato arrestato dai tedeschi perche' il 13 settembre ha fatto parte in Piombino della organizzazione di resistenza contro i tedeschi.- Riuscito a fuggire, sebbene avesse riportato lieve ferita, e' stato poscia ricercato dai tedeschi i quali hanno preso in ostaggio la moglie e il suo bambino che successivamente sono stati liberati.-

2) - Mario di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 15/4/1890; generale dei granatieri, coniugato con Esclapon Lillas di Luigi e di Hodgson Florence, nata a Palermo il 18/1/1896.- Detto generale l'8 settembre, al momento dell'armistizio, si e' ritirato a vita privata e si ritiene risieda ora a Genova con la sua signora di nazionalita' inglese e le due signorine sue figlie.-

3) - Luigi di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 28/1/1892, ingegnere, coniugato con Raffo Dina di Davide e di Sturla Teresa, nata a Borzonasca (Genova) il 5/2/1902.- Detto ingegnere e' stato sempre di sentimenti antifascisti ed antitedeschi.-

4) - Gustavo di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 12/2/1894; possidente, attualmente abitava Piombino, coniugato con Robertson Etnel di Guglielmo e di Schrader Luisa, nata a Iquique (Cile) il 24/2/1896.- Quest'ultimo che e' stato capitano dei bersaglieri e' stato arrestato dai tedeschi per lo stesso motivo per cui e' stato arrestato il fratello Francesco.- Egli e' riuscito a fuggire ma la sua famiglia e' stata presa in ostaggio e condotta a Roma al carcere di Regina Coeli dove sarebbe stata liberata dagli Inglesi.-

5) - Ettore di Michele e di Amelia Buoni, nato a Portoferraio il 30/6/1902.- Quest'ultimo e' sposato con una signora di nazionalita' inglese.- Egli e' stato sempre antifascista e antitedesco per cui e' stato arrestato nel dicembre scorso dal fascista repubblicano Gino Padrone e poscia ^srilasciato.-

I, Servini Domenico, make the following statement:-

I was a prisoner on Pianosa Island from the 12th June 1942 to 10th July 1944. There I saw a Damiani Giuseppe who was the Agricultural Expert. He used to go round the island to see if the prisoners were working, because all the farming and all kinds of work were done by them.

Many times the prisoners were ill-treated by Damiani in many ways. The prisoners used to ask him if they could buy some of the fruit grown on the island, and he used to reply that their mouths were not good enough to eat fruit and that if they insisted he would get a stick (Manganello) and beat them. This happened many times.

On the 17th September 1943 at the Sanatorium of the Hospital four prisoners were beaten to death and Damiani took part in their beating.

There were three machine guns placed at the front door of the prison hospital, and some prisoners who were suspected of giving orders to other prisoners for a mutiny were taken out of this prison naked and for about thirty yards they were beaten by Damiani and several wardens. Then they were thrown inside a door like bundles of rags, all bleeding and full of laments. This lasted about one hour and a half. Afterwards these prisoners were carried on a horse and cart to receive medical treatment, and a few days later five of them died and were buried in one grave.

Many times inspecting prisoners at their work and finding some resting he would take out his revolver and pointing it at them would say "Marocchino bloody English people with British ideas, if you don't work I will have you all put against the wall".

When the Republican Fascist Party was formed he was the head organiser, and was called "El Commissario Capo". He ordered all the wardens to join this party and about twenty (I am not sure) of them joined.

Damiani also gave orders that all the wardens who were in the Republican Party must not do the wardens job, but only remain in service for the German Army. This was done, but after a few months it came to my knowledge that the Ministry of Grace and Justice of Rome had issued orders that all the wardens must do their job and not do military work because they were exempt from military service. Only one warden of the Republican Party, named Couti, did not give up his service with the Germans. But Damiani gave orders, in accordance with the German Captain, that all wardens who had already served in the prison in the day time had to report to Couti at nights. They were given rifles and had to guard the coast of Pianosa because the British might have landed.

I don't remember the date, but about noon one day in April an American Aeroplane crashed right on the aeroplane field of Pianosa. I happened to see the plane crashing, and wardens, other prisoners, some German officers and soldiers, with Damiani and I ran to the spot to rescue the crew of six American officers. One was dead, two wounded, and three safe. A prisoner and I put one wounded officer on a stretcher to take him to be given first aid. On the way I asked the officer if he needed something, and he made a sign asking for water. Damiani asked me what the officer had said, and I replied that he wanted some water. Damiani

/answered

-2-

answered "kill him". The German officer present told Damiani to go away otherwise he would shoot him, and the wounded American officer was given water at once and given first aid.

On many occasions Damiani used to ill-treat the wardens who would not join the Republican Fascist Party.

I heard from second hand that one day, and pretty soon, Damiani had said that he would be the Governor of Pianosa Island and he would then show how he could rule. This statement I cannot swear to because I did not hear him myself. The remainder of the statement I can swear the truth of because I saw and heard these things myself.

One of his most active collaborators was Couti the warden who I think is now a prisoner in Corsica.

I could add other information but I think the most important facts have been stated.

Rio Marina,
31st August 1944.

(Signed) Servini Domenico fu Biagio.

