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ITALIAN RELATIONS WITH YEMEN  
1904-1912

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study deals with Italian relations with Yemen during the period 1904-1912. The basic source material for this study is the diplomatic correspondence of Italy and, to a certain extent, that of Great Britain.

In the year 1904, the Imam Muhammad ibn Hamid al-Din al-Mutawakkil Yahya came to power. He died, ruling Yemen, in 1948. In 1912 the war over Libya between Italy and Turkey came to an end.

The first two chapters are introductory, as they provide the historical background for both Italy and Yemen before the period noted above. The word Yemen historically denotes both the present state of Yemen and also the region of Asir--now part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Before 1849, Asir was usually considered to be part of Yemen. But in that year, upon the withdrawal of Egyptian forces under Ibrahim Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali Pasha who was the viceroy of Egypt, Asir was handed over to the sharifs of Abu Arish and not over to the Imam in Yemen. Although in 1872 the Turks incorporated both Asir and Yemen into one vilayat, it is from the time of Ibrahim Pasha's departure that events in Asir developed separately from these in Yemen proper.



Italy had established colonies--in East Africa along the Red Sea coast during the latter part of the nineteenth century. These colonies lay opposite Yemen. There was constant trade between these colonies and Yemeni ports; therefore, it was only a matter of time before the Italian Government in East Africa became involved in Yemen affairs. This was primarily due to Italy's attempts to expand her trade with foreign countries at this time.

Italy became politically involved in Yemen for the first time in 1907. She was the mediator between the Imam Yahya and the Sublime Porte at the request of the Imam. Imam Yahya, when he assumed the Imamate in 1904, had inherited a revolt from his father, al-Mansur Muhammad ibn Yahya Hamid al-Din. Imam Yahya attempted to gain the Turks' consent for autonomous rule in Yemen based on Shari'a law. The revolt had been reaction against the Turks' implementation of a civil code in Yemen. In his negotiations with the Sublime Porte, the Imam used Italy's good offices to help start the negotiations, and also to obtain the release of Yemenis who had been held by the Turks. From this time on, Italy's major interest in Yemen until 1911 was still centered on trade and construction concessions. She also maintained a watchful eye on the developments of Yemeni internal affairs with special interest in

the activities of other Western Powers there.

In September, 1911, Italy went to war against Turkey. Her interest in Yemen changed at this time. Italy had to take measures against a possible attack on her East African possessions which could be delivered from the Turks in Yemen and Asir. At the same time, she needed to prevent the Turks from sending reinforcements and supplies from Yemen to their forces in Libya.

Prior to this, in 1909, a revolt against the Turks began in Asir under al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris. This revolt continued through to 1911. In the interim, another revolt of brief duration had broken out under the Imam. Imam Yahya used this Idrisi revolt as a lever to force the Turks to grant him the autonomy they had withheld in 1907. Imam Yahya was granted this in May, 1911. Al-Sayyid al-Idris continued his revolt against the Turks alone until February, 1912. By this time, Italy had been at war with Turkey for four months, and was taking action against the Turks in the Red Sea area. The coincidence of the mutual interests of both al-Idris and Italy was the basis for an alliance between them in February, 1911. This alliance lasted until the end of the war. During the succeeding peace negotiations, the Italians acted on behalf of al-Idris for whom they were able to obtain amnesty from the Sublime

Porte. This had been difficult because the Turks did not want to consider al-Idris as a belligerent during the war, but rather as a rebel who revolted against them before the war.

This period, 1904-1912, represents one of the major steps that Italy had taken towards the development of her interests in Yemen. These were interrupted during the war years of 1914-1918. Afterwards, under Benito Mussolini, Italy made new attempts at closer relations with Yemen--economical and political. These attempts culminated in 1927 when Italy became the first European country to recognize an independent Yemen and sign a commercial treaty with her.

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CHAPTER I

I T A L Y

## ITALIAN UNIFICATION

In 1861 a united Kingdom of Italy entered the European commonwealth of nations. The relations between Italy and other major European Powers: Great Britain, France, Austria and Prussia during her unification conditioned her subsequent role in continental affairs as well as her expansion into Africa and the development of her interests in the Middle East. Italy had become united because of her geographical and strategical dependence upon--and influence in--the balance of power maintained by the other states.

Great Britain, sympathetic to Italian aspirations and seeking an additional element of constancy to the maintenance of the continental balance of power, supported the establishment of the new state. This policy acted greatly to her

favor and, as will be illustrated in the following chapters, it was with Great Britain that Italy attempted to stabilize her position in the Red Sea and her interests in Western Arabia. The results of Britain's role in Italian unification are succinctly stated by Trevelyan.<sup>1</sup> But unification was a long and expensive procedure. One striking feature about this is the fact that, in one way or the other, unification was the direct result of a series of wars. These wars concerned the other three major Powers, France, Prussia and Austria.

Without the support and acquiescence of France there is little doubt that unification could have occurred when it did. But French support was outweighed by the antagonisms that arose in Italy as to the manner in which it was granted. France not only was disliked by the Italians, she was also feared. And the combination of the two aggravated by the Tunisian affair and the Tariff War of 1887-1892 were the direct impetus for Italy's partnership with Germany and Austria in the Triple Alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> "Only our Italian policy of 1859-60 was based on a real understanding of the people and of the facts. Therefore it succeeded, and helped to raise up a new national power, which for more than half a century remained England's friend, partly from memory of the transactions of that crisis, partly from political affinity and common interests." George M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century and After, 1782-1919, (London: Longmans, 1960), p. 327.

The preponderant power in the Italian peninsula at the time of unification was Austria. She ruled the two Italian provinces of Lombardia and Venezia. The nationalist forces seething in the peninsula were directed against Austria and against her armed might.

The revolution in France of 1848 along with its counterpart in Vienna in the same year had immediate repercussions in Italy. Rome, Turin, Livorno, Pisa, Florence, Milan and Naples broke into revolt. Carlo Alberto (1789-1849), King of Sardinia, declared war against Austria hoping to unite and marshal the energies of the revolution against the enemy. He had little success. The following year saw the disastrous defeats at Custoza and Novara. The King abdicated and died shortly thereafter. His successor was Vittorio Emanuele II (1820-1869). The first attempt at unification had failed. In Rome the vacillating Pope, Pio Nono, having failed to support the revolution, had been forced to flee from Rome leaving in his wake the brief ill-fated Roman Republic. Order was restored by the entrance of French troops who remained almost a quarter of a century.

The lesson of the first failure was not lost on the new king nor on his able minister, Count Camillo di Cavour (1810-1861). If the Risorgimento were to be achieved the help of a strong power against Austria was needed. Cavour's



choice was France. Sardinia, at a cost of 28 lives,<sup>2</sup> had gained a seat at the conference table at the end of the Crimean War (1854-1856). There she was in a position to make unification an international question rather than a mere quarrel between her and Austria. Two years later Cavour met with Napoleon III in France and gained his support in a war against Austria.

At this time the kingdom enhanced four regions: Sardinia, Savoia, Piedmonte and Genova. In return for the cession of Savoia, and Nice, Napoleon III committed himself in a war to gain Lombardia and Venezia from Austria. In 1859 the war began. It was of brief duration. July of the same year saw Napoleon III come to a hasty truce with Emperor Franz Joseph at Villafranca. After the victorious but costly battles of Magenta and Solferino Sardinia, by the truce arranged between the two emperors, gained Lombardia but Venezia remained with her enemy. Napoleon III, contented with what appeared to be a questionable success, refused to take Savoia and Nice. But the Italians were displeased with the manner in which he had conducted his side of the bargain and this was one element in the rising discord between them and France.

There was immediate and stirring response in Italy by

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H.A.L. Fisher, A History of Europe, From the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century to 1935, (London: Fontana Library-Collins Press, 1964), Vol II, p. 1036.

the nationalists after the war. Baron Bettino Ricasoli (1809-1880), later to become a Prime Minister, turned the Duchy of Tuscany under his rule over to Sardinia. For Napoleon this was an unexpected move and to gain his approval Savoja and Nice were offered once again. This time he accepted. The loss of these, although a plebiscite showed that the people favored joining France, further irritated many Italians.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), leader of the defunct Roman Republic and now a Sardinian general, invaded the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This kingdom fell and Garibaldi moved against the Papal States. However fear of war with France caused the Sardinians to stop the fiery revolutionist. The Two Sicilies were added to the Sardinian holdings, the Papal States remained with the reactionary Pope protected by French troops, and Garibaldi went into self-imposed exile. In 1861 the new Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed. It was not until almost ten years later that the Papal States and Rome were incorporated into the new Kingdom. Again, war brought this about. This time between France and Prussia. There still remained one other main province, that of Venezia. After the Seven Weeks War of 1866 between Prussia and Austria, with Italy

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<sup>3</sup> France's move into these areas also served as one of the reasons for the growing antagonism between England and France.

allied to Prussia, this last province became part of Italy.<sup>4</sup>

This early alliance with Prussia, mainly for expediency, helped prepare the coming of the Triple Alliance. The new Kingdom of Italy, her unification completed except for these areas called terre irredente by the nationalists which remained in the hands of Austria, turned inward to consolidate the newly united regions of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> This war saw the first major sea-battle fought between ironclad steam ships at the island of Lissa on July 20, 1866. The new Kingdom suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the Austrians. The battle is described in Jacques Mordal's 25 Centuries of Sea Warfare, Trans. by Len Ortzen, (London: Souvenir Press, 1965), pp. 224-231.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

The major problems besetting the new state were internal ones. Chief among these was consolidation. This task was almost insurmountable.<sup>5</sup> Italy had become united at a great loss of blood and fortune. Besides these losses, poverty, and illiteracy there were also the idealistic antagonisms of the leaders of the Risorgimento such as Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi. The new Kingdom incorporated three main different branches of royalty, each antagonistic to the other: The Sardinian House, the Sicilian Bourbons, and the princely families of the Papal States. There were the conflicts

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<sup>5</sup> Today there is still a separatist movement in Sicily.

between conservatives, liberals and radicals; and finally as in France, the sharp division between the clericals and the anti-clericals. All of these varied as centrifugal forces depending on the cause at the time and were collected together under a canopy of sectional and personal self-interest. The different attitudes and ideals of politics in Italy during this, the Postrisorgimento,<sup>6</sup> decided the tone of Italian development within and her relations without. Basic to understanding this period is the fact that a great percentage of the Italian populace held no loyalty to the new Kingdom:

The Italian masses had not created Italy, for the truth was 'that the great majority of the Italian people--that is, the peasantry--was absent from public life: if it could have manifested an opinion it would have been one resolutely in favor of the old regime'.<sup>7</sup>

The need for dealing with internal problems detailed all the energies of the new state. Foreign politics, except for the brief alliance with Bismarck in 1866 and the nationalistic claims to the irredente territories such as Trieste, were set aside: "From the moment of the proclamation of the

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For a good summation of the Postrisorgimento see John A. Thayer, Italy and the Great War: Politics and Culture, 1870-1915 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), pp. 3-39.

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A. William Salmone, Italian Democracy in the Making: the Political Scene in the Giolittian Era, 1900-1914, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), p. 9. Quoted from Gaetano Salvemini, "L'Italia politica nel secolo XIX", Europa nel secolo XIX, I, p. 372.

Republic...until...1876, our foreign policy...amounted to nothing at all."<sup>8</sup> Even before unification there had been many, such as Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), who wrote that Italy had a civilizing mission or that she should expand into colonies like the other great powers. But in the 1870's Italy's main interest was to preserve its unification and to arrange for her defense. As stated earlier, England had been benevolent towards unification and had helped in the plebiscites that had joined the new regions to the Kingdom of Sardinia. Both France and Austria were looked upon with fear. The earlier alliance with Prussia had proven quite efficacious and once again Italy turned to her, now the German Empire. In 1877, Francisco Crispi (1819-1901), then the Minister of Interior in the Depretis Government,<sup>9</sup> went to Germany. In September of that year he had talks with Chancellor Bismarck at Wildbad, near Munich. Crispi told Bismarck: "I am instructed to ask whether you would be disposed to sign a treaty of eventual alliance with us, in case we should be forced into war

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Francisco Crispi, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Mary Prichard-Agnetti, ed. by Thomas Palamenghi-Crispi, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), Vol II, p. 2. Statement by the editor.

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Agostino Depretis (1813-1887) was Prime Minister three times, 1876-1878, 1878-1879, and 1881-1887.

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with France or Austria."<sup>10</sup> However, because of the ties between Bismarck and Austria, Italy could join Germany in an alliance against France but not Austria. Bismarck was adamant in this: "...I must repeat that we wish you to be friends with Austria."<sup>11</sup> Germany and Austria signed a treaty of alliance two years later on October 7, 1879. In Italy the Depretis Government had served only for a brief period and continued relations with Bismarck concerning alliance until it was replaced in March 1878 by the ministry of Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889) who was known as a francophile and considered an isolationist.

Italy was concerned about France and Austria not only because of the fear of their intervention in her internal affairs or against her newly won independence but also because of the growing interests of these two Powers respectively in Tunisia and the Balkans. Their expansion into either area was, to Italy, a corollary to the threat that they both represented. Added to these fears was the growing agitation against the non-activist foreign policy of Italy during this period and a vociferous demand that Italy be raised to an equal-footing with the great colonial Powers.

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<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>  
Ibid, p. 35.



After the Congress of Berlin in 1878 it had been Cairoli who had made the memorable statement that Italy had left the Congress with clean hands and, it might be added, empty pockets. Others had not. France received the approval to move into Tunisia. The English took Cyprus and Austria gained a protectorate over Bosnia-Herzegovina. To many Italians the die was cast. In 1881 France moved into Tunisia and as a result the Cairoli government as well as his policy collapsed. In the words of Baron Sidney Sonnino, "Isolation ...means annihilation."<sup>12</sup>

Almost a year after France signed the treaty of Bardo with Tunisia (May 12, 1881) Italy committed herself to a more active foreign policy and joined with Germany and Austria in the Triple Alliance. The direct relation between the French move into Tunisia and Italy's new alliance is not argumentative. The new alliance was purposely directed against France. In the 1870's an alliance with Austria was considered an impossibility even though Bismarck had offered Albania to Italy in compensation for eventual Austrian take-over of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Triple Alliance endured until World War I. The treaty was signed on May

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G. Lowes Dickinson, The International Anarchy, 1904-1914, (New York: The Century Company, 1926), p. 82. Baron Sonnino (1847-1922), later to become Prime Minister and also Foreign Minister, presents an interesting figure in Italian history if only because his father was Jewish, his mother was English, and he professed himself to be a Protestant.

