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ITALY
IN TRANSITION

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*Extracts from
the private journal of*

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With a foreword by

The Right Hon. the Lord Rennell of Rodd
K.B. C.B.

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FOREWORD

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Italy in Transition is an account of the experiences of an officer who served under me in Sicily and, later, on the mainland of Italy in 1943 and 1944, that is to say during the period of the Allied Military Government which preceded the resumption of the administration of Italian Territory by the Italian Government. The chronicle does not pretend to be an official or complete record even of those areas which the author saw. But it does give an interesting picture of how the Allied Military Government was set up and worked by the men who took part.

A little background may help the reader and correct some mistaken impressions which have got abroad.

When a territory has been occupied, *vi et armis*, the pre-existing machinery of government by the very nature of the circumstances frequently breaks down and usually comes to an end. This is obviously more likely to occur when the central government at the capital is, and remains for some time, cut off from the territory occupied; for when the outlying parts cease to have central direction, the local machinery of government must become incoherent. Moreover, since, as in Italy, the central as well as the local machinery of government may contain political factors and traditions which are undesirable, repugnant and even dangerous to the occupying troops and their governments, and which have to be eliminated, the breakdown is likely to be aggravated. A temporary government including a new central authority has therefore to be instituted to render administrative first aid. Breakdown of law and order is not only undesirable *per se*, but creates dangers. Moreover, the occupying troops need local resources such as labour, railways, and ports, and supplies in so far as these are available, and it is the duty of the substituted government, the Military Government, to provide for such requirements. But a military government is no ultimate substitute for a civil government though it may have to continue until a peace treaty or other international arrangement restores full civil government, autonomous in the case of metropolitan countries, or dependent perhaps on a new sovereign state in the case

of colonial or detached territories. A military government is always even at best a temporary régime, however long it may last. It is instituted in the first place to enable the armies which have conquered the territory to prosecute their military operations more efficiently; and in the second place to provide for the well-being and local needs of the civilian population within the limits of policy and available resources of the governments which are waging war against the enemy.

A military government is 'military' because in an occupied country which is a theatre of war there can be no other authority than that of the commander of the troops who exercises that authority by the oldest sanction known in law, the sanction of force arising out of conquest.

An Allied military government was set up in Sicily as soon as the landing of the Allied troops took place. It was the first military government in Europe and the first which was a joint Anglo-American organization. But prior to that, no less than nine military governments had been set up by the British Army in African territories as they were conquered or liberated by British troops. These governments were set up, in Cyrenaica three times (the first two administrations came to an end with the evacuation of the territory in 1941 and again in 1942), in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, Madagascar, and Tripolitania. While the problems of these territories with their large native populations and foreign countries differed very considerably from those expected and found in Italy, the experience gained was valuable, and certain problems, though on a smaller scale, were not dissimilar from some of those encountered in Italy.

The art and problems of all administration are in principle really the same wherever they arise. In the main, so far as the population to be administered is concerned, they are to provide law, order, and justice, and to relieve distress and want. In a military government all these objectives of administration are subordinated to military necessity. Nowhere more than in the realm of supply does this subordination make itself felt in a military government. Civil supplies can only be brought in within the limits of shipping space, port capacity, ability to handle given quantities and distribution facilities available, after the military

requirements of the fighting armies in the field have been met. It is idle to complain that this or that town cannot be fed when the available port capacity is say 3,000 tons a day and the battle requirements of troops are in excess of that figure: or where there are no lorries or insufficient railway trucks to carry the foodstuffs for civilians even if these can be landed. It is in this field that lies the greatest problem confronting a military government and it is precisely here, where competing claims have to be settled, that the decision of the local commander-in-chief is, and must be, final. He will take the advice of his staff which includes the head of the military administration of the civilian population, but if he decides that the requirements of the troops shall take precedence in all respects, or only to a major extent, it is no use complaining. If there is not enough capacity beyond what the armies need to give battle to the enemy which is the first objective of the commander-in-chief, the civil population of a city may have to go short of food, after all local resources have been used.

