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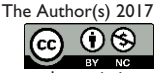
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Lord Rennell, Chief of AMGOT: A Study of His Approach to Politics and Military Government (*c.*1940–43)

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Abstract
Following Operation Husky in 1943, Francis Rodd, Lord Rennell (1895–1978) was Chief Civil Affairs Officer of AMGOT (Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories) in Sicily and Southern Italy. He had previously held important posts in civil affairs in Africa. This article examines his approach to politics and military government, with particular reference to his support for 'indirect rule'. This doctrine helped rationalize the fact that British/Allied military rule often rested on a small number of staff. Rennell's thoughts on AMGOT's administrative structures are also covered. A geographer and banker by background, Rennell emerges here as a reform-minded pragmatist.

Keywords
Francis Rodd, Lord Rennell, AMGOT, Allied military government, British military administration in Africa, indirect rule, the Mafia

In planning for Operation Husky in 1943, a key question for Allied leaders was who should lead AMGOT – Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories – the administration of the newly conquered areas. In particular, it was necessary to decide whether a British or American figure should take the lead in what was to be a joint operation. After protracted negotiations, the job was handed to an English aristocrat, Lord Rennell of Rodd, with the title Chief Civil Affairs Officer. A banker with a combative temperament, he was to prove a controversial choice. There is an extensive academic literature on how AMGOT dealt with the many political, administrative, and social challenges it

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faced,[1] but there is no in-depth study of the principles and mentality of Rennell himself. This article will address this by exploring his wartime career in military government. Before taking the AMGOT post, he had major responsibilities in civil affairs in Africa, including as the War Office's Chief Political Officer in East Africa in the second half of 1942. The policies he promoted in Italy had their roots in this African work.

Rennell is interesting for a number of reasons. One of the central aims of this article is to explain his application of 'indirect rule' to military government. The doctrine of indirect rule became something of an orthodoxy in colonial circles in the interwar period, especially amongst those who sought to protect African culture from Western modernity. But by the Second World War, it was being increasingly questioned, as the concept of partnership emerged as an alternative to the more paternalistic idea of trusteeship that informed it.[2] It was always an imprecise doctrine, left deliberately vague to enable colonial rulers to adapt it to local conditions; indeed it has been argued that the whole direct–indirect rule dichotomy is too simplistic to be of real analytical value.[3] Some have argued that indirect rule was never a defined system of administration at all, but more a philosophy and a justification of British rule, where the option to have direct administration did not exist.[4] It is here that the story of British military administration in Africa and Italy is relevant. Finding the personnel to impose direct rule in occupied territories was always difficult, hence more indirect methods of administration were attractive. Rennell's career offers a unique perspective on this. Colonial historians writing about indirect rule normally overlook the legacy of the doctrine in military government. Rennell's thinking – its origins and application – brings the connection between the colonial and military spheres into focus.

Rennell's advocacy of indirect rule, and more generally the pragmatic outlook of which it formed a part, help to explain the background to key aspects of AMGOT policy. In preparing for the invasion of Sicily, the Americans promoted the idea of replacing prominent fascist leaders with Allied soldiers. But the British, and Rennell in particular, thought the Allies lacked the personnel to rule Southern Italy directly. As historians of the AMGOT operation have noted, Rennell pressed for a gradualist approach, and played a key role in persuading the generals Alexander and Eisenhower to embrace a form of

1 See, in particular, C.R.S. Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy 1943–45* (London, 1957), chapters 1–4; Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington, DC, 1964), esp. chapters 7 and 8; David Ellwood, *Italy 1943–45* (Leicester, 1985), chapters 1–3; Manoela Patti, *La Sicilia e gli Alleati: tra occupazione e liberazione* (Rome, 2013); Isobel Williams, *Allies and Italians under Occupation: Sicily and Southern Italy 1943–45* (Basingstoke, 2013); Salvatore Lupo, 'The Allies and the Mafia', *The Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 2 (1997), pp. 21–33.

2 For a succinct overview of indirect rule, see John Cell, 'Colonial Rule', in J.D. Brown and W.R. Louis, eds, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 237–43; see also R.D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938–48* (London, 1982), chapters 1 and 2.

3 Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Patrons, Chieftancy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa and the Pacific* (Oxford, 2003), p. 12.

4 C. Andersen and A. Cohen, 'Introduction', in C. Andersen and A. Cohen, eds, *The Government and Administration of Africa 1880–1939*, Vol. 1 (London, 2013), p. xix.

indirect rule instead.[5] But Rennell's approach to politics was not purely pragmatic. For him indirect rule had an ideological appeal too. He differed from some of his US counterparts in believing that the occupying power should avoid formulating plans for the reform of Italy, and instead leave space for the Italians to shape their own political future. Indeed, he left Italy in December 1943, in part because he thought the size of the Allied Control Commission (ACC) – the successor organization to AMGOT – meant that it would tend to interfere too much in matters best left to the Italians themselves. Rennell's convictions were also evident in relation to organized crime. He tried to be tough on the Mafia – which underwent some revival under AMGOT. He always rejected post-war rumours that the Allies made use of the Mafia for the purpose of prosecuting the war more effectively.

Rennell also merits attention for a reason relating to the historiography of British military administration in the Second World War: namely the fact that he played a central role in shaping it. His book *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa, 1941–1947* (1948) is the most detailed account of British military rule in wartime Africa.[6] Although not an official history as such, it had something of that character. But it also clearly carried the imprint of his own political outlook. In addition, the official British history of the allied occupation of Italy, *The Allied Military Administration of Italy, 1943–1945* by C.R.S. Harris – who had worked for AMGOT as Controller of Property – was much influenced by Rennell. As Harris explained in his preface, Rennell personally revised the first four chapters – those dealing with the AMGOT period.[7] Not all readers found the book convincing. One American reviewer of the book complained of a pro-British bias in the text, citing, for example, criticisms in it of Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) and the ACC – which were in the chapters revised by Rennell.[8] In this context, it is important to explore the origins of Rennell's ideas about military government, for they are a guide to how a particular British version of events came to be written.

I

Rennell inherited his interest in world affairs from his father, James Rennell Rodd, a senior diplomat who had headed the British mission to Ethiopia in 1897, and was ambassador in Rome, 1908–19. A product of Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, his first experience in military administration came in 1917–18, when he worked in the Allied bureaus in Cairo and Damascus. Post-war, he had a short career in the Foreign Office (1919–24) before moving into finance. From 1929 to 1932 he worked at the Bank of England as an advisor to the Bank's Director, Montagu Norman, and as part of this was British representative at the Bank for International Settlements, 1930–31. From 1933 to 1961 he was a partner in the merchant bank, Morgan Grenfell. Banking brought him into contact with European high politics. In 1929 he was sent to Rome by Montagu Norman to address

5 Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 170–3; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 3.

6 Lord Rennell of Rodd, *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa, 1941–1947* (London, 1948).

7 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. ix, xi.

8 Lynn M. Case, *Journal of Modern History* 31 (1959), pp. 67–8.

problems at the British-Italian Bank and in that connection had a number of personal interviews with Mussolini.[9] The Foreign Office came to regard him as a key source of information about the Italian economy.[10] Also in the 1920s he established a reputation as an African explorer. Expeditions to the Mountains of Aïr in the French Sahara in 1922 and 1927, and a widely acclaimed book on the Tuareg, *People of the Veil* (1926), won him the Royal Geographical Society's Founders' Medal in 1929.

For nearly a year from July 1939, Rennell worked for the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) – an organization that he had played a role in creating.[11] He was the Ministry's chief negotiator in trade talks with Italy, promoting a strategy designed to give Britain leverage over Italy through becoming the country's main supplier of coal.[12] Already here he demonstrated some of the characteristics that he was to display in civil affairs. For example, a pragmatic streak was evident when he argued that, in order to prepare for a possible warming of relations with Italy, a distinction needed to be drawn in the press and public life of England between fascism and Nazism.[13] He was also outspoken, and easily got impatient with bureaucracy. When the trade negotiations got into difficulties, he blamed administrative chaos in MEW and competition between ministries; and he told some of his colleagues that they were incompetent.[14] There was a certain gambling instinct in his character. In one memorandum defending his approach to the trade negotiations, he wrote, 'Though we may have lost our stake on the number we have won our stakes on the colour more than once and have kept our winnings.'[15] There was surely some overconfidence here; as Robert Mallett has argued, Italy's pro-German alignment meant it was always going to be difficult to reconcile British and Italian interests.[16] It can also be argued that Rennell's approach to the trade talks amounted to a form of appeasement. Not surprisingly, Rennell was eager to counter this idea. When, in March 1942, the former British ambassador in Rome, Percy Loraine, produced a paper on British–Italian relations, Rennell criticized it for giving the impression that the trade negotiations had been a continuation of Chamberlain's appeasement policy, when in fact they were shaped by the demands of the French and British military.[17]

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9 Transcript of BBC interview with Rennell, 2 December 1970, Rennell of Rodd Papers (RRP), Bodleian Library (BL), Box 102.