20, 1882 and was initially to last for a period of five years. It was renewed in 1887, 1891, prolonged in 1902 and renewed again <sup>in</sup> 1912. Smith states that "The chief satisfaction which it (the alliance) bestowed on Italy was the recognition by the great powers that she was of their number."<sup>13</sup> The alliance had greater significance than this. Italy needed more than recognition. She needed and desired freedom of action and a system of defense. The alliance provided these. To Germany the treaty was another step towards completing a system of isolation around France. For Austria the alliance now provided a new check on Russia's interest in the Balkans as well as calming some of the strident claims by irridentists against Austria. At the same time, Anglo-French relations were strained and England did not look upon the new alliance with disfavor. Thus Italy was now in a position to direct greater attention to her position in the Mediterranean and she now had the means to further emphasize her role in European affairs as well as her bargaining power.

On February 12, 1887 Italy signed an agreement with England as well as Austria and later on Spain--to maintain

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Denis Mack Smith, Italy, A Modern History (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 126.

the status quo in the Mediterranean as well as <sup>in</sup>the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. Along with this England and Italy recognized each other's respective interests in Egypt and the North African coast--specifically Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Dickinson states that a subsequent agreement was reached in 1894 based on the prior instrument whereby "British acquiescence in the Italian seizure of Tripoli was made more definite than in 1887".<sup>14</sup>

The 1887 Mediterranean agreement was followed a week later by the renewal of the Triple Alliance. This time, besides the benefits of recognition and freedom of action, Italy now gained German support for Italian expansion in the North African coast.

Throughout this period Italo-French relations were at their worst. There was the question of French treatment of Italian nationals in Tunis respective to the capitulations and the earlier Italo-Tunisian Commercial Treaty of 1868, the tariff war with France, and incidents of maltreatment of Italian workers in France as well as a growing Italian apprehension of a possible French move into Tripolitania.

The first move towards the betterment of these relations came with the Convention of 1896 whereby the two countries

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<sup>14</sup> Dickinson, Op. Cit., p. 102.

came to an agreement regarding Italy's interests in Tunisia. This was followed two years later by a new commercial treaty which ended the tariff war. Italy's interest in the Libyan littoral was now coinciding with French interest in Morocco. Between December 1900 and January 1901 there occurred an exchange of notes between Italy and France declaring their respective disinterest in Morocco and Libya as well as a clarification of the Somali frontier.

Although Italo-French relations took a turn for the better, a shadow now fell on the almost continuing mutual understanding that existed between England and Italy. Between the years 1898 and 1905 three factors contributed to a new appraisal of Italian foreign affairs by the British Government. These three were the Fashoda aftermath, the Boer War and the rise of the new German Navy, and the change of Foreign Secretaries in the British Cabinet. Briefly the three calculated in this new appraisal in the following manner. The clash between British and French interest in the Sudan ~~was~~ resolved after the Fashoda incident in 1898. This as well as interests in Morocco and Egypt contributed to a new rapproachment between the two countries. In 1890 Bismarck was dismissed by Kaiser Wilhelm II who now started Germany on a new dynamic course which clashed with British interests in the Boer War of 1902-1905 and which had begun to be a

threat to England's position in the Ottoman Empire. The Kaiser's new emphasis on colonialism, expansion and the German Navy alienated Great Britain. And in 1905 Lord Lansdowne was replaced by Sir Edward Grey in the Foreign Office as Foreign Secretary and he was more favorably disposed to the French. The Triple Alliance was renewed again in July, 1907, and although it was not directed against England, Italy's tie with Germany now appeared in a different aspect. Italy's position in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea could be highly beneficial to Germany in the event of a war. It may therefore be said that between the years 1905 and 1914 Italian interests were precariously balanced between England and Germany. In the Red Sea Italy's policy, as will be illustrated, had to be continuously adapted to her position vis a vis England.

## THE ITALIAN DOMESTIC SCENE

The internal problems besetting the newly united country have already been alluded to. Mention, however brief, must be made about Italian internal affairs which help to throw light on the consideration of Italy's expansion into Africa and her relations with the Western coast of Arabia.

Newly united Italy was a constitutional monarchy some-what akin to that of England. Politically, because of a multiparty system and the divergent attitudes and demands mentioned previously, her history was one of almost continuous chaos except for the relative stability that endured during the era of Giolittismo (see below).

The following facts help to illustrate this state of affairs. In the seventy-five years between the formation of the new state and the accession of Mussolini to power there were sixty-seven ministries.<sup>15</sup> In the year 1901 alone there were 629 reported strikes in farm areas along with 1,042 strikes in industry while in a space of three years eleven armed conflicts between the populace and the authorities took place causing 242 casualties.<sup>16</sup> In 1893 there was the famous Banca Romana scandal which was followed in 1898 by a general uprising of the workers.

The era of Giolittismo describes the period 1901-1914 when government was effectively controlled by the almost continual premiership of Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928). He was Prime Minister five times. The Government was continuously formed by coalitions which Giolitti astutely controlled. When he himself was not Prime Minister he controlled that office from without. Control of government was also established by control of elections: "Under Giolitti's rule, the interference of the prefects<sup>17</sup> with local government and

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, Op. Cit., p. 202.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 218.

<sup>17</sup> These were permanent agents of the central government under the Minister of the Interior to supervise local government in the provinces.



elections reached unprecedented heights of brutality."<sup>18</sup>  
Thus Zampaglione states: "...Giolitti...remained in power until 1914, either at the head of the Cabinet, or using figureheads...who faithfully followed his policies".<sup>19</sup>  
With regard to foreign affairs Giolitti, a great parliamentarian, was out of his element: "A man interested only in domestic affairs and politics, for whom foreign relations were the unescapable burden and necessity of government, Giolitti must be approached and appraised as such."<sup>20</sup>

During the same period we find that foreign affairs were mainly in the hands of the Foreign Minister, the Marquis Antonio di San Giuliano (1852-1914). He was foreign minister in 1905-1906 and again from 1910 to 1914. In 1900 Vittorio Emanuele III (1869-1947) became king. He took great interest in foreign affairs and his influence was one of the reasons why San Giuliano was minister for the period 1910 through 1914. It was not because he and Giolitti continually saw eye to eye. This situation was due, in part,

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<sup>18</sup> Salmone, Op. Cit., See the Introductory Essay by Gaetano Salvemini, p. xii.

<sup>19</sup> Gerardo Zampaglione, Italy, (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1956), p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Salmone, Op. Cit., p. 103.



to the Italian constitution whereby foreign affairs were, in the main, supposedly in the hands of the Crown.<sup>21</sup> This situation remained until the takeover by Mussolini.

San Giuliano regarded the Triple Alliance as an instrument protecting Italy's position in the Mediterranean. Of him Smith relates: "At the foreign office Di San Giuliano believed that a young and energetic Germany was in the ascendent, while corrupt France and self-satisfied Britain were declining."<sup>22</sup> As will be illustrated below, San Giuliano did not act according to this premise and was apprehensive because he thought that Great Britain was not "self-satisfied".

Aside from sporadic internal turmoil, the economy of Italy continued to expand and improve with time from the moment of unification. The following figures taken from The Economic Resources of Italy<sup>23</sup> will illustrate the rate of Italy's economic progress:

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Henry K. Norton, Foreign Office Organization, a comparison of the organization of the British, French, German and Italian Foreign offices with that of the State Department of the United States of America, (The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1929), p. 5.

22

Smith, Op. Cit., p. 292.

23

Credito Italiano, The Economic Resources of Italy, Their Development during the last Twenty-five Years and Their Present Condition, (Milan: Bertieri and Vazetti, 1920), Vol. II.

Population: 1800---18,125,000<sup>24</sup>  
1914---35,597,000

Foreign Trade: 1896---2,232 million lira (1918 exchange rate)<sup>25</sup>  
1915---7,237 million lira (1918 exchange rate)

Imports of Raw Materials for Industrial Purposes:  
1895---685 million lira (1918 exchange rate)<sup>26</sup>  
1913---2,092 million lira (1918 exchange rate)

Exportation of Semi-Wrought and Finished Products:  
1895---552 million lira (1918 exchange rate)<sup>27</sup>  
1913---1,389 million lira (1918 exchange rate)

In reference to the trade between Italy and her two colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, the following figures are given:

Eritrea: 1895---14,013,000 lira (same rate)  
1915---49,319,000 lira (same rate)

Somalia: 1909-10---5,930,000 lira (same rate)<sup>28</sup>  
1915-----8,693,000 lira (same rate)

Askew states: "Although Italy's economic strength may be easily over-emphasized, it is yet true that in 1911 she was better prepared for a more active foreign policy than at

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<sup>24</sup>  
Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>  
Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>26</sup>  
Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>27</sup>  
Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>28</sup>  
Ibid., p. 169.

any time since the achievement of unity."<sup>29</sup>

Coinciding with economic development was the continual rise of a strident and activist agitation in Italy demanding that Italy build herself an empire.

The capital of the new state had initially been Turin. After Turin it had momentarily moved to Florence before finally being set in Rome. It is readily comprehensible that the new state, envisioning itself as a new power in Europe and finding expression in its long nationalistic struggle, would remember its ancient Roman heritage. Not only remember it, she would also seek to emulate it. That the ancient empire had its foundation on the African shores was also remembered. Other than the irridentist problem with Austria and nationalistic claims to Dalmatia, Italy's geographical position in the Mediterranean readily pleaded her case for hegemony in this area. Besides this, Africa, and perhaps the Balkans, were the only areas into which the new state could expand and thereby hope to place herself in the same status as the other great Powers. The dream of empire belonged to the kings, ministers and romantic intelligenstia but in the early stages not to the masses. This was evident when, after Italy's first war with Abyssinia, "railroad track was torn up to prevent the further embarkation of troops".<sup>30</sup>

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William C. Askew, Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya, 1911-1912 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), p. 24.

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Smith, Op. Cit., p. 187.

Such figures as Cavour, Crispi, King Umberto I, King Vittorio Emanuele II and Emanuele III, Queen Margherita and Giolitti are the leaders who spearheaded an expansionist policy. Mazzini, d'Annunzio, Turriello, di Zerbi and Corrente were the intellectuals providing the emotional and rational elements. One of the arguments for intervention in the Crimean War had been the necessity for the Italians to demonstrate their fighting qualities; Vittorio Emanuele II was quoted as ominously pronouncing that "Italy must not only be respected, she must make herself feared".<sup>31</sup>

The great liberal, Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), could not refrain from urging Italy onto a civilizing mission. He individuated the main reasons and means concerned with European expansion and wanted Italy's participation in this; that Italy needed "Italian influence to aggrandize itself systematically in the Suez and in Alexandria, and to accomplish, when feasible, a colonial invasion of Tunisia."<sup>32</sup> And further:

"...as the inevitable movement which calls Europe to civilize the African regions, as Morocco concerns the Iberian peninsula in the same manner that Algeria

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<sup>31</sup>  
Ibid, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup>  
Giuseppe Mazzini, Opere edite e inedite, (Milano: Daelli, 1925), Vol. XVI, p. 154.

concerns France, so Tunisia, as the key to the central Mediterranean--which connects the Sardinian-Sicilian system twenty-five leagues from Sicily to Italy--concerns Italy. Tunisia, Tripoli and Cyrenaica form an important integral continuity with Egypt, and Egypt with Syria and thus Asia; hence, that African area that truly takes part in the extension to the Atlantic and Europe.<sup>33</sup>

Cesare Corrente was more emotional but the meaning was the same:

"Africa invincibly draws us. It is predestination. This sealed book under our very eyes for so many centuries, this mysterious horizon closed to us and rendering to us a semibarbarous Mediterranean that impels Italy to find herself on the ultimate limits of the civilized world...Africa, always Africa...and we have it always right under our eyes, and until now, we are exiled from it.<sup>34</sup>

The reasons for Italian expansion may be briefly summarized as follows; strategic location in the Mediterranean and proximity to Africa; the threat of rising French expansion in the same area; the nationalistic dissatisfaction with Italy's position vis a vis the other great colonial powers; the desire of newly-arisen capitalists to expand their holdings and investments; the personal proclivities of the rulers, statesmen and intellectuals; the population problem and the loss of manpower and skilled individuals to

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 159.

<sup>34</sup> Italy. Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Documentation in Africa, L'Italia in Africa, text by E. de Leone (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1955), Vol. II p. 2.

foreign countries; and finally, religious zeal--much of the early exploration in Africa was accomplished under the Church and its missionary program.

ITALIAN INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST,  
1861-1882

There had been close commercial ties between the Italian peninsula and the Middle East during the Middle Ages.<sup>35</sup> However by the sixteenth century the monopoly of Eastern Trade enjoyed by the Italians had fallen to

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See: Thomas E. Marston, Britain's Imperial Role in The Red Sea Area, 1800-1878, (Hamden: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1961).

Ludovico di Varthema, Travels, 1503-1508, Ed. by J. W. Jones and G. P. Badger (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863).

Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Documentation in Africa, L'Italia in Africa, text by E. Leone, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1955), Op. Cit.

Luigi Villari, The Expansion of Italy, (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1930), pp. 13-18.

David G. Hogarth, The Penetration of Arabia: A Record of the Development of Western Knowledge Concerning the Arabian Peninsula, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1904), p. 41.

the Portuguese. Thus between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries the disunited Italians played no major role in the Mediterranean or the Middle East as trade had gravitated to the oceanic routes and to the Americas while the same period saw the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

In the early nineteenth century the rise of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, and his wars in the Sudan and in the Arabian peninsula, brought many Italians to the Middle East. They served in his armies and administration. No doubt they stirred up new interest in Italy about the area and possible trade there.

In 1861 Carlo Guarmani was commissioned by the Kings of France and Sardinia to go to Nejd to purchase stallions. He travelled in disguise under the name of Khalil Agha and said that he was sent by the then governor of Damascus, Fuad Pasha. In 1866 he published a book about his travels, Il Neged settentrionale: Itinerario da Gerusalemme a Anezeh nel Cassim.<sup>36</sup>

During this early period of the new kingdom there was also a marked increase in missionary activity especially

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The book was published in Jerusalem and has been translated into English: Carlo Guarmani, Northern Nejd, Trans. by Lady Capel Cure, Ed. by D. Carruthers, (London: Argonaut Press, 1938).



in Africa. There were occasions when such activity carried definite political overtones. Thus Smith states that Padre Massaia, during the 1830's, penetrated into Ethiopia and under the request of Cavour established friendly relations with local chieftains there.<sup>37</sup> In 1840 a Roman Catholic mission was established in Aden a year after it had been taken over by the English. Hunter states that it "is perfectly independent of all other missions, and is subservient only to the head of the Roman Catholic Church."<sup>38</sup> In 1855 the mission was turned over to the Capuchins and perhaps Hunter's statement served to note that the mission was apolitical.

