

AMGOT IN ITALY

By Basil Gingell, Representing the Combined British Press

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In the very front line of the battle at Salerno are the headquarters of the Allied military government of occupied territory which is responsible for establishing means for keeping order among civil population, arranging for their feeding, and working out problems of rationing and other matters. At the head of this force at Salerno is a tall good humoured American colonel who took up his quarters in the marble walled town hall the day after the landing and has directed affairs from here ever since although mortar bombs have been falling all round and enemy patrols penetrate into the streets at night. The town hall is excellently furnished and in addition to the usual civic establishment it possesses a first class theatre. "Most of the better off class of people" he said, "have left the district and the only really educated types we met on arrival were the Archbishop and the Podestra or Mayor. There had been a general clear out of the Fascist element before we arrived by Badoglio and the Mayor was one who had consistently remained outside the organisation. The Podestra is now installed in an office in the town hall and he under the supervision of AMGOT is responsible for the civil side of the town. We enforce a curfew in the area for Italians and have arranged rates of exchange on a rationing scale. Controlling the police we have the former deputy chief constable from Los Angeles and we are now finding that coming back to the town are the officials responsible for the public services, The feeding of the people is becoming something of a problem because Germans apparently took with them all available supplies. We have however found some food which we have been rationing. The chief deficiency has been bread, but we have got some grain and hope to use a mill soon which is at present under fire. Today we got one bakery going and distributed 5000 loaves. We have also found a little meat. As far as vegetables are concerned there is no problem for there are plenty in the fields round about and there is no shortage of fruit. We have set the ration at 150 grammes for flour, or three and quarter ounces, and the price of bread at three to four lira per loaf (or 3d). Other Italian dishes which are subject to rationing are olive oil and tomato paste which is used with pasta or macaroni. The olive oil is used chiefly instead of butter and cooking fats." All particulars regarding civil government are made known to the public by means of a large proclamation exhibited in the town which sets out rates of exchange, curfew times and so on. The proclamation is signed by Lord Rennell. Yesterday for the first time since the invasion a newspaper printed in Italian made its appearance in Salerno. It is called the Corriere di Salerno and is being published by the Allies. Its front page story for the first number was the Allied advance in the vicinity of Salerno and the editorial makes it clear that the Allies come as liberators. It speaks of the ancient culture of ^{the} Italians and after referring to the stigma which Fascism has cast over the country, bids the people to co-operate in ridding Italy of our common enemy. Since there is no electric power in Salerno the paper has to be set by hand and run off on a old style flat bed machine with a small boy turning a huge wheel to provide the motive power to run off the copies. Notwithstanding these disadvantages more than 2000 copies were distributed of the first number and it is hoped to increase this figure considerably. For the benefit of the troops an English language newspaper, The Times of Salerno, is also printed under similar conditions.

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