The second major element in military government or indeed in all government is the attitude and co-operativeness, or otherwise, of the population to be administered. The truism that people have the governments they deserve merely means at long last that people are their own government. A government may be able by force and elaborate machinery to oblige unwilling people to do what it wants; but the use of force on the scale necessary to drive unwilling or recalcitrant people is frequently impracticable even in peace-time. In war it requires human resources which are never available. We saw this throughout Europe under German rule, when without exception subject peoples rose and obliged the Germans to divert valuable military resources to keep them under control; the effort involved in keeping troops as garrisons to exercise that force weakened the fighting strength of the German Army and contributed directly to the collapse in 1945. The primary requisite demanded of a military government by a commander in the field is therefore that none, or as few as possible, of his troops shall be employed in holding down the population of an occupied territory or in restoring order. In Italy it is a fact that no Allied troops needed in the field ever had to be employed as garrison troops and no

troops were ever required to support or maintain the authority of the Military Government. So far, the Allied Military Government fulfilled what was required of it by the Commander-in-Chief.

The Italians were not recalcitrant or, with the exception of a few individuals, hostile to the Allied troops or government. Their co-operation was more noticeable for the wealth and volume of advice and criticism than for willingness to produce active assistance or assume responsibility. The ingrained characteristics of indolence, dishonesty, and black-market trading remained as prominent under Allied military government as they had been before the invasion of Italy.

Black markets exist everywhere in the world under war-time regulations. They are less widespread in those countries where public opinion is against them and where black-market traders, that is both those who buy and those who sell, are held up to opprobrium and contempt by the community as a whole. And, be it remembered, the persons who buy in the black market are just as criminal as those who sell. That is why there is so little black market in the United Kingdom. But in Italy the black market is not regarded in the same light as in England. In Italy every one, both buyer and seller in the black market operate as they have operated for years, and public opinion condones them. Now, black markets cannot be cured by police and prisons unless public opinion or an abundance of things operates to kill them. Italy is normally deficient in foodstuffs and in time of war, especially during a campaign, this deficiency cannot be remedied either locally or over all. Further, given the Italian capacity and indeed habit of black-market trading and you encounter a situation which no military or any other government can expect to change for a long time.

The administrator must always face the problem of how much he can do with his resources at any given moment. The art of the administrator lies, not in knowing how to make laws or rules, but in knowing what laws and rules he can make. Nothing is more mischievous than to enact laws which are not obeyed and which the administrator cannot enforce; and the enforcement of law is largely a function of public opinion aided by, within the limits of available force, salutary punishment meted out to the few as an

example for the many. Generally speaking recognition of the aphorism that 'the Best Government is the Least Government' works better than to attempt too much and neglect the practical in striving for perfection. These principles are not usually appreciated by those who have no administrative experience which includes not only nearly all the arm-chair critics and observers of military government in Italy and elsewhere but also, unfortunately, many of the staff who had remoter charge of civil affairs in the British and American Armies in Europe.

The fact is that outside the realm of the professional administrator and student of public administration there is not a very large number of men who know very much about public administration. This has been, and is, the difficulty in organizing all the military governments which have been brought into existence. On the British side, the large class of Colonial civil servants and of men who have done public administration in England, both paid and unpaid, was drawn on for man-power and, when secured, proved quite invaluable. The analogous classes are smaller in America where the professional civil servant is more difficult to find and secure. The staff for Sicily and a part of the mainland of Italy was initially fixed at about 600 drawn equally from the two countries. The officers included men of all sorts with a fair proportion of Italian speakers and of men with administrative experience. The combination of these two qualifications in any one individual was indeed rare. Next after professional administrators, men with experience of administration in business, with legal experience, and with academic qualifications were the most useful and most readily adaptable. Regimental training in both the British and American Armies does not normally produce good administrative personnel. The reason is not far to seek. Generally speaking in both armies the regular officer has no financial experience whatsoever: normally throughout his career he has no control of funds and no administrative responsibility beyond the few minor regimental funds and the equipment under his supervision. He does not have to budget for stores and equipment or procure them from their sources of origin: his scales are laid down for him. His handling of men and things is by rule and regulation, and he is always at long last able to give an order in the knowledge that it will be executed or receive instructions

needed, and they passed on to their appointed objectives leaving, without further thought but with some ephemeral abuse, the Allied Military Government behind to clear up and carry on.