Perhaps the most interesting missionary with regard to the Red Sea area was the Lazzarist, Giuseppe Sapeto. In the 1830's he went to Massawa. However a few years later he became a propagandist for Italian expansion. In his two works, L'Italia e il canale di Suez (1865) and Assab e il suoi critici (1879) Sapeto stated that the opening of the Suez would benefit Italy more than the other European countries as she would now have the closest com-

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, Op.Cit., p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> F.M. Hunter (Captain), An Account of the British Settlement of Aden in Arabia, (London: Trubner and Company, 1877), p. 147.

munications with the East while in the second work he maintained that Assab could become the center of entrepot trade in the Red Sea.

The Kingdom of Sardinia was alert to the possibilities of developing interests in the Red Sea before unification of the peninsula took place. In the 1850's Cavour had subsidized the Florio-Rubattino steamship company to open a line between Genoa and Tunis and this company was to initiate the first step towards the acquisition of a colony. After the Crimean War and the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-1878 the Powers had all given the Italian Kingdom approval to expand into the Red Sea. Napoleon III made overtures to this effect concerning the Red Sea and Tunisia in 1857, 1864 and during the late 1860's.<sup>39</sup> However no definite step was taken by Italy with regard to these two areas until 1870. Before this she had considered the possibility of establishing a penal colony in the Red Sea. The British Ambassador in Florence, writing on December 14, 1867, notified the Foreign Office concerning this idea and considered such a move as an Italian attempt to establish an outpost in that region.<sup>40</sup> In the same year an

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<sup>39</sup> Askew, Op.Cit., p. 3, fn. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Marston, Op.Cit., p. 377.

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<sup>39</sup> Askew, Op.Cit., p. 3, fn. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Marston, Op.Cit., p. 377.

African society was founded in Naples which contributed to the number of European explorers seeking the sources of the Nile. In 1870 the Italian Government made an official move in the Red Sea.

The Florio-Rubattino company, which was subsidized by the Government, purchased from the Sultan of Raheita the bay of Assab. This was to serve as a coaling station for the line between Genoa and India. The direct impetus for this purchase had been the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. About the same time Italy considered an expedition against Tunisia but this aborted in the face of English opposition. In 1871 Italy attempted to purchase the Island of Socotra and again the opposition of England --this time the Government of India--prevented it.

Despite these setbacks commerce in the area, especially with reference to the Western coast of Arabia, continued to expand. Italy had sizeable commercial interests in Aden and the trade that entered there from Yemen. Hunter states that the merchants of Aden could be divided into three classes and that Italian firms were in the first class, i.e. "old established, well-known, and comparatively wealthy..."<sup>41</sup> Of the European countries trading there,

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<sup>41</sup> Hunter, Op.Cit., p. 28.

the figures illustrate that Italy ranked fourth after the United Kingdom, Austria and France in volume of trade.<sup>42</sup> These figures also illustrate that between the years 1875-1876 Italian trade there doubled in volume. Italy exported chemical products, coral, liquors, coir and various types of instruments while she imported coffee, drugs, medicines gum Arabic, copal, hides, skins and shells.<sup>43</sup> In the Aden colony itself it was noted that Italian was one of the European languages spoken there and Italy was represented by a Vice-Consul. Interest in this area and the opposite shores of Africa continued to grow.

Manfredo Camperio founded the journal Esploratore in 1877 and was one of the main organizers of the Milanese Societa d'Esplorazione Commerciale. This organization, through the Caprotti brothers, was supplied a great amount of information and trade dealing with Yemen.

However, up to this time, except for the overtures mentioned above, as well as the landing of a small defensive military force at Assab in 1879, no direct expansion took place. This was to occur after France's invasion

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<sup>42</sup>  
Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>43</sup>  
Ibid, pp 91-96.

of Tunisia in 1881. From that time on Italy was politically involved in East Africa and the Red Sea and would eventually enter into war with Ottoman Turkey in 1911.

#### ITALIAN EXPANSION 1882 - 1911

The results of the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-1878 and the subsequent Congress of Berlin awoke Italy from what was considered by many Italians as being an era of lethargic isolation. Much discontent had been demonstrated by nationalists and expansionists because the other powers had left the Congress with new territorial possessions while Italy had not. Between 1878 and 1881 great concern was shown for Tunisia and the fear that France would acquire it.

During the nineteenth century there had been a constant stream of Italian emigrants to Tunisia. In 1881 the number of these there ranged from eleven to twelve

thousand<sup>44</sup> and many of these were the leading professional men and merchants of the country. Italy, as already mentioned, had signed a commercial treaty with Tunisia and there were many Italian businesses with a sizable amount of capital invested. The tension during those years and the actual invasion in 1881 almost caused war between Italy and France. They also caused Italy to definitely embark on a more activist policy of alignment and expansion. In 1882 Italy joined in the Triple Alliance.

After Tunisia France continued to suggest that Italian occupation of Tripolitania would restore the balance of power in the Mediterranean as well as compensate Italy for the loss of Tunisia. Great Britain advanced the idea that Italy could establish herself in the Red Sea to pursue her commercial interests. This proposal was taken up by Pasquale Mancini (1817-1888) the then Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was he who made the oft-quoted statement that Italy would "find the keys to the Mediterranean in the Red Sea."<sup>45</sup> It was Mancini's idea that the occupation of a sector of the coast along the Red Sea should merely serve as a prelude to wider

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<sup>44</sup> At the same time there were 700 French: Nicola A. Ziadeh, Origins of Nationalism in Tunisia, (Beirut: American University Press, Oriental Series No. 37, 1962), pp. 17-18.

<sup>45</sup> Luigi Villari, Op. Cit., p. 31.



expansion: Italy, with the agreement and the collaboration of England, might extend her sphere of influence through the Sudan and Darfur to the Libyan hinterland and thus secure an outlet on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

In 1881 the Italian Government bought the Bay of Assab from the Rubattino company. In July, 1882, it was proclaimed a colony. At the same time there was further expansion along the coast until, in 1885, after the withdrawal of Khedivial forces, Massawa and Saati were occupied. Massawa was an important port. In 1557 it had been occupied by the Ottoman Turks; later it fell under the control of Egypt but in 1885 the Egyptians were forced out after Khedive Isma'il's disastrous war with Abyssinia. Further expansion inland halted in the same year with the fall of Khartoum to the Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad, of the Sudan. The Abyssinians were hostile to the appearance of the Italians in the area and the withdrawal of the English from the Sudan left the Italian colony isolated and in a precarious position. Attention was therefore drawn elsewhere.

At the same time that Massawa was taken Italy began showing interest in the Somali coast. In 1885 a cruiser explored the mouth of the Juba river and a mission was sent to Zanzibar where a commercial agreement was signed with the Sultan. In 1888 a protectorate was signed with the Sultan of Obbia and a year later a commercial agreement was agreed

upon with the Sultan of Midjurta. However, Italian troops did not land in Somali until 1891. Aden had already been occupied by England in 1839 and in the 1880's she had also established a claim to the Somali coast adjacent to the Aden colony. France did the same at Obock. In 1905, after gaining the administration of the port of Benadir from England in 1892, the Italian colony of Somaliland, south of Cape Gardafui, was proclaimed.

Meanwhile Italy continued to have trouble with their holdings around Assab. This was mainly because of her movement into the Abyssinian highlands. In 1887 500 Italian soldiers were massacred at Dogali. In the same year Prime Minister Agostino Depretis (1813-1887) died and was replaced by the more dynamic and expansionistic Francesco Crispi. In 1890 he united the area around Assab into one colony known as Eritrea. The capital was at Massawa until 1900 when it was moved to Asmara. Also in 1890 the Treaty of Ucciali was signed with Abyssinia, a treaty which led to Italy's first great colonial disaster.

The Negus of Abyssinia had died in 1889. He was succeeded by Menelik, the king of Shoa. The treaty mentioned above signed with Italy was in two copies, one in Italian and one in Amharic. The Italian copy read that Italy had a protectorate over Abyssinia while the Amharic one said that

Abyssinia could utilize the offices of Italy in dealing with other Powers. Subsequent to the signing of the treaty Crispi ordered the occupation of Asmara. Continual movement into the highlands by Italian military forces aroused the hostility of the Abyssinians. In 1895 the Italian fortress of Amba Alagi was overwhelmed. In the same year the fort of Makalli fell. The commander of the Italian forces, General Baratieri, pressured by Crispi, moved against the forces of Menelik inland without proper preparations, sufficient intelligence of the opposing forces or detailed maps. This first war with Abyssinia was resolved at Adowa on March 1, 1896. The forces of the Italians, numbering about 20,000, of whom the greatest amount were Ascaris (native soldiers), were defeated by Abyssinian forces numbering approximately 100,000. Smith states that the General led "six thousand men to their deaths in a heroic but helpless engagement."<sup>46</sup>

The reverberation in Italy was almost immediate. The King's speech to the Chamber of Deputies on June 10, 1895 had made many references to Italy's mission in Africa. But it would appear that this legislative body was completely unaware of and hostile to any dangerous inland

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, Op. Cit., p. 185.

extension of Italian holdings in Eritrea. Thus:

On March 5, (1896) the members (of the Chamber of Deputies) were hastily summoned to hear Crispi's resignation following the Adowa catastrophe. There was no doubt that the majority had been betrayed. Only a policy of utmost prudence and withdrawal from dangerously exposed inland positions was compatible with the Government's mandate.<sup>47</sup>

The new Prime Minister, Marquis Antonio di Rudini (1839-1908) signed an armistice with Abyssinia which renounced Italy's claim to a protectorate over Abyssinia while at the same time maintaining possession of Eritrea.

The above helps to indicate that a great part of the endeavor of Italy to create a colonial empire was the action of a minority rather than a majority of the Italian Government, namely the monarchy and some ministers. At the most there seems, during this period, to have been little approval for such actions on the part of the Italian populace as a whole. This back of enthusiasm is an under-current throughout the whole history of Italian imperialism, and markedly manifested itself during World War II and Italian fighting in North Africa.

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<sup>47</sup> Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 79.

The period between the loss by Italy of the battle of Adowa in 1895 and the invasion of Libya in 1911 was a period of successive ministries against a background of political reaction and turmoil. A reactionary conservatism had set in after the catastrophic losses suffered at the hands of Menelik. In time, however, this conservatism became watered down, and was replaced by the entrance of a strong feeling of nationalism dividing Italy into two political camps: socialist and imperialistic-nationalists. In understanding Italy's final decision to move into Libya, we find that the causes for this decision were not only the results of diplomatic moves of other powers such as France, Austria and Germany, nor was it solely the final disregard for maintaining a status quo vis-a-vis the Ottoman Empire and the resurgent Eastern Question. A great cause for action in 1911 was the rise of emotional support and pressure within and without the government along with an excitement of the Italian populace by radical nationalistic journalists. "By 1911 the nationalists were represented in parliament and especially in the press."<sup>48</sup> These new publications were: The Grande Italia of Milan, the Tricolore of Turin, the Carroccio of Rome, the Nave of Naples, and the

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<sup>48</sup> Askew, Op. Cit., p. 27.

Mare Nostrum of Venice, and all "urged the conquest of colonies and recognized war as the only method of acquiring them."<sup>49</sup>

What became Italy's attempt to solve the "Libyan Question" by feat of arms was the result of a failure to invest Tripolitania and Cyrenaica with Italian control through the media of peaceful economic penetration. This peaceful penetration amounted to an idea that, as the European Powers had shown themselves amiable to an Italian takeover of Libya, and as Italy was certain that sooner or later Libya would slip away from Turkish control, all that was left for the Ottomans to do was to peacefully allow nature to take its course by allowing Italy to invest and separate these provinces from the Ottoman Empire. What upset the entire program was the simple fact that the Turks were not in accord with such an eventuality. Thus,

"The Turks, fearing that Italian penetration might endanger their sovereignty in Tripoli, were certainly not conciliatory in their dealings with Italy, and it is equally true that the action of Italian agents helped arouse Turkish hostility."<sup>50</sup>

A great amount of agitation in Turkey against Italian interests came from the Young Turks. The impetus for their

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 27.

revolt in 1908 against Abdul Hamid II was, in the main, opposition to Western internal interference and external encroachment. Concerning this change is the statement of Giolitti:

It was not necessary to have recourse to military measures to solve the Libyan question during the reign of Abdul Hamid, from whom we could obtain concessions of an economic and legal character such as would have ensured Italian interests against any other aims at expansion.<sup>51</sup>

The means for this penetration were post offices, medical services, schools, businesses, construction contracts and the Banco di Roma (a private banking firm, clearly tied to the interests of the Bank of Italy under the Ministry of Finance as the president of the bank was the brother of a Foreign Minister, Senator Tommaso Tittoni, 1855-1931). Even earlier than this, various Italian geographical and commercial enterprises had made favorable, and many times misleading, studies of the economic possibilities to be found in Tripoli, while in the eighties, Italy had agreements with the ruling family of Tripolitania, the House of Karamanli. During the ministry of Francesco Crispi, a letter was sent to him from the Italian consul of Tripoli, Grande, which illustrates the efforts made to secure Arab support against the Turks. In August, 1890, a letter

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Giovanni Giolitti, Memoirs of my Life, Trans. by E. Storer, (London: Chapman and Dodd, 1923), p. 251.



captioned, "Strictly private, and to be deciphered by his Excellency in person" stated:

Sid Hassuna Karamanli showed himself disposed to support Italian occupation, he being convinced that if we do not occupy Tripoli, others will speedily do so. He declares he can command all of the hill tribes, as they are all his devoted followers. He asked for time to prepare the ground and for money, not for himself but for the Sheikhs. He would be willing to accept a form of government similar to that of Tunis, and declares that by such an arrangement opposition on the part of the Arabs would be avoided and the country pacified...<sup>52</sup>

Instances of friction between the Italians and the Turks, both in Tripoli and Constantinople were numerous, and upon occurrence were given extra and many times undue emphasis in the Italian press. At the same time that relations between Rome and the Porte continued to be severely strained, the Italian government and press were constantly preoccupied with the fear that other powers, especially Germany and sometimes even England or the United States, were gaining influence in Tripoli, at the expense of Italy, and that if Italy was not going to act determinately then another power might replace her in Libya. And although the great powers, Austria, France, Germany, England and Russia had given their approval to the predominance of Italian influence in Libya, they had also qualified this approval with an expressed desire for

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Crispi, Op. Cit., p. 474.



moderation on the part of Italy with regard to any move militarily that would endanger the stability of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Straits, i.e., the Eastern Question. However, two incidents occurred which were to decide, for Italy, her decision to move militarily against Turkey. These were the German show of force at Agadir and the French occupation of Morocco.