1033

Copy of Statement by Cecilia Damiani to the Allied Military Government.

Regarding my brother-in-law Giuseppe Damiani who, as I believe, has been unjustly accused as being anti-British, I as an Englishwoman desire to make this declaration:- that he has from the time I have known him, when I may add Italy was already at War, treated me with the utmost kindness, generosity and the affection of a brother.

He has frequently assisted my husband and myself with money, as far as his limited means permitted during this very difficult period. We have been guests in his house on two occasions; once for period of nearly two months, when he desired we should spend Easter with him and his wife and remain as long as we wished afterwards. When apart he has always solicitous and practically helpful for our welfare.

To my mind it seems a very strange accusation to have been made considering how closely knit the Damiani family is with England. The eldest brother, General Mario Damiani married Lilias Esclapon, whose mother was before marriage Miss Florence Alice Hodgson of a Hampshire family. Another brother Captain Gustavo Damiani married Miss Ethel Robertson, a Scottish lady - she with her mother and three brothers lived at one time at Villa Nerli near Florence. Giuseppe Damiani was on excellent terms with them, and actually lived some months in their house.

During the early part of the present War he was again frequently in the house of his brother Gustavo here in Procchio, and always on excellent terms with his wife. He also knew her brothers intimately. I think the accusers of Giuseppe Damiani must have had little idea of the family connections, or they would not have put forth a charge with so little foundation. On the other hand, in company, one might add, with the greater number of Italians, he has always had a hearty dislike of the Germans, ever since he fought in the 1914-18 War, and this War has certainly not changed him.

Accusing Giuseppe Damiani came, I imagine, a correct number of persons - there would be prison warders, perhaps one or two ex-convicts - I do not know who among the civil population of Pianosa. I believe certain influential people responsible, as I suppose, for these charges would not have the courage to come forward - they would prefer to use the testimony of prison warders and the like, to achieve their own ends - the removal and silencing of Giuseppe Damiani. Unfortunately for them he knew very well all that went on in Pianosa, and opposed acts contrary to official regulations. In Portoferraio he has had another accuser in the shape of a young relation of his wife's, who is of doubtful reputation as regards the law. Until the return of the above mentioned people to Pianosa, and the denunciation made by the young man also cited, no stir at all was made about Giuseppe Damiani - a curious coincidence, perhaps, but the facts seem to point rather to an underhand personal attack. Charges, of what precise nature I am ignorant, were brought against my brother-in-law, and on these without yet having had a chance to defend himself, he was put in prison, where he has now been for fifteen days.

My husband and I in December last were also victims of the personal spite of certain people. We were denounced as dangerous spies to the Republican Fascio and to the German Command and were kept in custody for a fortnight at Piombino. The German Commandant took a sympathetic interest in our case, which, after he had thoroughly examined and inquired into it, he dismissed as not worth further consideration, and released us. Thus he did not allow the fact of our being enemies to overweight his commonsense.

Because, perhaps, of what we ourselves have been through, and of the greater sufferings of the other members of our family, I feel very strongly animated against the cruel tyranny imposed upon so many people and families in the name of politics. Difference in politics is not the reason for destroying a man's body, or for throwing him into prison. Politics, however, are a cloak, in nearly all cases for that personal envy and desire for revenge that takes possession of some characters. The avenger takes his revenge on the first object that crosses his path, innocent or guilty.

-2-

How often is an innocent man made a scapegoat, simply because he goes about unaware of his danger.

In the case of Giuseppe Damiani, who as I understand has been accused of certain actions of a more or less violent nature, I think it is only right to explain that he is, nor ever has been an even tempered man. He suffers from nerve complications resulting from boyhood, when he had "St Vitus' Dance". It should also be considered that he has been ten years at Pianosa, among convicts and prison warders, where rough ways are nothing strange, and even violence has sometimes to be employed. The abnormal atmosphere of a penal settlement, together with the long arduous years of work, for the most part unappreciated, and latterly under a very unsympathetic Director, is bound to have had an effect on a highly sensitive nature such as Giuseppe Damiani's. It is quite impossible he should have passed through that time without making enemies, who would have found the present moment their opportunity to strike at him.

It is not hard to imagine the suffering of the soul of Giuseppe Damiani, who has now been fifteen days in the prison of Portolongone, that "Living Sepulchre" as it has been called, for the worst criminals. The Italian law does not allow that men guilty of minor offences, or awaiting his trial, should be detained in such a place. The moral effect on the prisoner would be considered too severely lowering, while the repercussions on the public would be lamentable, giving an enormity to the offence quite out of proportion to the importance thereof, and creating alarm.

I hope within a few days to be able to produce letters from various people with the object of exculpating my brother-in-law.

Ettore Damiani, and I, his wife, Cecilia Damiani, nee Taylor, desire to make the request that Giuseppe Damiani might return home on our responsibility, pending the further investigation of his case.

Signed: Cecilia Damiani nee Taylor.

Ettore Damiani.

Procchio, 12 August 1944.

5

Mapa.

1. ~~Memo dated 17.9.43 from Planning Staff
on availability of maps~~
2. Application 19.9.43 for Town plan of Rome

0 4 8 4