While the Allied Military Government, somewhat short of men and even shorter of transport, was endeavouring to cope with the rapidly expanding area of Italy conquered by General Alexander's armies, another body of Allied officers was being recruited and collected in Algeria to become the Allied Commission of Control which was to take over the guidance and supervision of the Italian Government when Rome should be taken and the occupied provinces of Italy returned to the Italian Government for administration. Neither this body of officers nor the additional officers needed for the expanded Allied Military Government, which by October had reached Naples and north of Bari, were sent to Italy to be attached to my staff. A limited number of officers was sent as a nucleus to bring the Allied Commission of Control into existence at Brindisi where the King of Italy and Marshal Badoglio, escaped from Rome after the Italian Armistice, were maintaining the legal existence of the Government of Italy. Then suddenly a large mass of the Allied Commission of Control was pitchforked on to my headquarters administration at Palermo where my American Deputy was carrying on the Allied Military Administration of the rearward provinces, as I was doing of the forward provinces at General Alexander's headquarters on the mainland. The creation of this separate body and its superimposition on the Allied Military Government long before the Italian Government resumed administration of Sicily and Southern Italy was a mistake and led to many difficulties. The correct course would have been to have added staff progressively to the Allied Military Government organization and to have formed the Allied Commission of Control out of the former when the time came. The Allied Commission of Control would then have had the experience of Italy enjoyed by the Allied Military Government officers since the landing, instead of finding themselves usually superior in rank but inferior in experience and knowledge to those whose work they proceeded to take over. The situation which arose is vividly and sometimes rather directly described in the pages of this Chronicle.

In the outcome, the occupied provinces of Sicily and Southern Italy were taken over by the Italian Government under the Allied Commission of Control in February 1944. Allied military government then ceased except in the forward zones of operation of the 5th and 8th Armies. Many of the officers concerned with the first beginnings of military government gradually left Italy for other theatres. They took away with them a wealth of experience gained in that hard school of improvisation and the manufacture of bricks with very little straw which military government in the field provides. The lands which they helped to administer retain the memory of men who did their best in all honesty and disinterestedness for the populations committed to their charge and even instituted some reforms, which is not a primary duty of any military government. In Southern Italy many already look back to the days of AMGOT with regret. The more outspoken critics of AMGOT turned their attention to other matters, and some have even admitted to having been a little premature and not wholly well informed in their judgements in 1943.

Two things remain to be said.

Allied military government in Italy in its original conception was a joint Anglo-American enterprise in which the functions of British and American officers were complementary and not duplicated. They were, as was the local term, 'wholly integrated'. This remained the case even when Allied military government was later restricted to the forward combatant areas of the two armies advancing up the length of Italy. The Allied Control Commission which took over was likewise an 'integrated' Anglo-American concern though never quite as much as was AMGOT. Nowhere else in Europe in the realm of Civil Affairs was the merging of British and American personnel into one whole (and not two parallel organizations) attempted, in spite of the success achieved in Italy in terms of efficiency and good relationship. Indeed in Germany from the outset the American and British Civil Affairs organizations in the field were separate and the zones of administration of Germany were set up and kept as separate national organizations. History will examine and comment on the whys and wherefores of the two plans, and on the consequences to the people administered. I do not doubt, what-

ever the answer of history to these questions is, that the Italian experiment will be judged to have been an unqualified success. Those of us who were associated with this experiment and built the first foundations in 1943 are very, justifiably, proud of the success achieved and the way it lasted.