As early as 1904, France had obtained the approval for her interest in Morocco from England and Italy in return for her recognition of the interests of these two countries in Egypt and Libya, respectively. In 1909, Germany had also agreed to French special interests in Morocco but had not given her approval for direct military acquisition. In 1910, in answer to a request for French aid to settle a revolt against Maulay Abd al-Hafidh, French forces moved into Fez. In response to this, Germany dispatched the gunboat, Panther, to Agadir. By a settlement between them, France's position in Morocco was recognized by Germany, and Germany in return received compensation in Equatorial Africa. To Italy, both moves were threats to her position in Libya; the French had further expanded their empire in north-west Africa while it was thought that Germany, repulsed at Morocco while proclaiming her friendship for the Porte, might seek additional compensation in Tripoli. Askew states,

It soon became obvious that, as France would increase her Mediterranean territory, Italy must, therefore, seize Tripoli in order to restore the equilibrium. Equally important, many Italians believed that Germany...might now claim compensation in Tripoli unless Italy acted with all haste.<sup>53</sup>

Germany was on good terms with the Porte, and although she was a partner to the Triple Alliance, as late as September 11, 1911, "Turkey suggested that Germany could reap a rich reward from economic activity in Tripoli if she defended the integrity of the Turkish Empire."<sup>54</sup> Ziadeh illustrates a German precedent for action in Tripoli as early as 1871:

German victory over France in 1871 reminded her of possible action in Libya and a number of German travellers...travelled extensively in the area.<sup>55</sup>

After the French occupation of Morocco, the Italian nationalistic press became more violent towards Turkey. Events were now coming to a head, and when Turkey objected through diplomatic channels to the violent press campaign directed against her, the Italian Foreign Minister, San

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<sup>53</sup> Askew, Op. Cit., p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> Nicola A. Ziadeh, Sanusiyah, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), p. 34.

Guiliano remarked, "If we cannot conquer Tripoli economically, they (the Turks) will force us to occupy it...Italy feels young and strong."<sup>56</sup>

In August, Italy began her military preparations while she continued to lay the diplomatic groundwork for her invasion of Libya if necessary. By the middle of August, she had the qualified accord of Britain. France, Austria and Russia. Although Germany was an ally, she had now also assumed the dubitable title of 'Protector of Islam'<sup>57</sup> Germany also feared that an outbreak of hostilities between Italy and Turkey would compromise her position as well as disturb the balance of power in the Balkans with this latter fear was highly prophetic. Against the diplomatic background of German-Austrian mediation attempts to have Turkey acquiesce to Italian demands, Italy continued to prepare for war and

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Askew, Op. Cit., p. 51.

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Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Archives, Pos. 17/46. Hereafter cited as IMFA. Letter of T.T. Parvis to the Ministry, January 20, 1911: "These days a Sanussi from a zawia near Benghazi wrote that in that region and at Tripoli a kind of passward has spread to oppose the Italians and to favor the Germans and that even the Turkish authorities are doing so...the local German Agency, contrary to ours, seems to be developing actions in favor of the Sanussi. It sent to al-Azhar for Sheikh Muhammad Osman...the Agency stated that Germany is a friend of the Muslims and of the Sanussi and that she is ready to help them whenever she can." See appendix XXIV.

commenced to assemble her fleet. On January 29, 1911, the Italian Foreign Minister sent the following cable to the Ambassador in Constantinople, Baron E. Mayor des Planches which constitutes the demands requested by Italy:

A formal question on policy will be placed before the Chamber of Deputies...I will probably only be able to delay the answer for a few days. The Chamber really took my declaration concerning the incident in Hodeida badly, judging the Italian Government's conduct towards Turkey too weak. It is to the interests of both countries that feelings in the Chamber do not give way to a manifestation of a sentiment that will weaken Italo-Turkish relations. Only possible and accomplished achievements, possibly in the form of spontaneous and friendly offers on the part of Turkey, for example: concessions for excavating, or even better, a formal promise to grant the locality requested by Halbherr; effective exception of the exchange of notes; reparation for the isolation of the extra-territoriality of our steamship in Tripoli; impartial treatment for Italians and foreigners in the concessions for phosphates and others; removal, under any pretext, of the present Wali of Tripoli; reexpulsion of Guzmán; and so on. In short, we must show by deeds... that our friendly policy towards Turkey is fruitful and that it is not necessary to adopt a sterner policy. Other-wise such a policy will be imposed inevitably by the Parliament and by the country.<sup>58</sup>

From January through September negotiations continued concerning the demands made by Italy. On September 27th the Italian Minister at Constantinople was ordered to tender

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IMFA, No. 329.

an ultimatum to the Porte which he did the following day. In response to the ultimatum, Turkey replied that all the demands made by Italy concerning concessions in Tripoli, i.e., primary status for Italian nationals in Libya and the cessation of threats to Italians and foreigners in Libya (they had been denied by the Porte at the outset) would be granted if Italy would respect Ottoman territorial integrity. This reply was refused and on September 29, 1911 war was declared. The declaration of war followed by six days the preliminary accord signed between Germany and France concerning Morocco. This accord had ended the second international crisis over Morocco and, as France was now free to move to Morocco, Giolitti probably felt that the opportunity to move into Libya could not be lost. In the midst of diplomatic pressure to avoid war it is evident that Giolitti wanted to present the Powers with a fait accompli. The final decision to go to war rested with Giolitti. On December 16, 1913 he addressed the Chamber of Deputies concerning the Italo-Turkish war:

I did not undertake the Libyan War out of enthusiasm - quite the contrary!... It is the truth and I must confess it. I undertook it, however, after having carefully calculated on the one hand the great advantage of possessing a vast colony in the Mediterranean, and, on the other, the disaster to which we should have exposed ourselves

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had we not undertaken it.<sup>59</sup>

The development of Italian colonial interests in the Red Sea and in Libya provide the background upon which the relations between Italy and Yemen during the years 1904-1911 must be viewed.

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<sup>59</sup> Salmone, Op. Cit., p. 103.

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CHAPTER II

AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND :

YEMEN AND ASIR



## GEOGRAPHY

There are, historically speaking, at least two Yemens. The first one may be termed a "geographical expression" similar to the way Italy was described before her unification. The period covering this "first" Yemen ranges from approximately 2,000 B.C. to 1841 A.D. In 1841 the province of Asir, often included as part of Yemen, was treated separately by the Turks upon the withdrawal of Egyptian forces under Ibrahim Pasha. The "second" Yemen is the province of Yemen remaining after 1841 that has become the modern state of Yemen known today.

The frontiers of the older Yemen, as with other Arab states, showed a marked propensity for elasticity and continuously fluctuated according to the rise and fall of small states, dynasties or powerful tribes not to mention foreign

invaders. Very often, before the modern era, Yemen encompassed an area which included Asir, the Hadhramaut and Oman. 1934 was the year the modern state's boundaries were finally determined. The British had occupied Aden in 1839. In 1905 an Anglo-Turkish Boundary commission had delineated the frontier between Ottoman Yemen and the Aden Colony and Protectorate. Yemeni claims to this region held by Britain were decisively settled, after the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1914 which had not been ratified, in 1934 when the Yemenis failed to force acknowledgement of their claim. Also in 1934 the Saudi King, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, annexed the province of Asir. For the period 1904-1911 we may treat Yemen as she is presently. Thus, in the north Yemen was bounded by the province of Asir and both of them (Asir and Yemen) were nominally under the Ottomans. To the east lay the Rub'al-Khali, the "Empty Quarter". Both Yemen and Asir were bounded on the west by the Red Sea, and since 1839, Yemen was bounded on the south by the Aden Protectorate.<sup>1</sup>

Geographically Yemen may be divided into four main regions: the Tihama (coast), the mountains, the inland plateau and

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of treaties (1839-1939) between England and the Sheikhs of the Aden Protectorate see Doreen Ingrams, A Survey of Social and Economic Conditions in the Aden Protectorate, (Eritrea: Government Printer, British Administration, 1949), p. 24.

the inland desert.<sup>2</sup> Yemen is one of the few regions in the Middle East with sufficient rainfall to allow a rich agricultural productivity especially as she receives abundant rain during the summer months. It is interesting to note that the average temperature in Yemen's capital, San'a, is the same as that of San Francisco, i.e. 62°F. What must be noted here for historical purposes is the fact that Yemen can again be sharply divided into two major areas: the lowland coast along the Red Sea which is open to enemy naval forces or forces coming along the coast from the north (Hijaz), and the high inaccessible mountains rapidly rising to heights of between two and twelve thousand feet. In brief, Yemen's history has been that of relative

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On Yemen geography see:

Carlton S. Coon, Caravan: The Story of the Middle East, (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1962), pp. 114, 121.

Clarendon Press, Oxford Regional Economic Atlas, The Middle East and North Africa, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

A. Farouhy, Introducing Yemen, (New York: Orientalia Inc., 1947), pp. 2-9.

W.B. Fisher, The Middle East: A Physical, Social, and Regional Geography, (London: Methuen and Co., 1963), pp. 461-469.

Great Britain, Western Arabia and the Red Sea, Geographical Handbook Series, B. R. 527, Naval Intelligence Division, 1946, pp. 1-211.

Gamal-Eddine Heyworth-Dunne, Al-Yemen: A General Social, Political and Economic Survey, (Cairo: The Renaissance Bookshop, 1952), pp. 5-7.

independence in the mountains and foreign occupation of the Tihama or coastal belt lying between the sea and the foot of the mountain range. This coastal belt, proceeding from north to south, is an average of 40 to 50 miles wide.<sup>3</sup> It should also be mentioned that any foreign element occupying the Tihama must, in many regions, be prepared to face and operate under an average annual temperature of 130°F. in the shade and must struggle to meet and defeat an enemy who does not suffer the same discomfort. Not only do they wait in the mountain recesses, but the enemy always has the advantage of free withdrawal to the northwest. Thus an invader, once leaving the coast, must extend his lines into hostile mountains where, at the pleasure of the Imam, he is called upon to do battle. Even if the people are hospitable many times the land is not. An example of this is the question of drinkable water. In many areas the water is too salty and brackish for human--and especially military--consumption. The main Yemeni port is the city of Hodeida. Farougy states that water is brought here from the mountains 45 or 50 miles

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<sup>2</sup> A.H. Sharafaddin, Yemen, "Arabia Felix", (Rome: Daily American, 1961), pp. 7-11.

<sup>3</sup> Farougy, Op.Cit., p. 8.

away.<sup>4</sup> Ottoman troops usually landed at Hodeida with their main objective being San'a. The distance they had to cover was no greater than seventy-five miles. But in this short distance they had to climb from sea-level to an altitude of over 12 thousand feet, mostly without proper roads, where the fresh enemy lay awaiting. The country is almost rectangular, greater in length than in breadth. Most of the main cities lie in the mountains: Sa'da, San'a, Manakha, Dhamor, Yerim and Ta'iz. The other main cities, Luhaiya, Hodeida and Mocha are seaports. Mocha had been the most active port but declined early because of the Portuguese, changes in vessel construction, and the growth of Aden. It is interesting to note why Mocha had become a rich entrepot in early times. The Red Sea is difficult to navigate. There are many islands, hidden reefs and shallows. This was more difficult before the advent of steam-powered ships. Thus, "The only possible solution was to tranship goods from the larger seagoing vessels of the Indian Ocean to small craft capable of navigating inland waters. Two ports, Aden and Mocha, were available for this service..."<sup>5</sup>

Much has been and continues to be written about the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Marston, Op. Cit., p. 8.

ancient civilization that once flourished in Yemen.<sup>6</sup>

In Yemen--and the other Arab countries--geneology plays an important role especially among the tribes. Thus the Yemeni Arabs traced their lineage back to Yoktan of the Bible while the northern Arabs traced theirs back to Abraham, i.e. to a later date. The southern or Yemeni Arabs felt themselves therefore, to be on a level superior to that of their northern brothers. No doubt the ancient cultures under which they lived, more highly advanced than the desert ones of the north--even the towns of Mecca and Medina--were the main source for this differentiation. Whether because of the break-down of the irrigation system and the great dam of Marib or because of the redirection of trade during the time of the Romans and Byzantines, many of the southern Arabs had migrated north and sometimes across the sea to East Africa: a tribe from the district of Luhaiya, the Habashat, gave the land they settled in the name Abyssinia.<sup>7</sup> These tribes as well as those that remained in the south were not eager to be ruled under the less civilized Hijaz tribe of the Quraish. This was to stir up many conflicts with the advent of Islam and the subsequent division with opposing sects and factions.

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<sup>6</sup>  
See bibliography.

<sup>7</sup>  
L'Italia in Africa, Op. Cit., p. 131.

Throughout history Yemen has been known as a rich, fertile and prosperous country; hence the appellation "Arabia Felix". The dividing line between ancient and modern history is difficult to place with regards to Yemen. It was not really until the twentieth century that much about Yemen came to be known. Yemen under the Imams, struggling against and occupied by various caliphs and the Ottomans, was ruled theocratically under a system that was a mixture of tribal custom and Islamic innovation. The modern state of Yemen is the work of the Imam, al-Mutuakkil Hamid ad-Din Yahya, who ruled from 1904 to 1958.<sup>8</sup> Yet during these years it was his main policy to keep Yemen isolated from all Western influence.<sup>9</sup> His state functioned according to Islamic law and the nature of the Imamate itself stretching back to the ninth century. Considering this one might state that Yemeni modern history began either with the advent of Islam or with the republican coup d'etat in 1962. The history of Yemen during the entire period is closely tied to the religious sect occupying most of the country

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Hereafter referred to as Imam Yahya.