10 Francis Rodd to P.B. Nicholls, 23 August 1938, National Archives in UK (NA), FO 371/22425; John Harvey, ed., *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937–40* (London, 1970), pp. 321–2.

11 Rennell, 9 May 1944, House of Lords, Hansard online; http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/.

12 Robert Mallett, 'The Anglo–Italian War Trade Negotiations, Contraband Control and the Failure to Appease Mussolini, 1939–40', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 8 (1997), pp. 140–1. A key vehicle for this policy was the Anglo–Italian Joint Standing Committee; see Rodd, 'Progress report', 7 Nov. 1939, section 13, NA, FO 1011/206.

13 War Cabinet Memorandum, Italy, 24 October 1939, RRP, BL, Box 102.

14 Rodd to Maurice Ingram, 18 December 1939, pp. 3–8, NA, FO 837/494; 'Italian Policy', 1 April 1940, p. 5, NA, FO 837/498; Rodd to Mary Rennell, 9 November 1939, Private Collection (PC).

15 Rodd, 'Second Progress Report', 25 February 1940, pp. 14–16, NA, FO 837/496.

16 Mallett, 'The Anglo–Italian War Trade Negotiations', pp. 160–1.

17 Cited in Gordon Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat: Sir Percy Lorraine of Kirkharle Bt. 1880–1961* (London, 1973), p. 282. Loraine's wife, Louise, was a cousin of Rennell's.

Rennell left MEW in June 1940, and departed for West Africa on an intelligence mission to report on political allegiances in the French colonies. For this he was made a General Staff Officer in Military Intelligence (Research) – a unit within the War Office – with the rank of Captain.[18] His wartime career in the War Office had its origins here. Initially, his work involved setting up intelligence-gathering operations in Nigeria. In Lagos, he was based at Government House with the Governor-General, Bernard Bourdillon. In August 1940 a Free French coup took place in French Equatorial Africa, headed by General de Larminat. With Bourdillon's agreement, Rennell became an advisor to de Larminat on economic matters – currency issues were a particular problem in the liberated French colonies.[19] Rennell's presence in Brazzaville brought him into regular contact with Lord Hailey – the famous author of *African Survey* (1938) – who was grappling with similar issues across the river in Leopoldville. The two men sometimes had walks together.[20] Hailey enjoyed the interaction with Rennell. In a summary of his thinking on Congo and French Equatorial Africa, he wrote, 'My personal relations with [Rennell] enable us to be of mutual assistance to each other in economic matters.'[21]

The Free French vision excited Rennell. Although pragmatic in the way he approached issues, ideas were important to him. 'If we do not [believe in our ideas], we risk resorting to expedient after expedient and people will not sacrifice themselves for expedients', he told his wife, Mary.[22] While in Nigeria, Rennell saw de Gaulle on a few occasions. Indeed, he seems at certain points to have acted as a kind of liaison officer for him.[23] He thought him articulate and interesting, if bad-mannered and lacking a sense of humour. He reported to Mary, 'The Free French movement is interesting and worthwhile. De Gaulle is a remarkable man. I think the *idea* is gaining ground, and it is only ideas which are going to succeed in this world.'[24]

On returning to London at the end of year, Rennell was drawn into the task of setting up so-called Overseas Enemy Territory Administrations in the collapsing Italian Empire. The War Office, specifically its Directorate of Military Operations (M.O.11), was assigned responsibility for this, since the Foreign Office did not have experience of this kind of work, and to give the work to the Colonial Office would imply that the new territories might be incorporated into the Empire.[25] The plan was to use the form of military government adopted by General Allenby in Palestine during the First World War – which was for the Commander-in-Chief to govern through political officers especially appointed

18 Rennell's contact in Military Intelligence was its head Frederick Beaumont-Nesbitt; Rennell's diary for 1940, pp. 5–6, PC.

19 Bernard Bourdillon, cypher telegram, 2 October 1940, Bank of England Archives, OV 100/12.

20 Rennell to parents, 22 November 1940, RRP, BL, Box 32.

21 Lord Hailey, 24 November 1940, Bank of England Archives, OV 100/12.

22 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 9 November 1940, PC.

23 See Charlotte Mosley, ed., *Love from Nancy: The Letters of Nancy Mitford* (London, 1993), p. 108; Rennell, 'Return journey from Leopoldville to Lagos', RRP, BL, Box 81.

24 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 3 December 1940, PC.

25 See F.S.V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government Central Organization and Planning* (London, 1966), pp. 23–5.

for the work.[26] The man chosen to oversee the work was the former Governor-General of Uganda, Philip Mitchell. Designated Chief Political Officer (CPO) in early 1941, his remit initially extended to the whole of North and East Africa. But in February 1942 the role was divided and he was made CPO South, with his headquarters in Nairobi. On Wavell's suggestion, Rennell was made his Chief of Finance and Accounts, even though, in recommending him, Wavell warned that he could be quarrelsome.[27]

Rennell liked Mitchell, and sometimes deputized for him. Likewise, Mitchell enjoyed working with him, as well as with his legal advisor, Ralph Hone – who became CPO North in February 1942. Mitchell recalled that the three of them came to have an 'almost uncanny mutual understanding'.[28] Rennell clearly liked working in a small group in an informal way – a pattern that was to repeat itself on a larger scale in AMGOT. In a letter of April 1943, he observed, 'With administrations such as we have built up there is a very large personal element in the absence of tradition. That personal element surrounded the originators Philip Mitchell, Ralph Hone and myself.'[29] He made a similar point after the war; in his view, much of the success of British military rule in the ex-Italian colonies stemmed from the collaboration between the three of them, as well as to Mitchell's general principles – which he summarized as leaving all local authority with the head of a local administration while reserving certain matters for control from headquarters.[30] Mitchell and his team generally had to use their own initiative in addressing issues. This was part of the attraction. Rennell later recalled: 'We had no precedent to work on and builded [*sic*] empirically. But we builded well with scarce human material and have achieved the aims that were set without famine distress or disorder.'[31]

In early 1941, Mitchell's team were preoccupied with Ethiopia. On Haile Selassie's return to the country after the Italian surrender, the main challenge was how to reconcile his desire to re-establish his authority with British military interests. The War Office and the Foreign Office – keen to show that Ethiopia was being given its independence – saw the situation differently, and, more personally, Mitchell and Eden clashed.[32] A key figure in the complex negotiations with Addis Ababa was Deputy CPO Maurice Lush, previously Governor of the Northern Province of Sudan. Rennell was also involved. He attended the Asmara conference in June 1941, at which Mitchell and the Generals Wavell, Platt, and Cunningham were present; and he was also present with Mitchell at meetings at the War Office in London leading to the final Agreement and Military Convention in January 1942.[33]

The British takeover of the Italian colonies was made more complicated by the fact there was only a small number of administrators to handle it. Until April 1941, the

26 Richard Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul: Sir Philip Mitchell and the Twilight of Empire* (London, 1992), pp. 118–19.
27 Cited in Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts* (London, 1954), p. 199.
28 Ibid.
29 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 13 April 1943, PC.
30 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, p. 312.
31 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 31 March 1943, PC.
32 Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul*, pp. 120, 128–9.
33 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 76, 87, 92–4.