The second thing is this. In Italy the civil administrative machine was a whole and separate from the various branches, services, and corps of both armies—separate from top to bottom. The contact was at the top with the Commander-in-Chief whose staff officer and executive deputy the Chief Civil Affairs Officer was. In Northern Europe the civil affairs officers were staff officers of the various military commanders in whose zones or districts they were operating. The difference is very material because in Italy (as in Africa before) the Chief Civil Affairs Officer was the head of a corporate whole of British and American officers who belonged to him, just as the troops of a military unit belong to the commander of that formation. The result was that there was the possibility and practice of a uniform policy. It furthermore obviated different parts of the country becoming separated from each other by divergent policies and methods of administration in different zones. History will also pass judgement on the merits of the two systems and the consequences of them.

Whatever may be the answer to these questions I commend to all who are interested in military government *Italy in Transition* where they can learn much of what is done in the field and obtain a good deal of enjoyment from this account of the doing of it.

RENELL OF RODD

The Rodd

Herefordshire

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INTRODUCTION

Italy in Transition is a day-by-day diary written during a crucial period of military government in Italy when the first principles of Allied supervision of Italian education were laid down and during which the whole fabric of control was established.

In July 1943, while still Staff Officer for Education at Oxford, I was asked by the Controller of Army Education if, in view of my knowledge of continental universities, I would accept immediately the appointment of Educational Adviser in Italy. Without delay I left Oxford as it was understood I was wanted in Sicily urgently. As often occurs in military life there then began a series of infuriating delays, all, so it always seems to the victim, specially designed to retard him alone. I was kept marking time for days in an assembly centre in London, and told that air transport was out of the question. Even when the journey had started more valuable days were consumed in the Clyde. When, at length, I arrived at Algiers, I was kept waiting for more precious days because the military government section of Allied Force Headquarters could tell me nothing, seemed unconcerned over telling me anything, had no instructions, and was uninterested in getting any instructions about an educational officer for Italy, and generally blamed the War Office, and, in short, was bent upon sending me to a camp in the desert, at Tizi Ouzou, into which they were pitching waifs and strays of all kinds who some day might be used for military government, and where synthetically, they studied the problems of Italian government from instructors, the confidence of some of whom was the greater in proportion to their ignorance.

The instinct of self-preservation caused me to resist all the blandishments of the military government section which were devoted to persuading me to spend the rest of my military career, or a substantial part of it, in Tizi Ouzou—and so I remained obstinately in a tent in a sandpit overlooking Algiers enduring hardly the baking heat of August and all the time trying to find a way out of this obstacle to the simple proposition, that I was on

my way to Sicily for a specific purpose in response to a definite demand. I believe that I might have remained in my tent in the sandpit (where, incidentally I saw the finest anti-aircraft fire-work displays during air raids that I have ever experienced), had not bluff and strong-minded General McSherry arrived at the military government section. I saw the General and I told him for what I had been sent, and I asked him if he wanted me or if he did not. Orders were then given that I should be sent on to Palermo at once.

The curious thing about this appointment was its casualness. A first war aim of the Allies was the removal of the taint of fascism from the public life of Italy, and particularly from the educational system. Nothing else in the long run mattered. As soon as I was told to report myself to Civil Affairs in London I endeavoured to get information from them about the scope of the work and the terms of reference to which I should have to conform, but in this I failed. They could tell me neither how many officers I should have, if any, or where I should be expected to operate, or anything else. I then had to have recourse to mother wit.

Knowing, through Lord and Lady de Saumarez, Sir Percy Loraine, who had been our last Ambassador in Italy, and who had the unpleasant task of receiving Mussolini's declaration of war, I betook myself to him to find out all I could about the position of everything relevant in the situation in 1940. Sir Percy set himself out to bring me right up to date with every aspect of Italian affairs likely to come within my purview, and gave me much sound advice for which I was subsequently extremely grateful.

I had recourse also to Sir Alfred Zimmern, whom I had come to know very well at Oxford, and from him too, I gained much information of value.

Thus I spent that enforced idleness at the assembly centre in London gathering from friends what I felt then, and still feel, should have been the duty of the authorities to supply.

Actually a manual for military government had been prepared, commonly called the Amgot 'Bible' (everything in the Army during this last war seemed to become a 'Bible'), but I did not know of its existence till many months after I had been in Italy,

and I never had a copy in my hands till after I left. It is probably as well that I did not see it before commencing my duties, as what was written there was not always accurate and practicable to carry out in the field.