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Khadduri, Majid, "Coups and Counter-Coups in the Yemen, 1948", Royal Institute of International Affairs, (London: Chatham House, January 1962), Vol. XXVIII, No. 1., p. 59.

from the early tenth century (at last spiritually when not temporally) and the nature of the Imamate itself. It is the combination of geography and religion that differentiates much of the history of Yemen from other Arab countries. This is not the case for Asir which will be discussed separately.



## THE ZAIDI IMAMATE

The history of Yemen has been, in part, a history of invasions. Amongst these have been Egyptian, Roman, Ethiopian and Persian. The Persians arrived in the latter part of the sixth century and it was during their occupation, in the early seventh century, that Yemen fell to Islam. Thus, between April 630 and April 631, the ninth Hejiric year known as the 'Year of Deputations', Yemeni tribes came to acknowledge their fealty to the Prophet.<sup>10</sup> Their Persian governor, the satrap Badham, had already embraced Islam and had been confirmed in this post by Muhammad.

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W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 79.

Badham was later replaced by Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, who ruled benevolently and who left behind him upon his departure many ardent supporters. When the division of Islam into two major sects, Sunni and Shi'a, took place, the Yemenis were already predisposed to accepting the standard of Shi'ism. Throughout the vicissitudes of the Umayyids, Abbasids, Fatimids, and Ayyubids the Zaidis, a Shi'a sect, gained a foothold in Yemen that was to lead to the formation of a theocratic state ruling the country off and on until 1962. Zaid, a grandson of Husein Ibn Ali, had been the first to challenge the position of the Umayyid caliphate after the disastrous Alid defeat at Karbala.<sup>11</sup> He had announced that he, the descendent of Ali, was the rightful Imam and was killed fighting in ca. 740. The Zaidi sect was founded after him. Some of his family left for the Persian provinces while others remained in Iraq. It was the latter branch that formed the Zaidi state in Yemen.

The Imam, Al-Hadi Yahya, arrived in Yemen sometime around the year 897-898.<sup>12</sup> He sought to restore the

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R. Strothman, "al-Zaidiyah" Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, ed. G.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramer, 1961, pp. 651-652.

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Many authors vary on this date. His arrival can be placed anywhere between 893 and 900. Sharfaddin, Op. Cit., p. 55, states 284 A. H. (897 A.D.).

prestige of his House and, after seeing that there was no room for him in Persia, he had responded to the call of coreligionists in Yemen and departed for that country. He was the grandson of al-Qassim al-Rassi (from Jabal Al-Rass) and his dynasty to the present day has been known as the Rassid dynasty.<sup>13</sup> On March 16, 897, the Imam, with a few followers, captured the town of Sa'da.<sup>14</sup> The major importance of the town lay in its location for it sat astride the pilgrimage route between Mecca and southern Yemen. Sa'da did not become the seat of the Imamate until the thirteenth century although it had fallen early to the Zaidis.

The religion of Islam, especially Shi'ite in a more severe form (as a minority group, they stress greater observance of the particulars separating them from other Muslims) encompasses all fields of the believers' earthly endeavors. This is particularly true concerning law. The Imamate was a theocracy. It is not the purpose of this paper to explore the various dogmatic beliefs of Islam as a whole or even those particular to Shi'ism and Zaidism. What is more important historically is the Imamate itself.

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<sup>13</sup> Strothman, Op. Cit., p. 652 states that this name is inaccurate.

<sup>14</sup> Carl Brockelmann, History of the Islamic Peoples, Trans. by Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), p. 142.

The Zaidis agree with the Shi'ites that the caliphate should have gone to the descendents of Ali. But the Zaidis differ in that succession is not based solely on descent. Rather, the caliphate should have passed on to Ali because of his own personal merits. This is likewise true for any descendent of Ali. The Zaidis are not as intolerant as their Shi'a bretheren. They do not believe in a "Hidden Imam"; to the contrary, they believe that there can be more than one Imam at any giventime. They also believe that their elected Imam is divinely ordained and therefore infallible.<sup>15</sup> More important, the Imamate, by law and tradition, is not handed down from father to son. The Imam must be elected by the Ulema and he must have as much as fourteen qualifications for this office.<sup>16</sup> Anyone meeting these qualifications, and in reality chiefly those concerned with descent, was in a position to claim the Imamate. Because of the Imamate the history of Yemen, besides being a history of invasions, has also been a history of internal rivalries and assassinations as different groups and members of the

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Heyworth-Dunne, Op. Cit., p. 19.

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Ibid, p. 18. These are 1- male, 2- free-born, 3- taxpayer, 4- mentally competent, 5- in possession of all senses, 6- sound in limb, 7- just, 8- pious, 9- generous, 10- administrative ability, 11- descent from the Prophet, 12- descent from Fatimah's family, 13- brave, 14- be mujtahid. See also Hans Helfritz, The Yemen, a Secret Journey, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), p. 123.

same immediate family would claim the Imamate. Perhaps all the qualifications necessary for this office could be grouped into two: 1) descent from the Prophet and 2) ability with the sword. What also aggravated the situation was the fact that the country was dominated by a tribal structure which compromised the loyalties of the people.<sup>17</sup> No Imam could last long without the loyalty of the tribes. It was the intelligent as well as powerful Imam who could force a tribal sheikh to send his sons and members of his tribe to the Imam to be kept as hostages. These hostages were the guarantee that the tribe would remain either loyal to the Imam or at least not intervene on behalf of an enemy if they were not fighting with the Imam.<sup>18</sup> Also, the Imam would see to it that the hostages were held in another tribe--usually one hostile to the tribe whence came the hostage--as far away as possible.

The entire history of Yemen from 628--Islamization--until the Mamluke invasion of 1514-1516, in reaction to the growing

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The names of these tribes often appear in Italian correspondence. The main Yemeni tribes are: the Hashid and Baquil (the staunchest supporters of the Imam), the Hamdan, Hawarith, Zu Muhammad, Zu Husain, Banu Islam, Banu Matar, Makarimah and Zaraniq. Of these the Zaraniq are famous as fighters and also as pirates.

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Ingrams notes that in 1904 Imam Yahya had taken 400 hostages from the Shaf'ite tribes who tended to be less displeased with Turkish rule as they were Sunni. Harold Ingrams, The Yemen: Imams, Rulers and Revolutions, (London: John Murray, 1963), p. 61.

Portuguese menace, is chaotic. The Banu Ziad established a brief dynasty in the Tihama which soon ruled over most of the country. Theirs was a history of battles until the Karmathians. At the same time the Fatimids unsuccessfully tried to invade the country. Soon after the above mentioned Imam al-Hadi Yahya established himself in Sa'da. A period of internal strife continued until the invasion of the Ayyubids in 1173 led by the brother of Saladin, Turan Shah. However Ayyubid control soon lost out to the Rasulid dynasty that lasted less than a hundred years, being replaced by the Tahirids. The Tahirids ruled for only a brief spell. They in turn came into conflict with the Mamlukes of Egypt as they attempted to expand northwards.<sup>19</sup>

By this time the Portuguese had entered the Indian Ocean, establishing themselves in East Africa and in India. This was the first time that a Christian power posed as a threat to the Arabian peninsula since the abortive Abyssinian invasion at the time of the birth of the Prophet. For the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, indeed for the whole Muslim world, this ushered in a new era which continues to the present day. From this time onwards little may be said

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Jane Smiley Hart, "Basic Chronology for a History of the Yemen", The Middle East Journal, (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, Winter-Spring 1963), Vol. 17, Nos. 1&2 pp. 144-153.

about Yemen without reference to the Christian Powers although by 1600 Portuguese power had declined and no Western country greatly interfered in the Red Sea area until Napoleon's famous invasion of Egypt in 1798. The English unsuccessfully attempt trade with Yemen in the sixteenth century and also in the 1600's. A factory was established at Mocha by the Dutch in 1708 but they closed it thirty years later. At about the same time the French made commercial treaties with Yemen and also opened a factory there and even, in 1737, bombarded Mocha.<sup>20</sup> The English had established a factory much earlier and in 1819 had also bombarded Mocha.

In 1498 Vasco da Gama had rounded the trip of Africa discovering the famous sea-route to India. The Portuguese had established trade centers but were also carrying on a war of attrition against Muslim shipping. This was their policy of a religious Crusade against the Muslims which had begun two centuries earlier during reconquest and unification of their country. After the route to India was discovered there was a continued series of armed fleets sent out from Portugal. Their main objective was the defeat of the rulers of Calicut. The fourth of such fleets left

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Great Britian, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 265.



Portugal on February 10, 1502.<sup>21</sup> Led by Vasco da Gama the fleet had captured an unarmed Egyptian vessel containing pilgrims. Some of the women and children were captured but the greatest majority of those on board the vessel had been locked below after which the vessel was set alight and sunk. Similar acts and also the fact that all Muslim ships had to have permission to sail from the Portuguese while the trade from the east had been diminished to an alarming degree caused the Mamluke Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri to prepare for operations against the Portuguese.

In 1506 the Portuguese sailed with instructions to attack Aden and Jidda. Alarming reports concerning Portuguese shipping and incursions around Arabia accelerated the Sultan's attempt to build a striking force against the enemy. He had sought help from Venice but it had been declined. He therefore turned to the Turks from whom he received arms.

The Mamluke Sultan sent a force to the Yemen as a step towards the eventual forthcoming major clash with the Portuguese and also because of growing Tahirid threats in the Hijaz.

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L.O. Schuman, Political History of the Yemen at the Beginning of the 16th Century, according to contemporary Arabic Sources, (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1961), p. 54.



Mamluke influence in Yemen was of brief duration. The Ottoman Sultan Bayazit had been dethroned in April 1512 by his son Selim I. It was not too long before the new Sultan's attention was drawn to a rising Shi'ite power in Persia. He also had difficult relations with the Mamlukes.

Selim I, fearing a Persian-Mamluke thrust against the Ottomans, had to turn the Turks from their long series of wars with Europe to meet the challenge from the East. By 1515 Selim had conquered Tabriz as well as incorporating Albistan, a small principality lying as a buffer zone between Ottoman and Mamluke territory. The following year al-Ghawri began to advance through Syria. In August the Mamluke forces were defeated, the defeat subsequently being followed up by the fall of Egypt to Selim in January 1517. Along with Syria, Palestine and Egypt Yemen now entered into the Ottoman sphere of influence. The Egyptian forces in the Yemen remained there but now under the Turks. By the 1530's Yemen was ruled no longer by Egyptians but by Ottoman appointees and there was now a Turkish Pasha to administer the province. However the Turks soon abandoned Yemen as it was of lesser significance than other regions and more difficult to maintain.

The Zaidis under the Imam al-Qasim had revolted and were once more independent.<sup>22</sup> This was after the new Imam's accession to the Imamate in 1597.<sup>23</sup> Yemen under the Zaidi Imams continued to suffer turbulent times. Although their power continued to weaken they were able to continue their rule unchallenged externally until the entrance of reformist Wahhabism in 1802. During this period Aden, Lahej and the Aulagi and Yafai regions were lost diminishing the Imam's territories and strength while opening the area to the eventual invasion under Muhammad Ali Pasha and the British takeover of Aden.

In Central Arabia an alliance had taken place between the Muslim reformer Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the ruler of Dar'iyah, Muhammad Ibn Saud. In surprisingly short time the Wahhabis, as they came to be called, were sufficiently strong enough to unite Central Arabia under the Sauds as well as attack Karbala in southern Iraq in 1802 and capture Mecca and Medina in 1804. The following year they invaded Syria. Wahhabi influence had also spread southwards. By

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Imam al-Mansur billah al-Qasim was a descendent of the Rassid Imams of Sa'da but he established the dynasty which ruled from San'a.

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Concerning Yemen the rise of al-Qasim introduced the period of Ottoman decline in this area to match what was occurring throughout the empire itself.

1802 the leader of the mountainous regions of Asir, Muhammad Ibn Amir Abu Nuqtah al-Rufaidi had accepted Wahhabism and was appointed governor of upland Asir by the Saudis.<sup>24</sup>

The sacking of Karbala, the inroads made into Syria, and more important, the capture of Mecca and Medina, brought upon the head of the Wahhabis the wrath of the Sublime Porte. In 1811, under the orders of his Turkish sovereign, Sultan Mahmud II, Muhammad Ali Pasha, viceroy of Egypt, set out to destroy the Wahhabi state which also included the above-mentioned regions in Asir. The Pasha had an added incentive as he also hoped to obtain a monopoly over the coffee trade from Yemen. At the same time, by extending his power into the Sudan and along the coast of Arabia, he could hope to turn the Red Sea into an Egyptian lake. The wars against the Wahhabi lasted for seventeen years and ended in 1818 with the fall of the Saudi capital, Dar'iyah.

Most of the military operations in Arabia were under the Pasha's son, Ibrahim. All in all eleven expeditions were sent to subdue Asir but with little success.<sup>25</sup> By 1809 the Wahhabis were defeated there and Ibrahim Pasha's

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<sup>24</sup> R. Bayly Winder, Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Egyptian forces were the strongest element along the coast occupying Hodeida, Zabid and Mocha. However, by this time, the 1830's, Muhammad Ali Pasha had risen to such power that he felt ready to separate himself from the Ottoman Empire.

The Greeks had won their independence and Muhammad Ali's fleet, sent to aid the Sultan against the Greeks, had been destroyed by the combined action of British, French and Russian naval forces at Navarino Bay in the Morea. He still had his army--technically superior to that of the Turks--and it had reached Anatolia ready to strike at the heart of the Ottoman Empire itself, Constantinople. Such an event was prevented the first time by the Russians, and in 1841, after a diplomatic flurry, a second time by the concerted action of Britain, Austria and Russia. At this time an opportunity was also taken by Lord Palmerston to coerce the Egyptians into withdrawing from Yemen.<sup>26</sup>

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Britain's appraisal of Muhammad Ali's position in Yemen was aptly illustrated in a letter from Lord Palmerston to Colonel Campbell, British Consul General in Egypt, dated May 24, 1838: "... I have to instruct you to remind Boghos Bey of the declaration already made by H.M. Govt...that Great Britain could not see with indifference any attempt made by Mehemet Ali to invade or conquer the country lying at and beyond the mouth of the Red Sea.

