

ACC 10000/143/2586 149.01 / FB BENVILACQUA FRANCESCO - STURLA PIETRO

MAY - JUNE 1944

SECRET
HEADQUARTERS
A.C.C.
SECURITY BRANCH,
A.P.C. 394

SB/311.5/149.

12th June, 1944.

SUBJECT : Enemy Agents (BEVILACQUA Francesco; STURIA Pietro).

TO : Col. A.E. YOUNG, Director, Security Branch, A.C.C.
G.S.I.B., A.A.I.
G.S.I.B., 5 Corps.

1. I have made every possible enquiry into the circumstances of the subjects crossing from German Occupied Italy to Allied Occupied Italy, connected with the German Intelligence Service, but there is insufficient evidence to take them before a General Allied Military Court.

2. I have taken statements from the following, copies of which are attached :

Sgt. E. MINNETT, 10350476, 68 F.S.S.
Capt. Robert M. GOLD, O.C. 68 F.S.S.
Col. E. COPTIS, 5 Corps R.I.P.
Capt. J.G. DAWSON, G.S.I. (b) No. 2 District.
Capt. G.A. GENNAROPOULO, Intelligence Officer C.S.D.I.C. (Sub-Centre EAST).

3. The story commences at about 1500 hrs on the 18th April, 1944, when the subjects were taken by Italian peasants to the office of Sgt. E. MINNETT, which was then situated at VILLA SANTA MARIA, which at that time was in a forward area.

4. The two subjects had asked the peasants to direct them to the British Command, and they took them to Sgt. E. MINNETT.

5. Under further interrogation the subjects stated they were Refugees from German Occupied Territory, and in answer to a direct question said they had had no association with the German Intelligence Service.

6. The subjects were then sent to Capt. R.M. GOLD, the O.C. of 68 F.S.S., to whom they told a similar story, and Capt. GOLD then took subjects to 5 Corps P.W. Cage.

7. Some suspicion was attached to subjects owing to the amount of money found on them - 17,000 lire between them - and their acknowledged movements in German Occupied Territory.

8. At 5 Corps P.W. Cage they were interrogated at some length by Cpl.

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8. At 5 Corps P.W. Cage they were interrogated at some length by Col. E. COPTIS, to whom they told the same story as before.

9. The first night at 5 Corps P.W. Cage subjects were kept under guard, but the following night, having allayed the suspicions of the interrogators, they were not placed under guard, but treated as genuine refugees.

10. During the evening of 23rd April, 1944, subjects were placed on a train at TORINO di SANGRO with fourteen other Refugees. There was no guard of any kind on the train and the train did not leave until 0240 hrs 24th April, 1944.

11. After the train had left TORINO di SANGRO, information was received that the subjects were German Agents.

12. As a result of this information every effort was made to remove the subjects from the train, but it was not until the train reached FOGGIA that a check could be made.

13. I have interviewed Capt. LOWEN, R.T.O. FOGGIA, who was on duty at the time. He informed me he formed a search party and searched the train thoroughly, but could find no trace of subjects.