Political Branch of General Headquarters, Middle East, consisted of no more than nine officers, three other ranks, and six stenographers. Even in September 1941, the total number of staff available for the administration of Eritrea, Ethiopia, British Somaliland, and Italian Somaliland was only 270.[34] It was stretching work, as Rennell explained to Mary: 'I am appalled at the magnitude of the job I have and a terrible insufficiency in personnel to deal with it.'[35] In this context there was much attraction in trying to avoid a direct takeover of Italian fascist and Vichy territories.

Rennell's thinking on this issue was evident in relation to Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. On Eritrea, he recalled, 'No alternative was open when Asmara fell than to maintain as much of the Italian administration as remained.' When Wavell met with Eden in Cairo in March 1941, Rennell wrote a memorandum to inform their discussions, which illustrates his caution about imposing 'direct' British rule:

> If H.M.G. are to become responsible for the direct administration of the native *and* Italian populations . . . the cost will be onerous and the actual method of government difficult . . . The alternative and cheaper method is to secure the co-operation of the Italian authorities to continue their administration under our control in Eritrea and Somaliland.

Rennell recommended a '*modus vivendi* with the Italian authorities' while there was still time to take over a 'running machine'. In the absence of contrary instructions, his approach was adopted in the early stages of administration in both Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.[36]

In Eritrea, where Brian Kennedy-Cooke was Deputy CPO, the approach worked best in the areas of municipal and technical services. In practice, it was still necessary to dismiss some of the more ardent fascists, and when this was the case some kind of direct rule had to be introduced.[37] Different approaches were applied in different districts. For example, military defeat meant that the Italian settlers had lost much of their credibility. This meant that it was only in the major cities of Asmara and Massawa and their surrounding settlements, and the Hamasein Plateau, that the Italian administration was initially utilized, although the Offices of Political and Native Affairs were closed down and their work transferred to the British Administration Affairs secretariat. Elsewhere, it was felt better to have virtually no administration at all than to prop up a decaying Italian organization. But in the Western Plain province a form of direct rule was adopted. There were fewer Italians in Italian Somaliland, but there were similar issues to grapple with. In Mogadishu the local fascist mayor was retained for a while in his role as head of the municipality.[38]

A similar approach was evident in the British approach to Madagascar. The island became Rennell's main focus of concern in summer 1942, after he replaced Mitchell as

34 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, p. 39.
35 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 11 July 1941, PC.
36 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 102–3.
37 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 104, 111; Rennell, *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa during the Years 1941–43* (London, 1945), p. 17.
38 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 101–4, 111, 158.

CPO South in June – and was given the honorary rank of Major-General. He was the Chief Military Administrator of the Island for a month from September 21 onwards. The central political problem was how to relate to the collapsing Vichy administration. Already after the fall of Diego Suarez in May, Lush – now redeployed to Madagascar from Ethiopia – started using local French administrative staff, where they were willing to cooperate.[39] Rennell pursued a similar approach after the Vichy leader Paul Annett abandoned the capital Tananarive in mid-September. In a statement to the War Cabinet Committee of the French Resistance in November, he reported that the successful transition of power from the French to the British had been based on observing French legal process – which appealed to the French love of 'matters of form'. Within three days of the British occupation, the whole machinery of the French administration was functioning satisfactorily, he declared.[40] 'So long as an apparently legal form can be observed, the French will swallow almost anything', he subsequently remarked.[41] He was pleased with the fact that an interim government was set up successfully; 'it was really rather an achievement', he told Mary.[42]

Rennell initially advised that only a period of extended British occupation of Madagascar would keep the settler population happy. The War Office also thought a rapid transfer of the island to the Free French would not be easy. However, the Foreign Office, eager to placate the Free French after they had been excluded from the invasion of the island, was keen to see a rapid British withdrawal.[43] Rennell was soon involved in discussions about how to bring this about, and then present in London in December when a final agreement was signed by Eden and de Gaulle.[44] In later arguing for the influence on AMGOT of Britain's African experience in civil affairs, he remarked that the Madagascan campaign provided the 'nearest analogy' to what followed in Italy on account of the fact that it was a joint campaign, and also because of the way negotiations with the French authorities led to the termination of military government.[45]

Rennell's capacity for problem-solving was also evident in Madagascar after the Foreign Office, in May, appointed one of its Cairo staff, Laurence Grafftey-Smith, as CPO in the country, at the expense of Lush in the War Office. In September, Platt overturned the decision, insisting that Lush had primacy. Rennell, who was answerable to Platt, eventually resolved the problem by giving the two men separate areas of responsibility under his leadership.[46] In his memoirs, Grafftey-Smith paid tribute to Rennell's pragmatism in handling the problem, although he also stated that Rennell exaggerated

39 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 308, 210.
40 War Cabinet Committee of French Resistance, 23 November 1942, RRP, BL, Box 73.
41 Rennell, 'Transfer of the Administration of Madagascar to the Fighting French', 22 November 1942, RRP, BL, Box 73; see also *British Military Administration*, p. 28.
42 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 7 November 1942, PC.
43 Michael Thomas, *The French Empire at War* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 142–4, 148; Rennell, *British Military Administration*, p. 221.
44 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 232, 238.
45 Rennell to General Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 1, RRP, BL, Box 76. This letter is an extended 57-page summary of AMGOT's activities.
46 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 220, 228–9.

the extent of the Foreign Office's ambitions in his summary of the episode in *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa*.[47]

The fate of the Somali peoples also absorbed Rennell's attention. He owed some of his interest in this subject to his father; the borders between Abyssinian and Somali territories had been a focus of discussion during the negotiations in 1897.[48] Throughout 1942, he was involved in discussions about the 'reserved areas' of Ethiopia, the parts of the country temporarily remaining under British military control after Haile Selassie's rule was re-established. Here he was influenced by the idea of a Greater Somalia. He wrote in his private diary for 1943, 'I succeeded in getting the reserved areas of Ethiopia consolidated so as to make possible a settlement on the basis of a Greater Somaliland.'[49] Rennell continued to support the idea of a Greater Somalia after the war, even after the idea of a Greater Somalia foundered in the late 1940s. Speaking in the Lords in 1955, he expressed pride at the fact that when he was Chief Political Officer, British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, and Ethiopian Somaliland had been united under one single administration; and he regretted the post-war partitioning of the country.[50] For their defence of British military interests and approach to Somali issues, Mitchell and his team were viewed with suspicion by some pro-Ethiopian opinion. In his memoirs, the US historian John C. Spencer, who was an advisor to Haile Selassie from 1943 to 1960, called Mitchell, Rennell, and Lush a 'military-colonial group' that wanted a British-dominated Horn; and he claimed that their interpretation of Somali problems paved the way for the later Ethiopian–Somali conflict.[51]

Rennell's emerging political outlook was as much a response to circumstance as a product of deep reflection about colonial or military government. But it is important to note that he was much influenced by figures who were strong proponents of indirect rule. In early 1943, he told his wife, 'I learnt my African administration from Bourdillon . . . and Mitchell.'[52] Bourdillon was an advocate of indirect rule, although not in its most radical form; he saw it as a means to the longer-term end of creating parliamentary institutions in Nigeria.[53] Mitchell too was keen on the concept – stemming from when he had been Secretary of Native Affairs in Tanganyika, 1929–34. His thinking there had

47 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Hands to Play* (London, 1975), pp. 43, 60.

48 James Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1894–1901: Egypt and Abyssinia* (London, 123), p. 114.

49 Rennell, Diary for 1943, p. 8, RRP, BL, Box 111; *British Military Administration*, chapter 9.

50 Rennell, 6 July 1955, House of Lords, Hansard online. See also Rennell's articles in *Manchester Guardian*, 19 and 20 December 1955; Gerald Reece, 'United Somalia', *The Times*, 1 April 1967. For an account of how the Great Somalia project was shelved, including Mitchell's views, see W.R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–51: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 280–8.

51 J.H. Spencer *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* (Los Angeles, 2006), pp. 94–8.

52 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 27 March 1943, PC.