With respect to the occupation of the Yemen by the Egyptian troops, you will say that the British Government have no desire that such occupation should continue; but, on the contrary, would be better pleased by any overt act which should show that the Pasha is engaged in improving the administration of the Province confided to his Government, instead of employing the energies of his mind, and the resources of the countries he governs, in aggressive expeditions against neighbouring districts." Great Britain, Foreign Office, F.O. 78/2753. Hereafter cited as F.O.

Up until this period Asir was considered a part of Yemen although from many historical accounts this region (Asir) was usually a source of dispute between the rulers of Hijaz, Abu Arish and Yemen. Ibrahim Pasha, withdrawing Egyptian forces from Yemen and Asir in 1840 because of the diplomatic pressure of Britain, saw fit to divide the control of these two regions. Initially it appeared that Asir would be handed over to Sharif Muhammad Ibn Aun of Mecca. Whether Ibrahim Pasha's decision was based on power politics or the highest price offered is not known. In any case, he turned Asir (at least along the Tihama belt between the Yemeni highlands and Hijaz) over to Sharif Husein Ibn Ali Ibn Haidar. This was for an annual tribute of 90,000 German crowns.<sup>27</sup> This act therefore left three contenders for supremacy of the area: Husein of Abu Arish, Sharif Muhammad Ibn Aun of Mecca and the Zaidi Imam. Later on, especially after the eclipse of Husein's rule in Asir by

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Harold F. Jacob, Kings of Arabia: The Rise and Set of the Turkish Sovranty in the Arabian Peninsula, (London: Mill, 1923), p. 51. In the article by A. Headly, W. Mulligan and G. Rentz, "Asir", The Encyclopedia of Islam, ed. H.A.R. Gibb et. al, Vol. I, pp. 707-710, does not mention this transaction and Jacob is the only source I have found that gives the amount of the annual tribute. Also, Hart, Op. Cit., p. 147 states that Husein seized the Tihama rather than paying tribute for it.

the Turks, other groups within Asir itself such as the tribal chief, Aidh ibn Mar'i, would attempt to gain control. But from the time Ibrahim Pasha withdrew from Asir until 1934 the province of Asir was now a separate region belonging neither to Yemen nor to the Meccan Sharifs.

## ASIR

Yemen, Asir and to a certain extent, the Hijaz, were all now nominally under the Sublime Porte. They were only part of the Ottoman Empire as long as the Turks were able to maintain their position there. Up until 1809 there was no distinct and lasting incorporation of Yemen into the Empire. The interval of Egyptian rule emphasized the lack of Ottoman permanency in this region. No doubt the Egyptians were aware that all three regions: Hijaz, Asir and Yemen were antagonistic to each other, divided by religious, dynastic and tribal animosities and this division represented a weakened front utilized by Ibrahim Pasha. It rendered the entire area available to future incorporation into Muhammad Ali Pasha's Arab empire if the opportunity

presented itself. Muhammad Ali was assiduously attempting to obtain Great Britain's acquiescence for his designs on the Arabic domains of the Ottoman Empire; and the Arab peninsula, especially Yemen and its lucrative coffee trade, figured into these plans.

For the period 1904-1911 and after, the importance of Asir lies not in its geographical position between Hijaz and Yemen but rather in the fact that a continual revolt against the Ottomans was to begin and sustain itself through World War I. What is to be noted about this revolt is its constancy. Yemen came to terms with the Sublime Porte. The "Arab Revolt" led by Sharif Husein of the Hijaz did not start until certain political concessions, as well as gold and arms, had been given to the Sharif by Britain. The same may also be said about the Amir Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. He was ready, as was the Imam Yahya, to accept autonomy under an Ottoman imperial umbrella. For the rebel in Asir al-Sayyid Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Hasan Ibn Ahmad al-Idris,<sup>28</sup> a demand for autonomy was merely temporizing. Thus he allied himself with the Italians in 1911 and was the first Arab leader to join the Allies against the Turks in 1915.

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Hereafter referred to as al-Sayyid al-Idris.



Asir generally fits any description of Yemen but on a more diminutive scale. Instead of three basic regions, as is the case with Yemen, Asir is divided into two: the Tihama coastal belt and the Sarat mountain range. The name of this region is derived from a tribal confederation from the mountains made up of the Banu Mughaid, Banu Malik, Alkam, and Rabi'ah wa-Rufaidah tribes.<sup>29</sup> The capital of the province is Abha. Usually the province included (when not in the hands of the Yemenis) the ports: Jizan (the main one), Qunfidha and sometimes Luhaiya. Besides the capital and the three seaports, other important towns were Umm al Khashab, Abu Arish and Sabiya. The last was the seat of the Idrisi movement.

To understand events in Asir and to understand some of the reasons for Italian relations with the Idrisis it is necessary to begin with the life of Ahmad Ibn Idris al-Fazi, the forefather of al-Sayyid al-Idris.

Ahmad Ibn Idris was born around the year 1785 in the village of Araish near Fez in Morocco. He was a deeply religious man who, after his studies, began teaching. He was strongly influenced by Sufist doctrine and he was a leading member of the Kidriyah order.<sup>30</sup> Later he formed

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<sup>29</sup> Winder, Op. Cit., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ziadeh, Sanusiyah, Op. Cit., p. 45.

his own order known as the Ahmadiyah.<sup>31</sup> One of Ahmad's pupils was the Grand Sanusi, al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi, and "there grew between the two a spiritual relationship which was far-reaching."<sup>32</sup> Ahmad had already been teaching in Mecca for a few years when al-Sanusi came to study under him. He had arrived there sometime around 1805 and stayed in Mecca almost thirty years.<sup>33</sup> Ahmad left Mecca around the year 1835 and travelled to the south seeking a suitable site for the establishment of his new order. He found it in the town of Sabiya in Asir. He died there two years later revered as a holy man and venerated by the populace as a saint.<sup>34</sup> He also left

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31 Not to be confused with a Muslim sect of the same name founded in India in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Kadiani.

32 Ziadeh, Sanusiyah, Ibid. It was the Sanusiyah Order in Libya that confronted Italian attempts to pacify the Libyan hinterlands after the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912. The connection between the Sanusiyah and the Ahmadiyah during the time of al-Sayyid al-Idris was based on these early ties and Italy was cognizant of this relationship. She hoped--as will be illustrated--that her friendly relations with the Idrisis would help her bring about a rapprochement with the Sanusis.

33 Another pupil of Ahmad ibn Idris was Muhammad Amir Ghani who founded the al-Mirganiyah Order in the Sudan: Ziadeh, Ibid. George Wyman Bury, Arabia Infelix, or, the Turks in Yemen, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915), p. 22 states that Ahmad's other famous pupil besides al-Sanusi was Hassan ibn Murgan.

34 Ameen Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia, (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1930), pp. 153-158 contains the titles of Ahmad's books and writings about him by some of his followers.

his family wealthy and in favorable standing with the people around and in Sabiya. This was eleven years after the occupation of Asir by Ibrahim Pasha. As mentioned previously, Ibrahim Pasha was forced to withdraw his forces from Asir in 1840-1841 and had left the Tihama in the hands of Husein, the Sharif of Abu Arish. The period 1841-1849 was, as was often the case before, a time of struggle and **chaos**. Husein did not gain the support of the people and tribesmen of Asir. There was great hostility to his rule, and this hostility was aggravated by continuous and in the main, unsuccessful, battles against the Imam Ali Mansur of San'a.

In 1849 the Turks again attempted to regain Yemen and Asir thus ushering in a new period of wars in the Yemen from this time until 1904 when Yemen broke out in open revolt under Imam Yahya. With arrival of the Turks, Husein was forced back to Abu Arish. But opposition soon began in 1855 under Aidh ibn Mar'i, chief of the Banu Mughaid, which set the scene for the rise of the Idrisis as well as for open revolt throughout the entire area.

THE TURKS IN YEMEN AND ASIR,  
1849-1872

The Ottoman Empire was enduring its second century of decline. Apart from internal administrative disintegration the Empire was consistently losing control and sovereignty over her provinces in Europe. At the same time, besides the centrifugal forces operating in the Asiatic and African parts of the Empire, the Western Powers were embarking on a new phase of rabid imperialistic expansion. In reaction to this the Empire was attempting to reassert itself especially against the incursions of the West. Great Britain had established herself in Aden and in the Persian Gulf. France had occupied Algiers. A semi-independent Egypt had incorporated the Sudan and had already proven itself to be

a threat to the very existence of the Empire itself. Even Tunisia was only nominally under the Porte. The Turks attempted to resubstantiate their hold in the Arab empire in three main areas: Iraq and the Fertile Crescent, Libya, and Yemen-Asir. In 1870 the Turks were somewhat successful in Iraq because of the wise administration of Midhat Pasha. Libya offered no concerted opposition that could withstand the Turks. In Yemen, as we shall see, the situation was quite different although greater opportunity for effective military operations would present itself with the opening of the Suez canal in 1869. As has been illustrated, the entire period of 1517 to 1849 could be likened to a barometer of the strength of the Ottomans. Usually their control in Yemen did not last for a considerable amount of time, if established at all. Basically Turkish influence always remained in the lowlands. This was, besides logistical problems as well as administrative corruption and inefficiency, due to the problem of religious antagonisms. In the lowlands many of the people were of the Shafite school, i.e. Sunnis, while the mountains were inhabited by the Zaidis, i.e. Shi'ites. This problem bears a marked resemblance to the problems confronting Turkish rule in Lebanon during the period, 1841-1860.

In April 1849, after Egyptian withdrawal, the Sublime Porte again attempted to restore Ottoman hegemony in the two

provinces. At this time an expeditionary force under Tewfik Pasha landed at Hodieda. Hogarth states that the Turks had been "encouraged by assurances from the Emir of Mecca that there was no strength behind Sharif Husein (of Abu Arish) and that Yemen would gladly be rid of him..."<sup>35</sup> This is true. There was also the added incentive, as it was also for Muhammad Ali, of the coffee trade.<sup>36</sup> Husein was easily forced back to Abu Arish. But rather than remain and consolidate his position, the Pasha, leaving behind a small and insignificant force, pushed onwards towards San'a. This would prove itself to be a fatal error. The withdrawal of Husein and the weak Turkish administration left by Tewfik Pasha created a power vacuum in Asir. As forces within Asir marshalled together against the Turks Tewfik was successfully beginning operations against the Imam Muhammad Yahya. This Imam had deposed his cousin, Imam Ali Mansur in 1844. Muhammad had attacked the Sharif of Abu Arish and had been able to gain

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<sup>35</sup> D. G. Hogarth, Arabia, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> Roderic H. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 275: By 1872 there was an additional incentive. Besides wanting to prevent Yemen's separation from the Ottoman Empire, the Turks feared its "succumbing to (Khedive) Ismail's intrigues".

a few important towns. But immediately afterwards Sharif Husein had reconquered them as well as forcing the Imam back to San'a. Once again the Tihama was back in the hands of the Abu Arish Sharifs but now both parties were considerably weakened and thus not able to withstand a new Turkish onslaught. After Tewfik Pasha had settled with Sharif Husein, he had turned on Imam Muhammad. The Imam had no choice but to come to terms. For him these were drastic. He accepted to remain only in the highlands and to rule under Ottoman administration. The Zaidis immediately rose against him and the Turks. When a Turkish force arrived at San'a to garrison the town they were slaughtered. The Imam was deposed and then done away with by his predecessor, Ali Mansur, who once again became Imam. He celebrated this event by reopening hostilities with the Turks. While doing so he in turn was deposed and replaced by Muhammad's son, Ghalib. The Turks, their position weak, fell to maintaining an insecure hold in the Tihama. For the rest of Yemen, a period of chaos ensued from 1849 to 1873:

Though the Turks were driven from San'a, they kept their footing on the coast. Anarchy overtook the high plateau; the splendour of the Imamate temporarily waned; nine Imams tried to rule within six years.<sup>37</sup>

The Turks now tried to maintain the advantageous hold in Asir they initially had in 1849. But their weakened position

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<sup>37</sup> Great Britain, Op. Cit., p. 273.

served notice to the rebellious tribes. A revolt broke out in 1855 but cholera ravaged the Asir tribesmen and the Turks gained a respite. Though the revolt had failed it had shown that the Turks were weak. At the same time the unhappy rule of the Sharif of Abu Arish and tribal discontent and uprisings left the province in continual disorder. This situation continued until 1872.

The Suez canal had opened in 1869. The distance and difficulties facing the Turks in maintaining their hold on Yemen and Asir were now not as great an obstacle. At the same time the canal now opened the Red Sea to other Powers besides the British. The Turks therefore felt compelled to reassert their position in their recalcitrant provinces. Once again forces were sent to Hodieda, this time commanded by Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha. In a brief amount of time he was able to invest San'a and bring both Yemen and Asir securely under his control. A Turkish Wali, or governor-general now ruled in San'a while under him a mutassarif, or governor, ruled in Asir.

In 1891 Muhammad ibn Yahya Hamid ad Din became the Imam. Although conditions were bad in the Yemen as there had been a drought, and although some of the Turkish Walis, such as Isma'il Hakki Pasha or Husein Hilmi Pasha, were quite efficient, developments in the Empire itself served as another cause for anti-Turkish feelings.



The result of the Tanzimaat period of Ottoman reforms, such as the Hatt-i Humayun of 1856, now imposed a civil code upon the peoples of Yemen and Asir. This was especially irritating to the strict Zaidis whose law lay within the Quran and the Imamate. Coupled to this was the apparent disregard for the proscriptions of the Quran--such as the drinking of alcohol--by the Turkish Civil and Military administration. This change--naturally abhorrent to the Zaidis--also irritated the less estranged Shafite element as well as the Idrisis and served as fertile ground to nurture new rebellions. Thus the very improvement of Turkish administration based on socio-ethical Western lines was distasteful to the recipient. New Ottoman civil administration called for better treatment and equal status to the Jews living in Yemen. The exact number of them is unknown, a fair estimate would place the number as being between 50 to 90 thousand. No matter how the Jews had been treated previously the new civil code presented, besides religious antagonism, a new political threat to the two provinces.<sup>38</sup>

A new era of revolt in Yemen began and a series of Turkish governors, using both force and conciliation, were not able to pacify Yemen. Then, in 1904, Imam Muhammad al-Mansur died and was replaced by his son, Imam Yahya.

The new Imam was thirty-five years old and known for his hatred of the Turks. At the same time al-Sayyid al-Idris had returned and prepared to take over the movement from his father. Both men were ready to revolt against the Turks.