Apart from this lack of initial information and direction from official sources on the policy to be pursued in re-establishing the Italian educational system free from fascism, one other difficulty presented itself acutely once I reached Sicily. There was really no way of getting information from England, and I had to have recourse to personal letters to obtain such assistance as might be got in that way. I was no longer under the control of the War Office educational authorities, and my immediate superiors were Lord Rennell and General McSherry, and Allied Force Headquarters at Algiers where the educational problem was little understood or appreciated. This, of course, will always be the case with the military mind, especially when active operations are in progress, for food, communications, and public order rank highly in importance, although the ultimate value of these things is little compared with education.

Had there been any other commanders than Lord Rennell and General McSherry, his deputy, nothing like that which was carried out could have been done in Italy. They were as conscious as I was of the pressing importance of the educational problem—with all the schools closed, children on the street, fascist text-books and teachers, fascist universities, and destruction everywhere. After I had outlined to them what I thought ought to be done on the basis of the general principles behind our war aims they gave me a completely free hand. What they could not do for a long time, owing to the chronic shortages of staff and materials in Sicily, was to give me adequate staff (a problem the more acute as educationalists of the right type for such situations are not easily found) and equipment. Nevertheless by degrees these came. But what they did was invaluable—they let me call upon the financial departments for all the funds I needed to get buildings rebuilt, and staffs in schools and universities engaged and paid, and presses to work, where they existed, for the printing of text-books, and they also allowed me an equally free hand to set up commissions of Italian educationalists to revise the text-books on the spot and to advise on details of educational procedure.

Thus it was, that within a few days of arrival, my title had become out of date and a misnomer. I was called the Educational Adviser, but my work was to act, and act quickly.

As a consequence, despite the appalling difficulties and disadvantages under which the educational work had to be commenced, it came about that when the Armistice Control Commission arrived it found existing an educational machine, and not merely an 'Adviser', complete with policies and principles established in the hard school of reality and experience. It was for that reason that when the amalgamation, and absorption of Military Government Headquarters took place by the Control Commission it was decided that in the case of the Educational Division the reverse would be the case, and the new officers who had arrived with the Commission were in fact absorbed into the old AMGOT Division of Education.

Apart from the general vagueness about the scope and the objectives of my appointment which had beset me from the start, and for which some excuse may be forthcoming, what was inexcusable, and what I have failed to understand, is how any planners sitting in London and Washington could have overlooked the fact that Italian education could not be reformed without new school text-books. In all the years that had elapsed between Italy's declaration of war upon us and our conquest of Italy there had been ample time in which to plan good texts with the aid of Italian educationalists, especially those in America. But I discovered on arrival in Italy, that nothing of this kind had been provided for, nor could the authorities offer to hard pressed and struggling military government any assistance whatsoever in the educational field. There was nothing for it but to sit down and plan in the physical and spiritual ruins of Palermo not merely a new educational administration with new ideals but actually the texts of every text-book from elementary to higher schools. This was done with the aid of commissions of Italian educationalists. Having driven them hard week by week draft MSS., sometimes every line of which had been fought over by the opposing political parties represented in the commissions, were obtained. Then started the heart-breaking task of trying to find paper, cord, and machines in a war-torn country without communications and without the necessary technical staffs to produce

these books. Yet this was done, and the Italian schools in the south began opening within five months of the invasion. A record which has not been exceeded in Germany despite the fact that this later experiment in military government had a large staff and benefited by all this experience and a period of pre-invasion planning, to carry out which I was recalled to England to be Chief of Education and Religious Affairs in the German planning group of Shaef, in March 1944, when this chronicle ends.

The following pages do not pretend to be a comprehensive account of either military government in Italy, or of the educational work of that government. They are recordings of what were to me some of the more interesting daily occurrences, during the period of military government. Nevertheless, it is felt that they will form material upon which to judge more widely and with more knowledge, the difficulties which beset officers in Italy in the earlier and formative stages of Allied control of Italy.

G. R. GAYRE