53 C. Sylvester Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–66* (Princeton, 1970), p. 52; Robert Pearce, *Sir Bernard Bourdillon: Biography of a Twentieth Century Colonialist* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 210–12, 216.

been shaped by Donald Cameron, the Governor General of the colony from 1925 to 1931. Cameron, in turn, had been influenced by the pioneer of indirect rule, Lord Lugard, although he held to a more interventionist version of the idea.[54] Rennell was himself positive about Lugard. Following his trip to the Sahara in 1922 he wrote of the system 'so successfully instituted' by Lugard in Nigeria, contrasting it with the 'direct' French approach.[55] His views on politics and military government in Africa were thus shaped by men who were steeped in the tradition of indirect rule. There were other factors that might have inclined him to an appreciation of the doctrine. In the 1920s he had developed a real affection for Tuareg culture; his friendship with the local tribesmen was very meaningful to him.[56] There was in the idea of indirect rule an implicit endorsement of such traditions. His father's approach to diplomacy also contained a respect for locality.[57]

Rennell's link with Lord Hailey brings in a different perspective. There was a combination of elements in Hailey's outlook. He was never a firm advocate of indirect rule, but he came to appreciate the more gradualist approach of men like Bourdillon and Mitchell. His *African Survey* came to be associated with a more activist conception of trusteeship in Africa, and the replacement of the conception of indirect rule with the idea of 'partnership' – a tendency connected with the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945.[58] In his *Native Administration and Political Development* (1942), he emphasized the need for the creation of an African political class capable of managing the modern state.[59] This kind of approach would have appealed to Rennell. The two men sometimes took similar positions on Africa in debates in the Lords. For example, in July 1944 Rennell proposed a motion calling on the government to put more thought into the education and housing of Africans returning to civilian life after the war. It was strongly backed by Hailey, in the light of the need for Africans to take greater responsibility for their own social and economic development.[60] When in 1947 Lord Hailey stood down as chairman of the International African Institute – initially founded by Lugard – he nominated Rennell in his place.[61]

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54 Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts*, chapter 7; Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul*, pp. 266, 269. Pearce, *Turning Point*, p. 8. Lugard's most famous interpreter is Marjorie Perham; see in particular *Lugard: The Years of Authority 1898–1945* (London, 1960), chapters 7 and 8. On indirect rule in Tanganyika, see John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), esp. chapter 10.

55 Francis Rodd, *People of the Veil: Being an Account of the Habits, Organisation and History of the Wandering Tuareg Tribes which inhabit the Mountains of Air or Asben in the Central Sahara* (London, 1926), p. 42.

56 Rodd, *People of the Veil*, p. 421.

57 See James Rennell Rodd, *Diplomacy* (London, 1929), p. 68.

58 Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 90; John Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism 1872–1969* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 246.

59 John Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London, 1988), p. 61.

60 Speeches by Rennell and Hailey, 19 July 1944, House of Lords, Hansard online.

61 *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 17 (1947), p. 270.

Rennell was not convinced that indirect rule offered a long-term way forward for Africa. Speaking in the Lords in August 1944, he noted that indirect rule was generally thought of as 'liberal', and direct rule as 'reactionary'. But he countered that direct rule did not always have to be reactionary, and that native administrations could be 'extremely reactionary'. More specifically, he questioned the policy of extending indirect rule as applied in the northern parts of Nigeria and the Gold Coast to the south.[62] A year later, in a speech prior to the General Election, Rennell warned against 'enthusiastic anthropological administrators' trying to wrap the African up in 'cotton wool' to protect him from the outside world.[63] Such comments indicate that Rennell's enthusiasm for indirect rule in East Africa was more a pragmatic response to a wartime need than a permanent philosophical commitment to the doctrine. It also suggests that he is better seen as a pragmatic reformist than a traditionalist.

Rennell left Africa with the conviction that the empire needed significant reform. This is evident in his thinking on organizational questions in the British colonies. His War Office work led him to believe that there needed to be greater integration in the empire. For example, he wanted Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) to be integrated into British plans for East Africa. He discussed his ideas in London in April 1943 with George Gater, the Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and Arthur Dawe, Head of the Colonial Office's Africa Division – a man who took the view that indirect rule was an outmoded method of government; apparently they found his ideas 'novel'. He also shared his thinking with the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley.[64] In a debate in the Lords in late 1945, he complained that the administrative divisions existing in British East Africa and the Indian Ocean made little sense, and there needed to be a more cohesive plan for the area.[65]

More generally, Rennell's work in Africa led him to formulate his own philosophy of decision-making, which, in its pragmatism and gradualism, reinforced wider influences. He wrote to his wife in November 1942,

> The process of letting things happen and letting decisions make themselves has become more deep-seated, inescapable and satisfactory. Even the major ones in my work of a political and technical nature have made themselves – that is they reached a point at which no other decision really rationally presented itself as an alternative.[66]

II

In the light of his experience in Africa, it is not surprising that Rennell emerged as a candidate to lead AMGOT. In early 1943 there were plans for him to take on the wider role of Inspector General of Civil Affairs in Africa. But in February the Secretary of State

62 Rennell, 1 August 1944, House of Lords, Hansard online.
63 Rennell, in 'Africa and the British Political Parties', *African Affairs* 44, no. 176 (1945), p. 107.
64 Rennell, Diary for 1943 (second quarter), pp. 6–7; on Dawe's outlook, see Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 88.
65 Rennell, 29 November 1945, House of Lords, Hansard online; see also Rennell, 'Development in Colonial Administration', *The Fortnightly*, July 1945, p. 26.
66 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 14 November 1942, PC.

for War, P.J. Grigg – with whom Rennell had a good rapport – proposed him for the AMGOT job. At the end of April he formally relinquished his role as CPO in East Africa – a job that had been re-titled Chief Civil Affairs Officer – and he became CCAO of AMGOT when it came into being on 1 May.[67]

AMGOT was always a difficult compromise in terms of who had ultimate authority. The lines of accountability were eventually organized in such a way as to try to please all parties, but leave the main source of authority with the US military. Washington's initial choice to be its head was the Mayor of New York, Fiorello H. LaGuardia, a reform-minded but authoritarian figure, to whom the British were not sympathetic. When Rennell was appointed instead, he was made answerable to the head of 15th Army Group, General Alexander – who was responsible for nominating him – as Military Governor of Sicily. In turn, Alexander reported to Eisenhower, but through the medium of the US Brigadier-General Julius Holmes, head of the Military Government Section at AFHQ.[68] Many of the difficulties that occurred over the next few months had their roots in this arrangement.[69] The plan for government in Sicily was first formulated by the US Lieutenant C.M. Spofford, and then approved by Rennell with some amendments. The idea was for civil affairs officers to be attached to advancing units, so as to make it possible for them to take charge of vacated areas.[70]

One of Rennell's initial tasks was to supervise a programme of education for civil affairs at Chrea, south of Algiers. This included Italian language instruction, lectures on military government with reference to Italy; committee work in specialist areas; and physical training.[71] A key aspect of the training was the fostering of British–American unity. This was not easy. In a talk at Chatham House in February 1944, Rennell declared that the 'Anglo–American fusion' created in AMGOT had been 'outstandingly successful and complete'. But he also noted that British and American servicemen had 'complained horribly' about being required to sleep in the same houses and eat together – even if they had ended up as good friends.[72] Initially, Rennell himself was quite dismissive of some of the Americans – most of whom were new to the challenges of military government. He described the US police officers as 'college men with no training as soldiers', and called his deputy, Brigadier-General Frank McSherry, 'a nice old thing with no conception of what it is all about' – although he was soon impressed with his handling of the

67 Rennell, *British Military Administration*, pp. 609, 123. On the organization of AMGOT, see Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government*, pp. 45–59. On the process leading to Rennell's appointment, see D.S. Duff, 'Narrative for an Official History of Civil Affairs in Italy, (the Sicily Campaign)', Part II, pp. 17–28, NA CAB 44/171.

68 Andrew Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 123.

69 Ellwood, *Italy, 1943–1945*, p. 30.

70 Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy*, p. 121; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 3, 27.

71 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 25.