CHAPTER III

ITALY, YEMEN AND ASIR  
1904-1912

ITALIAN INTERESTS IN YEMEN AND  
ASIR

The British had established themselves in Aden in 1839. The ensuing years brought a series of treaties with various sheikhs ruling small conclaves around the new colony and, as it has been mentioned, the British had occupied the Somali coast lying opposite Aden. However, except when Turkish actions in the Yemen seemed to pose a threat to the Aden colony and Protectorate, the British illustrated a marked reluctance to become involved in Yemeni affairs. True, Britain had caused Muhammad Ali Pasha to withdraw his forces from Yemen and Asir, but she did not care to take the Pasha's place as the primary political power in this area. Later, after the Turkish reconquest of San'a in 1872, the British became involved in a controversy with the Turks over Yemen.

This was because the Turks, fighting against tribes in southern Yemen, had come uncomfortably close to the Adeni frontiers. This question was settled through the efforts of the Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission between the years 1902 and 1905.<sup>1</sup> All together, at least five attempts had been made between the years 1840 and 1848 by the San'a Imams to enlist British support in Yemen.<sup>2</sup> Although both Turks and Italians believed that the British were involved in Yemeni events, there is no obtainable evidence to support this belief. There is also no available evidence that Britain had made any political moves in Yemen or Asir until 1915 when she signed a treaty with al-Sayyid al-Idris against the Turks. This reluctance on the part of Britain was known to the Italians, and Italy hoped that she might develop interests in Yemen and Asir, as Britain showed concern in these areas only when circumstances placed her face to face with problems of security for her position in South Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See appendixes, I, II and III for I.M.F.A. correspondence regarding the Anglo-Turkish frontier question concerning Aden.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob, Op. Cit., et passim.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 127: "Seeing our apathy above Aden, it was natural that Italy should seek developments here." Also, p.82: "Our aim throughout our stay in the Aden Hinterland [Dala] was carefully to refrain from aiding or abetting the Arabs against the Turks. Hundreds of Arabs have begged me, while Political Agent in Dala, to take over these tracts...." This policy was aptly remarked about to Italian Ambassador in England. See p. 2 of Appendix II.

There were two main reasons for Italian interest in Yemen and Asir: 1) Strategic - Italy was mindful of the fact that a power across the sea from Eritrea could be a threat to that colony; for the French were developing interests in Yemen; and Italy was preoccupied, as were the British, with growing German interest in the Ottoman Empire. 2) Economic - the areas in question presented an open field for the expansion of Italian commercial interests.

The Italians first and foremost were interested in the development of their trade.<sup>4</sup> The documents reviewed related to this period illustrate that the question of political activity was subordinated to that of trade development. It was only after the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 - 1912 that Italy began paying greater attention to possible political action in the Peninsula; but even then, any policy along these lines had to be always interpreted according to the a priori demands of Italy's relations with Great Britain.

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<sup>4</sup> Askew, Op. Cit., p. 23: "Italy was rapidly becoming one of the great powers of Europe in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Between 1890 and 1910 she made more rapid progress in foreign commerce than any other nation in the world." On p. 128, he states further: "The Italians were very careful not to wound Arab susceptibilities in the Red Sea. They moved circumspectly, lest their trade suffer." Also, Mustafa al-Sayyid Salem, Takwin al-Yaman al-Hadith, 1904 - 1948, (Cairo: Alamieh Press, 1963), p. 172 states: "The relations between Italy and the Idrisi were the common interest they had in fighting the Ottoman Empire."

It will be illustrated that even the alliance between Italy and al-Sayyid al-Idris was a result of their immediate common interests against the Ottoman.<sup>5</sup> After the war, Italy would find that this alliance could be beneficial in developing her interests in Yemen and Asir, but the alliance was not a result of this policy. Instead, the first Italian moves in the Peninsula were directly tied to the growth of trade with the area.

In the first chapter it was shown that before the establishment of an Italian colony on the Red Sea coast, during the 1870's, Italy was already enjoying a flourishing trade with Yemen through the outlet of the British-ruled Aden port and, in fact, that in two years this trade had doubled.<sup>6</sup> It does not appear that the Italian merchants

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<sup>5</sup> Thus Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 127 states: "It was Italy who first befriended the Idrisi Saiyid of Sabia, who still looks occasionally for her assistance; for his ports have for long years been in close touch with the Italian ports in Africa of Assab and Massawa. It is not surprising that Italy looks across to Arabia expectantly. It is their trade they would extend..." and, Ibid, p. 128, he states further: "The Italians were very careful not to wound Arab susceptibilities in the Red Sea. They moved circumspectly, lest their trade suffer." Also, Sayyid, Ibid, states: "The relations between Italy and the Idrisi was the common interest they had in fighting the Ottoman Empire."

<sup>6</sup> Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 529, also mentions that, "Salt, evaporated from sea-water, is the only mineral produced in Aden colony. The first salt-works were constructed by an Italian firm in 1885."

in Aden entered Yemen in these years. Rather, they received Yemeni goods from the camel caravans that arrived from the Yemeni highlands into Aden each day. No doubt the goods sold by the Italians in Aden reached Yemen in the same way.

The first Italian in modern times to enter Yemen for commercial purposes was Renzo Manzoni; by 1877 he had arrived in Aden. The Italian Consul there, then Giuseppe Bienenfeld, suggested to Manzoni that he go to San'a and attempt to begin trading with Yemen. Because of the opposition of Greek merchants long established in that city, as well as the opposition of the local Turkish authorities, Manzoni's attempts to establish himself in Yemen failed. All in all he made three trips into Yemen. But aside from his troubles with the Wali, Mustafa Azim Pasha, the Italian's presence in Yemen was of no consequence. Manzoni returned to Italy where he wrote a highly informative book about Yemen and his experiences there.<sup>7</sup> Another attempt by an Italian to establish himself in Yemen was more successful.

Luigi Caprotti, born in 1858 or 1859, had arrived at Massawa in 1880 as an agent for the Societa di Commercio con l'Africa. For some time he travelled and traded extensively

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<sup>7</sup> Renzo Manzoni, El Yemen, Tre Anni nell'Arabia Felice - Escursioni fatte dall' settembre 1877 al marzo 1880, (Rome: Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1884).



in the Sudan and in Abyssinia. However, it was not too long before he became dissatisfied with the company he represented as well as with the meager opportunities presented to him in those regions. Thus, in 1884, he turned his attention to Yemen. He arrived there in September of that year as an agent for the commercial house of Mazzucchelli e Perera. At that time Sante Mazzucchelli, one of the partners, was the Italian Consul at Hodeida.<sup>8</sup> In August of the following year, Luigi was joined by his brother Giuseppe who was interested in building a career in foreign commerce but who had, up to this time, been serving in the Italian army. Four years later at San'a Luigi died of typhus fever, leaving his brother to carry on alone.

Giuseppe Caprotti dropped his ties with commercial establishments, and for the remaining years of his stay in Yemen he worked independently. It may be mentioned also that for seven years he was the local agent of the Ottoman Tobacco Regie.

He remained in Yemen until 1919. During all these years he astutely avoided any action that would compromise him or his business in the eyes of either the local Turkish

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Italy. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Annuario Diplomatico del Regno D'Italia per l'anno 1886. (Rome: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1886), p. 35.

officials or of the Imam; he was also able to furnish the Italian Government, as well as western scholars, with valuable information about local affairs. This was more important after the year 1889 when Turkish officials prohibited western travellers from entering Yemen. Thus Hogarth states: "His reports made to the Societa d'Esplorazione Commerciale of Milan and his copies of new inscriptions have gone far, however, to render fresh expeditions unnecessary."<sup>9</sup> Besides, Giuseppi Caprotti rendered valuable services to the Imam Yahya, at least during the revolt of 1904 - 1905, and at times this brought him into conflict with the Italian Consul General at Hodeida.<sup>10</sup> Along with giving information to Italy, he rendered his country another distinctive service. Caprotti communicated directly with the Government of Eritrea, and for them he obtained and sent seeds and seedlings of coffee plants which were used to start the cultivation of coffee by the Italians there. It would appear that Pietro Felter in 1890 had done the same thing to introduce coffee cultivation in Asmara. But as Caprotti did this later on, the first attempts had probably been unsuccessful.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hogarth, Penetration, Op. Cit., p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> E. de Leone, "L'assedio e la resa di San'a del 1905 attraverso il carteggio inedito di Giuseppe Caprotti", Oriente Moderno, vol. 36, No. 2. (Rome, February 1956), p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> Leone, Op. Cit., p. 65, fn. 1.

Caprotti is an interesting figure in the history of Yemen and Italian relations with Yemen. Little has been written about him in English. However it is sufficient to note that Bury, an Englishman who was a member of the Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission, states:

When I was at Sanaa, in the autumn of 1913, there was still a worthy Italian merchant there, who, by his upright dealing and discreet conduct, had secured the good will of Turks and Arabs for more than a quarter of a century.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the activities of such men as Manzoni, Felter, and Caprotti, direct action in Yemen by Italian Government officials started between the years 1897 and 1900. It came from the Italian colony of Eritrea.

Many Italian writers have noted the favorable position Eritrea enjoys concerning trade with Yemen. In the Red Sea itself there were only three natural harbors suitable for large seagoing vessels: Massawa, Djibouti, and Aden.<sup>13</sup> Massawa made Eritrea a pivot-point whence Italian commercial influence could radiate outwards: "Eritrea is the natural

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Bury, Op. Cit., p. 184. It should be remarked that during all those years Caprotti spent in Yemen he was the only European settled in the highlands.

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Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 115: "The economic and strategic significance of Eritrea arises from its position on the Red Sea Coast, where Massawa is the most important port on the Red Sea, and was the chief gateway to the whole of the former Italian East African empire."

outlet for the trade both of certain parts of Abyssinia and the opposite Arabian coast, and a transit market for goods between the two countries."<sup>14</sup> Official notice of opportunities in Yemen for reasons other than commerce was taken by the governor of Eritrea, Ferdinando Martini. He was governor between the years 1897 and 1900, and later, in 1914, became a Minister of Colonial Affairs. Martini began a program of recruitment in Yemen to fill the ranks of Italian native soldiers, or ascari, who served the Italian colonial administration, and bolstered Italian military forces in Eritrea and Somaliland. These recruits proved to be quite valuable to Italy and fought for her in the Libyan war as well as in the two wars against Abyssinia.

Jacob, writing about British administration in Aden, regrets that his Government did not follow Italy's example in the utilization of the indigenous population for the purposes of military service. He describes this policy of recruitment as being commendable, subtle, and far-reaching and goes on to state that, "Not until the Great War was nearly over did we raise one Arab battalion, but we declined to put them to the test, although the Italians

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<sup>14</sup>

Villari, Op. Cit., p. 51. On the following page Villari states that in the 1930's trade between Eritrea and Yemen amounted to between 50 and 60 million lira annually.

had tried them in Tripoli and were enthusiastic over their efficiency and fire-discipline."<sup>15</sup>

These ascaris were an effective source of beneficial propaganda for Italy in Yemen and Asir regarding the treatment they received from the Italians. Aside from military duties, the troops were allowed to engage in trading with the local populace. Many of them married and raised families where they were serving. Also there were those who learned some specific job or skill that enabled them to increase their income. Besides, they were given sufficient and regular pay and medical care; and strict attention was paid by their Italian commanders to their religious differences and their customs. After two years' service, and with full pay, the troops were allowed to return homewhere they spread reports about their service with Italy.<sup>16</sup>

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Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 86.

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There is one tragedy connected with this period of recruitment. Gaetano Benzoni (mentioned in Western Arabia and the Red Sea, p. 306 as a "prominent Italian traveller") was the son-in-law of Governor Ferdinando Martini and had been appointed the consular agent for Mocha in 1907. Western Arabia, Ibid. goes on the state that he was sent by Martini to recruit Ascaris in Yemen. Such does not seem to be the case. Benzoni arrived at Mocha at the same time that Hermann Burchardt, the traveller, was there. Burchardt had already visited Arabia accompanied by another Italian, Eugenio Ruspoli, in 1893. Benzoni and Burchardt left together for San'a against the express orders of the Italian Consul General of Hodeida, Ferdinando Sola, and the Turkish authorities. They were both killed near the town of Ibb on December 19, 1909, by Bedouins of a local tribe. See L'Italia in Africa, p. 197.

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Italian economic interest in Yemen/furthered also by concessions granted to Italians in Yemen by the Ottoman Government. In Hodeida in 1907, an Italian company installed a condenser and ice-machine. These were capable of distilling ten tons of water, and making three tons of ice daily. These plants were contracted for at the cost of 2,000 pounds sterling, and were still operating when Bury visited the city in 1913.<sup>17</sup> Bury also states that, between the years 1902 and 1908, the French were given a concession to build a breakwater at Hodeida, and that this concession was sublet to an Italian. He goes on to relate that the breakwater was constructed, but the effort was wasted because "... the water was not deep enough to allow loaded lighters to come alongside and discharge - the raison d'etre of the whole scheme."<sup>18</sup> Bury seems to be mistaken here. The breakwater was constructed to shelter the railway which was to be built from Hodeida to San'a.<sup>19</sup> This breakwater was part of a concession granted to a French

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<sup>17</sup>  
Bury, Op. Cit., p. 126.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>  
I.M.F.A., No. 3516/1110. Letter from Mayor to San  
Guiliano dated October 27, 1910.

financial group by the Ottoman Government. Participation in this concession was another instance of Italian economic activity in Yemen.

The Credito Italiano banking institution had a 5% share in the concession for the construction of a railway in Yemen by a financial group headed by the Banque Francaise pour le Commerce et l'Industrie.<sup>20</sup> This concession was approved by the Ottoman Parliament on August 21, 1909.<sup>21</sup> During these years and until the outbreak of war with Turkey in September 1911, this percentage of the railway concession was Italy's chief concern in Yemen; along with it she kept an eye on the possible development of interests in Yemen by other foreign Powers. Italy had made no move to establish herself in Yemen; at the same time, because of Eritrea, she did not want to see another European Power enter that country. Despite the fact that she had invested capital with a French trust, any foreign involvement in Yemen was a matter of interest to the Foreign Ministry, whether French or otherwise. On April 1, 1910 the Consul General at Hodeida,

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I.M.F.A. No. 1723/595, letter from Mayor to San Guiliano dated July 6, 1910.

21

I.M.F.A. Telegram No. 2893 from Mayor to Foreign Ministry dated August 22, 1909.