14. He passed/.....

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14. He passed this information on to G.S.I. (b) 5 Corps, who communicated with BARI.
15. Instructions were then issued from BARI to 85 Port Security Section, stationed at BARLETTA ordering the train to be searched at TRINITAPOLI.
16. At 1840 hrs on the 24th April 1944, A/Sgt. H.T. BARSBY and A/Sgt. H.T. HILLIER, both of 85 Port Security Section searched the train at TRINITAPOLI.
17. I have interviewed both A/Sgts., and they informed me that when the train arrived at TRINITAPOLI they called on all the civilians to alight. When it appeared that all the civilians were off the train the A/Sgts. called the names of subjects who answered to them immediately.
18. The subjects were then taken to BARLETTA, where, the next day, they were interviewed by Capt. DAWSON, and they re-affirmed their story of being refugees.
19. Subjects were then taken to BARI prison and some days later Capt. DAWSON interviewed BEVILACQUA alone. BEVILACQUA, after a little hesitation admitted the German Intelligence Service had sent him over the lines, but added that he had no intention of completing the mission. He added that the reason he and STURIA had not told their full story in the first place was because the Germans had told them that all self confessed spies were shot out of hand by the Allies.
20. The two subject were later interrogated by Capt. GENNAROPOULO, to whom both readily told their full stories.
21. The reason this case was put up for investigation was because both subjects did not tell their full story until they had been interrogated several times; and because of two conflicting reports of what happened on the train. One story stating subjects had escaped from the train, and the other that they were found hiding on the train.
22. The train story is now quite clear and the fact that subjects travelled so far unescorted and made no attempt to escape gives some strength to their story as to why they crossed the lines and also why they only told half their story for so long.
23. I would here mention that Capt. GENNAROPOULO is so convinced of the truth of the story subjects told to him that he suggests they might be usefully used by the Allies.
24. Under all the circumstances I cannot recommend that subjects be taken before a General Allied Military Court on a charge of Espionage on behalf of the Germans.



J.P. HARE,

0104

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WRH/BM.


Z. R. HARE,
Major,
Security Branch,
H.Q., A.C.C.

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0105
ATESSA, 31 May; 1944.

Statement by 10350476, Sergeant MINETTI, E.W.
68 Field Sec; Section, Int. Corps.

On 18 April, 1944 at approximately 15.00 hrs. two peasants named DI FRANCESCO Berardino and D'ORAZIO Fedele di Camillo, and an Italian auxiliary policeman employed by the F.S., escorted to my office at VILLA SANTA MARIA two men, whose names, I ascertained from identity documents in their possession, were:

STURLA
&
BEVILACQUA

In the presence of STURLA & BEVILACQUA, and of the auxiliary policeman, the two peasants declared that the above named had arrived at their farmhouse, situated at Contrada Croce, Comune of CIVITALUPATELLA, at about 07.00 hrs. on that day and said they had come from enemy occupied territory and wished to proceed south.

STURLA then declared that both he and BEVILACQUA had fled from GENOA, and after visiting a relative of BEVILACQUA in the south of Italy they desired to present themselves to the Italian Military Authorities. STURLA also stated that he asked the peasants where the British Command was situated as they wished to report there. The peasants agreed that this was so.

After dismissing the peasants and escort I first searched and interrogated BEVILACQUA, who maintained that neither he or STURLA had had any contact with the enemy, apart from paying a soldier for a lift from ROME to the neighbourhood of FOFOLI. I found nothing incriminating on his person.

On STURLA I found a sum of approximately Lire 17,000 about half of which he said belonged to BEVILACQUA. STURLA told precisely the same story, in every detail, as BEVILACQUA, and expressed indignation at being searched and considered in any way suspect. Apart from the money I found nothing on STURLA's person which might arouse suspicion. STURLA, in reply to my questions, vehemently denied any contact with the German Int. Service.

I transferred both men to the local Gaol for the night, and on the following day dispatched them under escort to the F.S.O. 68 F.S.S. at ALESSA, with a report concerning each man's interrogation.

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I speak fluent Italian and my interrogation of these men was carried out in Italian.

E. Winnett 6

10350476, Sgt.
68 F. S. S.

Statement of Capt. ROBERT MARTIN GOLD, O.C. 68 F.S. Section

1. I am the Field Security Officer responsible (interalia) for the area VILLA SANTA MARIA, where during the month of April a detachment of my Section consisting of Sgts MINETTI and WALLWORK was located.
2. On the morning of 20 Apr 1944 two Italian youths, named BEVILLACQUA Francesco and STURLA Pietro, were brought to my office by Sgt WALLWORK and a Carabinieri escort from VILLA S. MARIA. A report from Sgt MINETTI accompanied them.
3. This report stated in effect that these two men had crossed the lines from enemy territory stating that they were refugees but that some suspicion attached to them owing to their account of their movements in enemy territory and the large amount of money (something over 17,000 lire) which they had in their possession.
4. During the afternoon of 20 Apr I interrogated the two men separately for some three hours when they repeated and amplified the stories contained in Sgt MINETTI's report.
5. On 21 Apr I took the two men to PAGLITA where I caused them to be handed over to the 5 Corps P.W. Cage. I sent with them copies of Sgt MINETTI's report and of my own interrogation report. This was the last I saw of BEVILLACQUA and STURLA.
6. On the night of 23/4 April I received information to the effect that the two men were German agents and I immediately caused enquiries to be made to have them detained.
7. I speak Italian and all my conversations with the two men were conducted in Italian.