72 Rennell, 'Allied Military Government in Occupied Territory', *International Affairs*, July 1944, pp. 311–12; the speech was given on 1 February. See also Henry Adams, 'Allied Military Government in Sicily 1943', *Military Affairs* 15 (1951), pp. 157–65.

temperamental General Patton.[73] He warmed to the Americans. In August, he reported that the US officers in AMGOT had done 'very well', showing 'enterprise, ingenuity and tremendous keenness', 'exceeding expectations'.[74]

An important difference between the British and Americans was over how to deal with local fascist leaders. To begin with, Washington took the view that fascist officials should be removed, whereas the British were more pragmatic.[75] Rennell himself was conscious that some fascists had practical skills that were much needed, and conversely that not all anti-fascists were law-abiding citizens. He also saw a difference between the fascist party itself, which needed to be quickly suppressed, and institutions operating within the fascist system, which might have some continuing use. Indirect rule gave him the rationale for taking a gradualist and pragmatic approach to these issues. He pushed the concept forcefully, playing a central role in persuading Alexander and Eisenhower of its merits. Eisenhower initially gave him verbal instructions to proceed on this basis.[76] Recalling these discussions in early 1944, Rennell wrote,

> On the basis of the rulings I had received from the Commander-in-Chief about indirect rule, I made an estimate of the staff required on the supposition that the Italian administrative machine would be kept in existence subject to early removal of dangerous Fascists and the progressive, but not immediate removal of all Fascists which I did not regard as practical.[77]

Of course, in seeking to make use of local institutions and personnel, Rennell was following a model that he and others had already deployed in Africa. But whereas in the former Italian colonies the British deployed Italian settlers to do some of their administration, it was now an indigenous Italian population that was to be the vehicle for Allied rule.

Rennell's thinking was particularly evident in a memorandum he produced in April, in which he argued that Allied administrators should not replace local prefects, but sit alongside them and explain what AMGOT wanted done. Prefects would then issue orders to their subordinates in their own names. The aim was to avoid giving the impression that the Allies were establishing a government of their own. Rennell stressed the relevance of indirect rule on a number of grounds: it required fewer officers; local officials were more likely to remain obedient to their superiors; fewer language difficulties would arise; there was an incentive for people to remain at work when they had a chance of filling the posts of their superiors; there was less danger of a general strike; administrative breakdowns were less likely to be attributed to the Allies; education of the local administrative machine was more likely when there were fewer dismissals; and it provided reassurance that there would be no general annexation. He also thought indirect rule less complicated

73 Rennell, Dairy for 1943, p. 48.

74 Extracts from letter from Rennell to Colonel French, 3 August 1943, p. 2, NA, WO 220/312.

75 Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 170–3.

76 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 3, 10; Rennell, Foreword to G.R. Gayre, *Italy in Transition. Extracts from the Private Journal of G.R. Gayre, etc.* (London, 1946), pp. 12–13.

77 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 7.

from a budgetary point of view, since it protected AMGOT from having to absorb local personnel onto its payroll – because a local treasury system would be maintained.[78]

There was a wider issue at stake here, relating to the extent to which a military government should have a political agenda of its own. Rennell was critical of the 'reformer spirit' in some of his US colleagues. Many of them, he observed, thought in terms of 'recasting the Italian social and governmental structure'; even at Chrea they were discussing social security plans and the future fiscal system for Italy. In his mind, this failed to take into account the fact that the role of the military government was to operate on a 'maintenance basis', before giving way either to a national administration under an Armistice Commission, or a more formal Allied civil administration. For this to happen, it was necessary to keep in existence as much as possible of the local administrative machinery. This, he insisted, was the rationale behind his emphasis on indirect as opposed to direct rule. His concerns about reformism seem to have fallen on deaf ears: 'In vain I pointed out that this was not a function of military government and was a concern of the Italian people themselves under the government of their own choice, which liberated nations had been promised under the Atlantic charter.'[79]

US military planners were well aware of the need to take account of local sensitivities. Their *Field Manual 27-5* (1940), which formed the basis for the School of Military Government set up in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1942, stressed the need for military government to take account of local laws, customs, and institutions. It also stated that local governmental institutions in occupied areas should be permitted to continue, unless military necessity or some other cogent reasons required otherwise.[80] This kind of principle was evident in the planning for Operation Torch in autumn 1942, when it was insisted that as far as possible the French civilian administration should be kept intact – even though in this case the occupied area was regarded as 'friendly liberated' rather than 'enemy' territory.[81] Yet there was suspicion of British imperialism on the American side; some saw their own history of military government as more benign than European examples.[82]

It was only in mid-June that Roosevelt agreed to decisions about the removal of prominent fascists being left to the discretion of the military commander, Alexander. The formula expressing this, which was not finalized until the end of the month, cautioned that permanent appointments of Italian officials would not be made without the agreement of the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

> The replacement of any prefects and mayors of important communities . . . will rest with the military commander. He will decide whether the functioning of Military Government is better served by the appointments of officers of the Occupation Forces or by the use of the services of

78 Rennell, Memorandum, 18 April 1943, 3 pp. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), ACC, 10000/100/604; Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 171–2.

79 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 36.

80 William M. Hudson, *Army Diplomacy: American Military Occupation and Diplomacy after World War II* (Lexington, 1984), pp. 149–51, 130; Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 68–9, 77.

81 Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 32–3; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 3.

82 See Hudson, *Army Diplomacy*, p. 80.

> Italian officials. No actual appointment of Italian officials to important posts, as distinct from their temporary use, will be made until it has been approved by the two Governments through the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

As Rennell observed, the 'whole structure and policy' of the AMGOT administration as he had conceived it depended on having this agreed.[83] The wording of AMGOT's Proclamation No. 1, which had already been drafted, reflected Rennell's thinking, in that it directed all local Italian officials in provinces and communes to remain in office, unless removed by the order of the military commander.[84]

The invasion itself took place on 9/10 July. By the end of August, all prefects from pre-occupation days had been removed. Most mayors were also dismissed, if they had not fled to the mainland. But vice-prefects and deputy mayors were often permitted to remain.[85] Concurrently, a concerted effort was made to draw local society into provincial administration. Rennell explained his thinking on this in a September directive:

> I think it is desirable that, with the fatherly blessing if not the official approval of AMGOT which cannot make constitutional changes yet, a small council be set up in each commune to assist the mayor, take some of the responsibility off his shoulders and explain the necessity of unpopular measures to their constituents.

He went on to suggest that these councils should include representatives from different classes and interests, including local farmers; and that priests, doctors, and schoolmasters could be useful in building links with the community. In consequence, there emerged what David Ellwood has called a '*de facto* alliance' between Allied authorities in the provinces and the most prominent local citizens.[86] But finding citizens who were ready for this kind of responsibility was not easy. Rennell's brother, Peter – who was Senior Civil Affairs Officer in the central Sicilian province of Enna – observed that Italian officials had become so accustomed to shelving responsibility that it was sometimes necessary to force them to assume it.[87] For policing AMGOT relied heavily on the local Carabinieri – for the obvious reason that the number of Allied policemen needed to enforce order was too great to countenance.[88] Rennell thought the Carabinieri were important for keeping the Mafia in check.[89] He found the church 'neutrally helpful', in the sense that it preached acceptance and cooperation with the Allies, but refrained from denouncing Mafiosi or dangerous fascist influences.[90]

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83 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 11; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 4; Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p. 173.

84 *A.M.G.O.T. Plan, Proclamation and Instructions* (Palermo, September 1943), p. 29.

85 Rennell, 'Monthly Report for August 1943', p. 9, NA, CAB 122/442; Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p. 202. Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 41, 48–9.

86 Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p. 284; Ellwood, *Italy, 1943–1945*, p. 58.

87 Peter Rodd, cited in Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p. 279.

88 Williams, *Allies and Italians under Occupation*, p. 21.

89 Rennell, 'Notes in Reply to Comments Made in House of Commons Debate 3 August 1943', p. 1, Rennell Papers, Nuffield College, Oxford, Box 7.

90 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 32.

Already at Chrea, Rennell warned of the dangers of the Mafia.[91] Seeing it as 'less a secret society than an attitude of mind', he was conscious that no Italian government had succeeded in stamping it out completely, even taking into account Prefect Mori's efforts in the late 1920s. He saw it as a 'racket organization', but one which had played a considerable political role. Already in mid-August, he reported a growth in Mafia activity. Part of the problem, he observed, was simply that war itself and the breakdown of authority accompanying it provided a good 'culture ground for the virus'.[92] 'Unruly elements' often took advantage of the relative chaos that followed the Allied occupation of an area.[93] A case can be made for saying that indirect rule was not well suited to dealing with the criminal possibilities in this situation; indeed Harris argues that it was a 'definite failure' in suppressing the black market, although he also notes that direct rule might not have been much better. In particular, he pointed the blame at the Agents of Public Safety – those responsible for criminal investigation – as partly responsible, noting that they had been more corrupted by fascism.[94]

Rennell tried to be tough. When a local landowner, Baron Genuardo, was murdered, he had the suspects – who were Mafiosi – tried in a military court rather than by local jury, in order to ensure that death sentences were given and carried out immediately.[95] But distinguishing members of the Mafia was not easy, as he subsequently explained:

> With the people clamouring to be rid of a Fascist *Podestà*, many of my officers fell into the trap of selecting the most forthcoming self-advertiser. . . . The choices in more than one instance fell on the local 'Mafia' boss or his shadow, who in one or two cases had graduated in an American gangster environment.[96]

Conscious that some imprisoned Mafiosi were genuinely anti-fascist, Rennell still warned that they were not people to whom clemency could be extended on the grounds that they were political prisoners.[97] He later blamed the Americans for releasing some anti-fascist prisoners, who were in fact Mafiosi. He also strongly rejected suggestions that the Allies encouraged a recrudescence of the Mafia for the purpose of fighting the Germans.[98] His interpretation of how organized crime re-emerged under AMGOT is essentially in line with the view of writer Tim Newark that it was through 'misunderstanding and administrative overstretch', and 'by mistake', that AMGOT created space for the Mafia.[99]

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91 Rennell to Joanna Rodd, 6 March 1963, PC.

92 Rennell, Report to General Commanding in Chief, 15th Army Group, 18 August 1943, NARA, ACC, 10000/100/688.

93 Rennell, 'Notes in Reply to Comments Made in House of Commons Debate 3 August 1943', p. 1.

94 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 53.

95 Tim Newark, *Mafia Allies: The True Story of America's Secret Alliance with the Mob in World War II* (St Paul, MN, 2007), p. 195.

96 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, pp. 32–33; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 63; Patti, *La Sicilia e gli alleati*, p. 108.

97 Rennell, Report to General Commanding in Chief, 15th Army Group, 18 August 1943.

98 Rennell to Joanna Rodd, 6 March 1963.

99 Newark, *Mafia Allies*, p. 195. Lupo also dismisses conspiracy theories about the re-emergence of the Mafia; see 'The Allies and the Mafia', p. 29.

More personally, one historian has speculated that Rennell's aristocratic background may have blinded him to the fact that some of Sicily's landed families had Mafia connections, citing as evidence for this AMGOT's appointment as Mayor of Palermo of the landowner Lucio Tasca Bordonaro – a man from a separatist family with Mafia links.[100] This is not impossible, for in his report for August 1943 Rennell did remark that the Tasca family was 'commendably cooperating' on straightforward administrative questions;[101] but it seems unlikely, given Rennell's consistent wariness of the Mafia. He was certainly conscious of the Tasca family's links to separatism – and he was keen to suppress signs of separatism.[102] He was also aware of the fact that some local dignitaries wanted to curry favour from him. In one report, he remarked that Finocchiaro Aprile, another separatist leader from a liberal ruling family, was trying to take up certain issues with him with the view to securing his recognition as a local leader.[103] As a possible conduit for Mafia influence, Newark points the finger rather at Charles Poletti, an Italian American who had briefly been Governor of New York, and was Senior Civil Affairs Officer in Palermo – and who was responsible for Tasca's appointment.[104] Rennell and Poletti were wary of each other. Rennell did not like Poletti's 'appetite for press publicity' and warned against his appointment to a senior role in the ACC.[105] For his part, Poletti found Rennell lacking in knowledge of government administration. He also thought him superficial in his analysis of problems and disinclined to liberal democratic solutions to issues.[106]

On 3 September, fighting moved to the mainland, and a month later two new administrative districts – Calabria and Lucania – were added to the responsibility of 15th Army Group. At this point AMGOT was split into AMG Forward and Rear areas, with Rennell in command of the former and McSherry the latter, but with both remaining under the command of Alexander. Rennell spent an increasing amount of time alongside Alexander in Bari. Rennell later suggested that the creation of these two potentially competing centres of authority was a mistake.[107] The situation was made more complicated when it was decided to permit the existence of an Italian government, under Prime Minister Badoglio, in the province of Apulia, with headquarters in Brindisi. It was decided that an Allied Military Government would not be imposed there, but that AMGOT representatives

100 John Dickie, *Mafia Brotherhoods: The Rise of the Italian Mafias* (London, 2012), pp. 353–6.

101 Rennell, 'Monthly Report for August 1943', p. 3.

102 Rennell, report of 20 August 1943, p. 3, NA, WO 221/312; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 59.

103 Rennell, 'Monthly Report for August 1943', p. 3.

104 Newark, *Mafia Allies*, p. 218.

105 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 12; Newark, *Mafia Allies*, p. 219.

106 Poletti to McCoy, 27 September 1943, cited in Matthew Jones, *Britain, the United States and the Mediterranean War, 1942–44* (London, 1996), p. 94. For the September report on Palermo province, including some tensions with AMGOT headquarters, see NARA, ACC, 10106/115/23.

107 Rennell, 'Memorandum on AMG and ACC', 30 December 1943, p. 1, RRP, BL, Box 111; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 95–6.

would act as liaison officers and have considerable influence. It was thought that capital would be gained by stating that military government would only be installed when it was essential for military operations.[108]

Further complexity was created with the formation on 11 November of the ACC, the body designed to take over from AMGOT. This soon had the character of a 'large, military bureaucracy'.[109] Rennell was unhappy with how it was set up, in particular with the fact that it was created and trained separately in Algiers, and not on the basis of AMGOT. In his view, the result of this was that when the ACC came into being, its officers often found themselves superior in rank and inferior in experience to those whose work they took over. Rennell was also worried about its size: 'The number of officers, and in many cases their training and background, leave me in doubt whether the Italian Government would ever survive being overlaid by such a nursery governess. The authority of the Prefectorial Government in the provinces will never survive so numerous a staff.'[110] In Rennell's mind, the ACC as constituted pointed more in the direction of direct rather than indirect rule, and in this sense it ran counter to the political philosophy he had been so strongly promoting. As he observed, 'The more men available in the field the more direct administration they will try to undertake.' He found his concerns shared by the Soviet representative on the Allied Advisory Council for Italy, Andrei Vyshinsky.[111]

Rennell also thought the existence of a 'nomadic' ACC administration added to the problems connected with managing AMG Forward and Rear, and overseeing the areas under Italian rule. Indeed, he thought the ACC was responsible for some of the economic and civil supply problems that became pressing as the Allies advanced into Naples and beyond. He was also dismissive of the abilities of the American General chosen to head the ACC, Kenyon Joyce, and thought there was a tendency under him to 'Americanize' the culture at ACC headquarters. In leaving AMGOT, he shared his concerns about Joyce with Eisenhower, painting a stark picture of how bad things had become.[112] Harold Macmillan, Churchill's representative at AFHQ, also had a low opinion of Joyce.[113]

Rennell attributed many of these problems to the Military Government Section at AFHQ. He had originally hoped the Military Government Section would be a channel of communication between AMGOT and AFHQ, but already in June was concerned that it was starting to become a policymaking body in its own right.[114] To his frustration, it turned into the main channel of communication with Washington and London on matters relating to AMGOT and the ACC, with him and Alexander being kept out of the loop. He was particularly unhappy about being excluded from discussions about the future

108 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 95–6.

109 Ellwood, *Italy 1943–1945*, p. 55.

110 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 54; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 108, 113.

111 Rennell, 'Memorandum on AMG and ACC', 30 December 1943, p. 6.

112 Rennell, 'Memorandum on AMG and ACC', 30 December 1943, pp. 4, 6; Rodd to Alexander, 29 January 1944, pp. 34–5, 55.

113 Harold Macmillan, *War Diaries: Politics and War in the Mediterranean January 1943–May 1945* (London, 1984), pp. 273, 290.