Robert Martin Gold 5

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31 May 1944

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STATEMENT BY CPL. E. CORNIS, 7834 RASC, of 8 ARMY FOOT
OF INTERPRETERS, on:-

STURLA Pietro and
REVILACQUA Franco

I, the undersigned, state the following:-

On 21 APR 44 the a/m were brought to 5 Corps R.I.P. in the evening, by 68 F.S. Section, as Refugees from E.O.T. Reports and personal effects accompanied them.

On arrival they were registered and accommodated as ordinary Refugees, in an enclosure which is not locked and guarded only by a prowler.

At about 23.00 Hrs the C.C. P.O.W. Cage, adjacent to R.I.P., transferred them to a locked and guarded pen.

Next morning they were brought back to R.I.P. where I, together with Lt. ROGER and Sgt. FONDINI, interrogated them both separately several times.

Statements on Interrogations attached.

Their stories seemed satisfactory and they were left at liberty in the R.I.P. Camp, till the morning of the 23 APR 44. They were entirely unguarded and made no attempt to escape.

On 23 APR 44 they were taken down on their own by truck, with an unarmed escort of one, and handed over to R.T.O. TORINO DI SANGRO Station.

They took with them their personal effects and a letter to M.T.O., BARI, asking him to hold them for disposal to No. 300 M.U. C.S.D.I.C., BARI, for further interrogation.

A letter was sent 22 APR 44 to No. 300 M.U., C.S.D.I.C. advising them to expect the a/m Refugees.

The individual stories given to me by the a/m were as follows:-

STURLA, Pietro.

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STURLA, Pietro.

2 SEP 43 At the Armistice at REGGIO EMILIA Airfield.
10 " " . Escaped to return home to GENOA.
END NOV Moved with family to GIGOLI (San Mignato)
40 Kms. from FLORENCE, to avoid call up.
He worked for two months with his father on rly.
Pay 1,200 lire a month.
17 DEC 43 Went to MILAN by train with C.C.P.R. Permit.
18 " " Volunteered at 1st Squad. IAP. Was accepted.
19 " " He deserted and went to GENOA where he met
BEVILACQUA, whom he had known since 1936,
when at school together at GENOA.

There they discussed crossing the line for the first time. *Epl. Datta*

Page 2.

STATEMENT OF: S. GORTIS, 7834 RASC, ON: STURIA & BEVILACQUA.

- 21 DEC 43 He returned home to GIGOLI, having arranged to meet at a future date at the house of PIAMIGIANI, Via Brunelleschi 2, FLORENCE.
- 8 MAR 44 He met BEVILACQUA at the above address and they decided to go to ROME with idea of crossing line.
- He said he left home with 15,000 lire of his own.
- 15 " " Arrived at ROME and stayed with his uncle, AVV. VOLPI, Via Padova 33. They made the journey by Pullman bus. They stayed about a month amusing themselves. Spent about 2/3,000 lire.
- 10 APR 44 They left ROME for POPOLI. Got lift in German truck, for which they paid 500 lire each.
- From there they walked towards POGGAFIA.
- 12 " " They arrived at a house near POGGAFIA, owned by a fat woman, ZOCUOLETTA.
- 17 " " "ARMANDO", a guide, came to the house and offered to show them the way for 2,000 lire. They set out that evening.
- 18 " " They arrived near FALERA where the guide left them. They continued alone to MONTENERODOMO from where they were escorted by peasants to 58 P.S. Section.
- He said he came SOUTH as he was disillusioned by the corruption of the Fascist regime.
- BEVILACQUA Franco
- 8 SEP 43 At ANCONA.
- 14 " " He returned to GENOA, to his home.
- 31 OCT " Called up and sent on a course as Allievo Ufficiale at MONCAGLIERI (TORINO). He stayed there until end of JAN 44, except for short visits home to GENOA.
- 3
- DEC 43 On a visit to GENOA he met STURIA, whom he had known since 1936, while at school together.