114 Rennell, 26 June 1943, RRP, BL, Box 111; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 9.

government in Rome; he was informed by the Military Government Section that he would not be involved in the Armistice Commission, nor in any Allied organization in Rome – in the event that there was no Italian government.[115] He also thought the Military Government Section presented its plans as emanating from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, when in fact the Combined Chiefs had simply approved the plans submitted to them. He was particularly concerned with the leadership of the Military Government Section. He was suspicious of Holmes's ambition and lack of administrative experience. He also thought his British deputy, Colonel Terence Maxwell, lacked governmental experience; he was frequently engaged in trying to 'drive my car from the back seat', he observed. More broadly, he thought the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, and their Civil Affairs committees, were too distant from events and too much like a post office for the departments of the different governments to be really effective.[116]

These administrative tensions, and the practical issues arising from them, affected Rennell's mood. In the course of the autumn, he swung from exhilaration to depression. In early October he was in a broadly positive frame of mind. Following a journey through Allied-occupied Italy, he wrote to Spofford that Calabria was 'less unhappy' than he had expected; and, in the light of a visit he had just made to Naples, he suggested that they would soon be 'out of the woods' in addressing food-supply problems in the city, although he warned of a lack of water and electricity.[117] But a few weeks later, he was gloomy and pessimistic. To Grigg he described Allied initiatives in Italy as 'operations Dogsbreakfast and Catshit', and said, 'It is beginning to dawn even on Holmes and Maxwell that they have committed a MFU.' He also observed that he was not himself popular at AFHQ: 'They do not want me here and will be very thankful to see the last of me.' He also said he was 'very tired mentally' and 'ripe to make a first class mess soon' – citing as cause of this the absence of time off during the war.[118] This was the background to his decision to leave Italy altogether rather than continue work with the ACC after it took over. He turned down the vice-presidency of the Economic and Administrative Section of the ACC – on the grounds that he did not approve of how it was constituted.[119] He was replaced by Lush – AFHQ's original choice for the role of CCAO – and returned to the UK in mid-December.[120]

Rennell's influence is felt throughout Harris's account of AMGOT. Indeed, Harris clearly had access to Rennell's overview of AMGOT written in January 1944.[121] Like Rennell, Harris charged the ACC with being responsible for some of the food-supply

115 Rennell, 'Memorandum on AMG and ACC', 30 December 1943, pp. 2, 6.

116 Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, pp. 34–8, 56.

117 Rennell to Spofford, 6 October 1943, NARA, ACC, 10000/100/1075.

118 Rennell to Grigg, 30 October and 5 November 1943, PJGG 9/7/27 and 29, Churchill College Archives (CCA).

119 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 109.

120 Lush was proposed by the British side of AFHQ, but vetoed by the War Office; Rennell to Alexander, 29 January 1944, p. 2. Rennell formally relinquished his role as CCAO on 14 February 1944; *British Military Administration*, p. 613.

121 For example, the quotations from *Allied Military Administration* on pp. 63 and 113 come from Rennell's extended letter to Alexander, 29 January 1944, pp. 33 and 54.

problems of autumn 1943. He was also critical of AFHQ; in his version of events, it was AFHQ in Algiers, rather than Rennell or the Advanced Echelon of AFHQ in Naples, that was responsible for food shortages in the winter. The administrative confusion of the period also comes across forcefully in Harris's account: 'The . . . chaos will be remembered by those who took part in it as an administrative nightmare, of successive and often contradictory policies, the details of which were circulated (or more often failed to circulate) between five headquarters and two continents.'[122] But Harris also observed that the unification of AMG Forward and Rear under the ACC simplified things. He also remarked that Rennell's initial concept for the Military Government Section – which was to be something like a 'post office' for transmitting information – was 'perhaps not really practical'.[123] In the light of Rennell's influence on Harris, this may point to a subsequent evolution in Rennell's own views, reflecting a realization that the takeover of Italy inevitably brought with it a growth of bureaucracy.

Back in the UK Rennell was in the public eye. *The Illustrated London News* had him as one of their 'personalities of the week' in late July.[124] But he was a controversial figure on the left. There were articles in *The New Statesman and Nation* suggesting that he was too closely associated with Italian business interests.[125] Hugh Dalton – whose appointment as head of MEW in 1940 had prompted Rennell's departure from the organization – once said that were Rennell to be influential in Italy, he would draw in 'undesirable' industrialists like the Venetian businessman Giuseppe Volpi.[126] He clearly had a reputation for being close to the Italian 'party of business' – moderate fascists, like Volpi, who were discreetly in favour of Italian neutrality.[127] Left-wingers were suspicious of this. In parliament, the Labour MP Tom Driberg expressed concern that AMGOT as constituted would always tend to leave in office 'more of the official Fascist functionaries than we would wish left in office'; and the deputy Labour leader, Arthur Greenwood, said that Rennell and his associates were not the kind of people who would be likely to have the interests of the workers and peasants of Sicily at heart.[128] A month later the Labour MP, Richard Stokes, suggested that AMGOT represented the 'most reactionary' elements and that Rennell was a 'diehard tory'. He retracted this last point, perhaps because in

122 As the 'five headquarters', Harris had in mind AFHQ at Algiers and its advanced Echelon in Naples, the Fifteenth Army Group at Bari, AMG/ACC at Palermo, and the headquarters of the ACC in Brindisi; Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, p. 113.

123 Harris, *Allied Military Administration*, pp. 47, 85–8, 98, 112–14, 121.

124 *The Illustrated London News*, 24 July 1943, p. 91.

125 *New Statesman and Nation*, 24 July 1943, p. 1, and 7 August, 1943, p. 2.

126 Ben Pimlott, ed., *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton 1940–45* (London, 1986), p. 622; Rennell's diary for 1940, p. 3, PC.

127 MacGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939–41: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 47. Some decades later, the Nazi hunter, Curt Reiss, linked Rennell with Schacht and the tyre manufacturer Alberto Pirelli; Curt Riess, *The Nazis Go Underground* (Oxford, 2013), p. 65.

128 Tom Driberg and Arthur Greenwood, 3 August 1943, House of Commons, Hansard online; Lord Cranbourne came to Rennell's defence, 5 August 1943; House of Lords, Hansard online.

the Lords Rennell sat with the Liberals – although he switched to the Conservatives after the war.[129]

The attacks prompted a statement from Eden, insisting that AMGOT's aims were practical rather than political, and that it was doing 'very fine work'. He mentioned that the fascist leaders of all nine Sicilian prefectures had been removed and arrested, or had fled; and he distinguished the Carabinieri from the Italian secret police, the Ovra, noting that if use had not been made of the former, at least 10,000 British troops would have been required to do the job.[130] But Eden did not defend Rennell himself. Exactly why is not clear, but his previous disagreements with Mitchell, which Rennell was party to, and the broader tensions between the Foreign Office and War Office, were probably factors. But it is also likely that there was a personal dimension to their differences. In his diaries, Dalton reports an occasion in late 1942 in which Eden was 'indescribably rude' to Rennell – although he does not explain in what connection.[131] Eden was apparently not supportive of his appointment to the AMGOT post.[132]

Opinion on Rennell was clearly divided. In some, he inspired great loyalty. For example, G.R. Gayre, a Scottish educationalist who worked for AMGOT, praised him for choosing an excellent staff and having confidence in it:

> Having chosen a staff, he reposes confidence in it. Furthermore, there is no question of rank or 'channels' here. He is ready of access and it is a question of a direct approach between head of a division and the General, or General McSherry, or the Chief of Staff, whichever might be most readily accessible. The result is that there is both freedom and rapidity of action and decision.

According to Gayre, Rennell's strength lay in the fact that he was a civilian not a soldier. Indeed, he was very positive about AMGOT's civilian character. When AMGOT came to an end, he wrote,

> Here . . . passes away the Rennell regime which has always kept a strong informal civilian touch about it, and its replacement by a body of officers, many of them high-ranking, who whether drawn from the regular army or not, tend to have in their ranks an unduly large proportion who think more of 'channels' than getting the job done.

Military government of Rennell's kind was efficient because it was informal, he said.[133]

Gayre hints at the fact that some of the tensions in AMGOT were not simply about whether the British or Americans should have predominance, but also about the character of the American military and whether or not it should be in ultimate control. This had been a source of tension in Washington itself. When the School of Military Government was set up, there was suspicion amongst some of Roosevelt's staff that it could prove a

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129 Richard Stokes, 21 September 1943, House of Commons, Hansard online.

130 Anthony Eden, 22 September 1943, House of Commons, Hansard online.

131 Pimlott, ed., *Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 327, 622.

132 Rennell, Diary for 1943, end of June, p. 46. He attributed Eden's opposition to his appointment to Oliver Lyttleton, Minister of Production 1942–45.

133 Gayre, *Italy in Transition*, pp. 79, 84, 190.

vehicle for conservative military ideas. It took some persuasion by Henry Stimson, Secretary of State for War, to persuade Roosevelt of the soundness of the School's vision. The US military was always insistent that its control of military operations in the field should be unhindered. For example, Eisenhower insisted that the State Department representative on his staff, Robert Murphy, was not independently accountable to Washington; and when in 1943 the Combined Civil Affairs Committee was set up in Washington to advise the Combined Chiefs of Staff, it was organized in such a way as to leave the ultimately authority with the military.[134]

Macmillan was also positive about Rennell, although with reservations. Writing in his diary in August, he described him as 'awfully good at his job', and 'quick, intelligent and persistent', but adding that he was sometimes impulsive and took decisions too rapidly. AMGOT itself impressed him; in early September, he called it a 'great piece of organisation, in view of the difficulties'. But at the beginning of November – a time when Rennell was more pessimistic – his assessment was less generous. He called him a 'great prima donna and prime intriguer', suggesting that he was determined to resign from AMGOT if he could not be head of the new body. People like Rennell and Joyce were 'plotting and worrying' about their jobs, he remarked.[135] Some found Rennell's demeanour off-putting. General Montgomery – in charge of the 8th Army – thought him 'pompous' when they met in the early autumn.[136] He was eccentric to some of the Americans. A US serviceman in AMGOT, Stephen Mavis, remarked on his habit of 'gracefully indulging in a piece of snuff taken from a silver snuff box', noting that he remained a 'continuing source of curiosity' to the Americans.[137] Something of his character was doubtless present in Lord Runcin, a snuff-taking AMGOT leader in John Hersey's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Bell for Adano* (1944) – a man with a 'purely colonial point of view' towards the Italians.[138]

III

Rennell did not return to war work after leaving AMGOT. He turned down an offer to be Director of Civil Affairs (M.O.11 had been re-titled the Directorate of Civil Affairs), citing a lack of backing from the Foreign Office.[139] Instead, he relaunched his career at Morgan Grenfell, started to build up a profile in the House of Lords, and took on the Presidency of the Royal Geographical Society (1945–48). The range of these activities points to the fact that in his outlook he was more a generalist than a specialist. He was conscious of this; he once called himself a 'jack of all trades'.[140] It also suggests that in

134 Hudson, *Army Diplomacy*, pp. 117, 130, 149–51; Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 119–25.
135 Macmillan, *War Diaries*, 22 August, 1 September, 3 November 1943, pp. 190, 200, 280.
136 Montgomery to Grigg, 14 October 1943, PJGG 9/8/3, CCA.
137 Mavis, Stephen F.O. 'Reminiscences of Allied Military Government under Two Flags in Sicily-Italy (1943–47)', manuscript, p. 47.
138 John Hersey, *A Bell for Adano* (New York, 1944), pp. 128–35.
139 Rennell to Mary Rennell, 22 July 1943, PC.
140 Rennell, Autobiographical notes, 1950, section 1, PC.

professional terms he should not be seen primarily as a military administrator. He liked having a variety of projects on the go, and the freedom to pursue them. Yet it is understandable why a man of his character and expertise, and pragmatic instincts, would thrive in a fluid wartime situation. His career is testimony to the way in which military conflict can throw up opportunities for people they would not otherwise have had. Indeed, many from his background had influence during the war.[141]

Rennell was a pragmatist in his approach to military administration. This came out in his desire as far as possible to prevent administrative collapse in occupied countries. In this connection, he saw the value in taking over Italian and French administrative structures in Africa. John Darwin has made the point that colonial governments were often enfeebled by their lack of staff and resources, and that indirect rule was often just a convenient excuse for inaction.[142] British military administration in Africa was clearly another example of a huge operation run with a minimum of resources, where the avoidance of direct rule had a major attraction. AMGOT faced similar challenges. For Rennell in his capacity as CCAO, indirect rule gave intellectual legitimacy to a practical necessity. It would be wrong to see him as a deep thinker on the subject of indirect rule – although that does not mean that he had only a superficial acquaintance with Africa and Italy. He was a practical man, responding to certain wartime challenges. His readiness to adapt the terminology of direct and indirect rule to a number of different contexts reinforces the idea that indirect rule was more a set of attitudes than a clearly defined doctrine.[143] At the same time, his thinking had its origins in a network of colonial administrators well versed in the traditions of indirect rule.

Rennell's enthusiasm for indirect rule was also connected with his belief that military government needed to be transitional. In Italy, this meant arguing for a minimum of Allied interference, pending an Italian rather than an Allied decision about the country's future. In a sense, he was promoting the idea that AMGOT had a duty to be non-political. Whether this was wholly realistic can perhaps be doubted. As Colin Newbury has observed, one of the problems with indirect rule as an administrative typology is that it misses the political character of colonial government.[144] There was a conservative tendency in Rennell's thinking here. In using the doctrine of indirect rule to try to protect Italy from overzealous US plans for reform, Rennell was using a rationale familiar to colonialists eager to keep the forces of modernization at bay. But he also knew that indirect rule had limitations. Like Lord Hailey, he was conscious that a more systematic approach to the development of the empire was needed.

Rennell's frustrations in autumn 1943 came partly from the bureaucratic confusion arising out of the creation of the ACC. He did not like the way the ACC was created, and the fact that its size seemed to point more in the direction of direct rather than indirect rule. He was also unhappy at being sidelined from key decisions about Italy's future. In

141 David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), chapter 13.

142 John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford, 1991), p. 93.

143 Christopher Prior takes this view of indirect rule; see his *Exporting Empire: Africa, Colonial Officials and the Construction of the Imperial State, c. 1900–39* (Manchester, 2013), p. 43.

144 Newbury, *Patrons*, p. 257.

a broad sense, his frustrations can be seen as a reaction to the power of the US military at AFHQ and elsewhere. But there was a more personal dimension to his view of events; he thought the Military Government Section at AFHQ, and in particular two individuals – Holmes and Maxwell – contributed in considerable measure to the mistakes of that time; and he was angry at the appointment of Joyce. The fact that the challenges facing Rennell would have tested anyone means that the matter of his personality should not be overemphasized. On the other hand, it is clear that at some level his character was a factor in the way he responded to events. As Macmillan observed, there was a temperamental quality to his reactions. In his memoirs, Lush observed that Rennell was inclined to make 'heavy weather over ordinary problems'.[145] Setting aside the possibility of some professional jealousy here – for Rennell rose quickly to be Lush's superior – this is well put. Rennell had a tendency to overdramatize situations.

Rennell's bluntness and force of personality, although they had a down side, meant that he exuded an air of authority. He was a tough-minded person, capable of taking a strong stance on issues. This was evident in his dealings with the Mafia. His post-war contributions in the Lords reinforce this sense of a man ready to take robust action, where he thought it necessary. For example, in response to the Mao Mao rebellion, he suggested that Britain should be ready to inflict 'collective punishment' on the Kenyan population; and he was associated with the right-wing 'Suez Group' which in the years before the Suez Crisis tried to pressure the Conservative government into maintaining its Suez Canal Base.[146] But he was reform-minded too. His enthusiasm for the Free French cause and the Great Somalia project suggests a man with some idealism and conviction. Later, as Ghana approached independence, he was keen to ensure that constitutional safeguards against authoritarian rule were maintained in the country.[147] There was, then, a mixture of tendencies in Rennell's mentality: authoritarian and conservative on the one hand, and liberal and reformist on the other.

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145 A.J.M. Lush, ed., *A Life of Service: The Memoirs of Maurice Lush* (London, 1992), p. 146.

146 Rennell, 26 November 1945, 17 December 1953, House of Lords, Hansard online; Sue Onslow, 'Suez Group (*act.* 1953–1957)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford); accessed 22 April 2016.

147 Rennell, 24 January 1957, House of Lords, Hansard online.