10 APR 44 They left ROME for POPOLI. Got lift in German truck, for which they paid 500 lire each.

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18 " " They arrived near PALENA where the guide left them. They continued alone to MONTEPERODOMO from where they were escorted by peasants to 68 P.S. Section.

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31 OCT " Called up and sent on a course as Allievo Ufficiale at MONCAGLIERI (TORINO). He stayed there until end of JAN 44, except for short visits home to GENOA.

- DEC 43 On a visit to GENOA he met STURIA, whom he had known since 1936, while at school together. They discussed crossing the line together, and he gave STURIA an address where they might meet in FLORENCE: Via Brunelleschi 2.

END JAN 44 He deserted the Cadet School as he heard that after a course of three months he would only pass out as ASGT. and would be sent to the front. Also the officers were very selfish and thought only of themselves.

8 MAR 44 He met STURIA at the prearranged address in FLORENCE, and they decided to cross the line by way of ROME.

From there on their stories were identical, including their reason for crossing the line.

31 MAY 44 *Ep. 217-1834* (5 CORPS R.I.P.)

STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN DAWSON CONCERNING THE INTERROGATION OF :

STURLA,

and BEVILAQUA,

At 0800 hrs on 25 April I interrogated the above mentioned persons separately at BARIETTA.

The interrogations were brief, lasting a few minutes only for each person. Each affirmed that he had nothing further to add to the statement already made to F.S.P. concerning his recent movements.

Some days later I again interrogated BEVILAQUA at BARI. After considerable hesitation he admitted that, to avoid military service in the Republican Fascist Forces, he, together with STURLA, had accepted service with a GERMAN espionage organisation in FLORENCE.

This organisation sent them both on to ROME and from there to another GERMAN Espionage HQ., where after very scanty training in the recognition of BRITISH military signs they were sent across the lines to obtain military information in the forward areas. Their mission was to have lasted about a fortnight.

BEVILAQUA, then stated that both he and STURLA accepted the mission only as a means of crossing into ALLIED territory and that neither had any intention of fulfilling their task.

In explanation of his early silence he stated that before leaving he had been warned by the GERMANS that all self confessed agents were shot out of hand by us. He and STURLA were therefore afraid to admit that they were sent by the GERMANS.

He also stated that at FLORENCE he and STURLA had signed an obligation not to reveal their connection with the GERMANS and that they had hoped to be able to pass into ALLIED territory as refugees without breaking their word in this respect.

Owing to ^spressure of work I did not interrogate STURLA at BARI.

Joseph G. Dawson

Capt.
c/o G.S.I. (b), No. 2 District, C.M.F.

8 June 44.

C.S.D.I.C. (Sub Centre EAST)

Statement of Capt. G.A. GEMMAROPOULO, Intelligence Officer.

Subject:- Interrogation of: Giero STURLA and Francesco BEVILACQUA.

Both the above were interrogated in Italian by the undersigned between 3 and 8 May 44, at C.S.D.I.C. (Sub Centre EAST).

They readily admitted that they had accepted to cross the lines on behalf of the German Intelligence Service, but were very emphatic that they did NOT intend carrying out their mission or returning to Enemy Occupied Territory.

They stated that their mission was to last 10 days, during which time they were to operate in the VASTO - TERAMO area.

They reported that they had travelled, unescorted, on a refugee train from TORINO DEL SANGRO to TRINITAPOLI, and made NO attempt to escape having NO desire to do so.

Heinrich
Capt

C.S.D.I.C. (Sub Centre EAST).

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