Sola, wrote to the Foreign Minister that the French engineer, Alexis de Pauliny, had come to Yemen as a representative of an Anglo-French syndicate to study the construction of a railway, as well as the oil-layers on the island of Farasan, and a coal mine near Hujariya.<sup>22</sup> It might also be added that along with Italy's participation in the railway concession, she had also set up a hostel in Hodeida where free medical service was dispensed to the local populace.

The preceding sums up the development of Italian economic interests in Yemen during the period, 1904-1911. Aside possibly from the recruitment of ascaris, and if one were to hypothesize that the hostel at Hodeida was established for propaganda purposes, there is no available evidence that Italy had any political designs on the Yemen at this time. It should be mentioned that although these first movements seem minuscule when placed alongside similar Italian actions in Cyrenaica, these economic activities seem to have been more than those of other European countries.<sup>23</sup>

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I.M.F.A. No. 193/26, letter to Count F. Guicciardini. See appendix XII, and also XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX and XXI.

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Yemen has for centuries had a reputation of being a rich area. Thus, "The Turks knew of the mineral deposits, and by proclamation in 1880 the Government at San'a offered \$5,000 for information leading to the discovery of gold, \$3,500 for silver openings, and \$600 for coal." Jacob Op. Cit., p. 277. No doubt Italy and other countries were aware of the possible gains to be had from concessions in Yemen.



Also, a glance at the bibliographical notes will show that further study of the works by Italian writers concerned with this period and area might reveal greater Italian activity than has been mentioned.

The foregoing does, however, introduce Italy into Yemen and provide a background upon which Italian involvement in Yemen and Asir may be scrutinized. It is necessary to mention here that Italy, in 1927, was the first European country to recognize an independent Yemen under the Imam Yahya, and was also the first country to sign a commercial treaty with Yemen.

THE REVOLT IN YEMEN  
1904

A brief account of events in Yemen from the pre-Islamic era until 1872 has been placed before the reader. There is a common current of invasions and revolutions running throughout the history of Yemen from the advent of the Abyssinians in the country to the present day. This is a period of almost two millenia. The introductory chapter on the history of Yemen serves two purposes: 1) fulfilling the requirement of presenting a background upon which may be viewed the events of the years 1904 to 1912; and 2) the past events serve as a mirror which reflects the comparisons and contrasts of previous revolts in Yemen with those that occurred--and continue

to occur--in the modern era. This reflection also has the added benefit of preventing the student of Yemeni history from making the mistake of interpreting modern events according to a generalization derived from a review of past events. Thus, earlier Yemeni history is one of a series of invasions and revolutions. The period under study is also one concerned with the same phenomenon. The question arises, were the causes for previous revolutions the same as those for the revolts between the years 1904-1912? The revolutions of the past were always seemingly related to the problem of religious antagonisms. In Yemen, the Zaidis were always attempting to throw off the yoke of the conquerors, usually conquerors of a different Muslim sect. Politically, the Zaidis seem to have wanted to be independent because of their doctrinal beliefs. This is especially the case when their beliefs and practices came into conflict with those of the invaders such as the Turks.

The Turks appeared on the Yemeni scene in 1517. Their constant attempts to establish a hold on the country from then until 1872 were a reiteration of the problem facing them: the dogmatic clash between them and the Zaidis. This was a repetition of what had occurred under their predecessors: the Umayyids, Abbasids, Fatimids and Egyptian Mamlukes. Although they established control over Yemen and Asir in 1872,

this was but a brief interval before new revolts erupted under the Imam Yahya. These at first seemed to be extensions of the earlier religious controversy as noted above.

Mention has already been made of the opening of the Suez canal. This altered the situation of the Turks in Yemen. However, it would be an error to over-emphasize the role which the opening of the canal played in subsequent events. Thus Jacob states: "It was, however, the construction in 1869 of the Suez Canal that caused the awakening of the East, and of Turkey in particular, to the importance of Arabia and its commerce."<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, Turkey was already quite interested in Arabia--and Yemen--after the withdrawal of Egyptian forces in 1841. The opening of the canal abated, somewhat, the logistical problem of maintaining military forces in Yemen. This benefit was probably neutralized by the fact that by this time Turkish soldiers were extremely reluctant to go to

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Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 69.

Yemen.<sup>25</sup> In a brief statement Ramsaur aptly described the situation of the Turkish common soldier in Yemen:

Like the officer he was rarely paid, his food was poor, his clothing was inadequate, and his general standard of living was little better than that of an animal. He was kept in active service as long as twice the legal period, and it had come to be common knowledge that if he were ordered to some remote outpost of the Empire such as Yemen, he had little chance of returning.<sup>26</sup>

Thus by this time Turkey could move troops to Yemen with more speed, but the conditions and attitudes of the soldiers themselves more than counter-balanced this; and the plight of the men helped prevent a consolidation of Yemen under Turkish control. The canal also made it easier for European Powers, such as Italy, to expand their interests in the Red

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Many authors make note of this fact. Thus Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 75, states that Turkish losses "since 1892 were playfully termed 'The Cemetary of the Turks'--mukbirat al-atrak" H. St. John Philby, Arabian Jubilee, third edition, (London Robert Hale Ltd., 1954), p. 29, states that, "Service in Arabia generally meant a life sentence". George Antonius, The Arab Awakening, the Story of the Arab National Movement, reprinted, (Beirut Khayats), p. 88, notes that Syrians were forcibly recruited to fight in Yemen in 1872. Also, Ernest E. Ramsaur Jr., The Young Turks, Prelude to the Revolution of 1908, reprinted, (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), p. 65, quotes an article by Richard Gottheil, "The Young Turks and Old Turkey", Forum XL, December 1908, p. 534, wherein is stated that between 1903 and 1908 100,000 Turkish troops had lost their lives in Yemen. Ramsaur also says that a revolt took place among Turkish troops in 1906 because they had received orders to leave for Yemen, Ibid, p. 130.

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Ramsaur, Ibid, p. 119.

Sea. Simultaneously it made the Turks increasingly aware of their weaknesses compared to the strength of their rivals. The Turks were not the only ones to note this, the Yemenis did too. Jacob remarks:

Of one thing I am sure, that our occupation of Aden in 1839, and later, our brief sojourn in Dala [1902-1907], did indirectly undermine the influence of Turkey in the Yemen--not through any set purpose of ours to such end, but by the attractive power of another Dawla, or Government, which had appeared on the scene.<sup>27</sup>

No doubt, to a lesser extent, the same might be said of the Italian Government in Eritrea. The Suez canal did play a definite role in the events in Yemen, but the emphasis should not be placed on the fact that it awakened Turkish interests in Yemen. On the other hand, the canal indirectly helped bring about the end of Turkish influence in Yemen at this time.

On the Yemeni scene, Turkey was the protagonist. Under pressure from the West as well as the reforming spirit from within, she had brought the administration of her provinces under a civil code. This civil code, along with the pre-determining<sup>in</sup> fact of the Turks being Sunnis and the Yemenis predominantly Shi'a, helped cause another revolt. This

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<sup>27</sup> Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 82.

revolt, which occurred in 1891, was markedly religious in nature. Thus, "The religious laxity of the Turks, and the substitution of the Ottoman civil code for the Shar', offended both the Zaidis and the Shafe'is."<sup>28</sup>

In 1891 Muhammad al-Mansur Ibn Yahya Hamid ad-Din became the Imam. An immediate revolt broke out under him, especially among the tribes from Sa'da and around San'a.<sup>29</sup> San'a was quickly beseiged, but in 1892 Ahmad Faizi Pasha was able to lift the seige and had some 300 villages burned.<sup>30</sup> Ahmad Faizi Pasha proclaimed a general amnesty and began negotiations with the Imam. However, no agreement could be reached because of the Imam's refusal to accept the civil code, and his insistence on replacing it with Quranic law. In 1897 Faizi was replaced by Husein Hilmi Pasha who effectively attempted to restore good relations between Yemenis and Turks. However, he lasted as governor only until 1900 when he was

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Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 273.

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Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 68: "In 1872 the Turks created of the Yemen one vilayat, which was divided into four mutasarrifs (Prefectures) at Ta'izz, San'a, Asir, and Hodeida... Each of these prefectures was subdivided into Kada's under Kaimakans. Ta'izz comprised Ibb, 'Udein, Hujariya, Mokha, and Kataba; San'a encompassed J. Haraz, Hijja, Dhamar, Yerim, Rada', and 'Amran; 'Asir held amongst others, Mihail or Abha, Rijal al-Ma', Kunfidha; while under Hodeida were Zebid, Luhaiya, Zeidiya, Hajur, Beit al-Fakih, Bajil and Abu Arish."

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Great Britain, Op. Cit., p. 274. Also, during the seige an Italian journalist, J.B. Rossi (see bibliographical notes-- further readings) was a guest of Giuseppe Caprotti in San'a for three months: Leone, L'assedio, Op. Cit., p. 64.

removed in favor of his military commander Abdullah Pasha. It is possible that had Hilmi Pasha remained, the subsequent revolt of 1904 would not have occurred. Hilmi favored--as much as was possible at the time--autonomous rule for the Zaidis. His removal and replacement by Abdullah Pasha signalled an end to a conciliatory policy and a return to the old regime.. The Imam continued to foster ill-feelings towards, and to encourage revolts against, the Turks. In this he was aided by the harsh rule of Abdullah Pasha. Before the Imam's death in the early days of June, 1904, a new revolt began. The Imamate now fell to his son, Imam Yahya (ca. 1869-1948).

Most historians declare that the revolt began after the Imam Yahya had taken over the Imamate. Such does not seem to be the case. In a letter dated April 26, 1904, Giuseppe Caprotti informed the Consul General at Hodeida, Ferdinando Sola, that "Something big" was going to take place in the coming autumn, as the people were very agitated because of the new taxes on animals, homes and slaves.<sup>31</sup> In a subsequent letter to Sola dated May 10, 1904, almost a month before the death of the Imam Muhammad, Caprotti wrote:

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<sup>31</sup> Leone, *L'assedio*, Op. Cit., p. 66.



At Qulf ash-Sham, a little to the north of Hajja, it seems that the revolt has begun. A revolt would force the Turks to come to terms because they absolutely do not have any kind of provisions and more than once during this last week have had to beg the shopkeepers and bakers to loan them the flour necessary for the next day's bread.<sup>32</sup>

Thus it appears that the revolt of 1904 was not the work of the Imam Yahya. This he had inherited from his father. This is a point that should be studied further as it will be illustrated that the next revolt in Yemen, under the Imam, did not take place until 1911, and this after a revolt had begun under al-Sayyid al-Idris.

By April of 1905 San'a fell to the Zaidis; Imam Yahya captured approximately 20,000 rifles, thirty cannons, large quantities of ammunitions and other war material. By the end of February Hajja also fell, and again a large store of arms was gained by the rebels: six cannons, 3,800 rifles and 1,800 cases of ammunition.<sup>33</sup> Leone adds that the city fell because of hunger: "... the garrison, 1,000 men strong, was constrained to eat even the soles of their very shoes."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>  
Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>34</sup>  
Ibid.

The revolt and the loss of towns and cities must be attributed to the poor administration of the province itself, and to the inefficiency of the Turkish military officers. Thus, when San'a was being besieged no earlier care had been taken for such a seige, and the conditions in the city were very harsh: "There was a great scarcity in the city, where cats and dogs were eaten, while the price of a horse was 400 dollars.<sup>35</sup> A Turkish supply column sent to its relief was captured by the Imam..."<sup>36</sup> The Turks later rectified this error and were therefore better prepared for the revolt which would occur in 1911.

Turkish reaction to the new revolt was not long in coming. Faizi Pasha, who had suppressed the revolt of 1891-1892, landed in Hodeida in June, 1905. The Imam's forces now numbered approximately 50,000 tribesmen. However, they were disputing among themselves, and the Imam could not provide an effective united front against the Turks. Faizi Pasha began operations with a force composed of 126 battalions, eight squadrons and fifteen batteries--a

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<sup>35</sup> Maria Teresa silver.

<sup>36</sup> Great Britain, Ibid. p. 288.

total of 45,000 men.<sup>37</sup> By September 1905 San'a had returned to the hands of the Turks and the Imam had withdrawn into the northern reaches of the mountains. The revolt had come to a standstill. It had been costly to both sides:

"More than half the population [of San'a] is said to have perished during the seige and subsequent fighting. Moreover, the whole country had suffered badly, agriculture had been neglected, and private stores of grain had been siezed."<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the Imam's withdrawal was tactical; Faizi's forces followed the rebels only to meet a severe defeat at the Imam's stronghold of Shahara. Rihani states that 30,000 men were lost in this battle.<sup>39</sup> Even if some exaggeration is allowed for, the battle caused the Turks a great loss. By this time there was a great amount of unrest among the Turkish forces. The Arab auxiliaries did not wish to remain, and many of the Turkish soldiers were threatening mutiny as their period of service had been extended beyond

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<sup>37</sup> Farouqhy, Op. Cit., p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 288. My parenthesis. Charles Mullingen, Notes of a Journey in Yemen. (Read in Edinburg on February 23, 1874), p. 121, gives the population of San'a at that time at around 20,000 while the Turkish garrison numbered 1,000 men.

<sup>39</sup> Ameen Rihani, Arabian Peak and Desert, (London: Constable and Co. Ltd. 1930), p. 111.

the perscribed enlistment. The Turks therefore turned to negotiations.

The first negotiations were a failure. A delegation was therefore sent from Constantinople in an attempt to reach an agreement with the Imam. Basically, his demands regarding the civil code were the same as those of his father. These, proffered by the Imam at this time, formed the basis of the later agreement between him and the Ottoman Government in 1911. They were stated as follows:<sup>40</sup>

"With the help of God I agree to a peace treaty between me and the representative of the Sultan of Islam, may God secure his rule, to put out the fire of war and replace it and disorder with friendship, so as to save the countries from instability and bloodshed, and erase the crises so that peace may<sup>be</sup> established to the believers in a bond of brotherhood that cannot be broken, and injustice may be removed from among them:-

1. Laws should be carried out according to the illustrious Islamic Shari'a;
2. To the Imam must be returned the right to appoint and remove judges and resolvers of the Sahri'a;

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These conditions for a peaceful settlement of Ottoman-Yemeni relations are taken from Mustafa al-Sayyid Salem, Takwin al-Yaman al-Hadith, 1904-1948, (Cairo: 'Alamieh Press, 1963), pp. 70-72.

3. The punishment of traitors and people who accept bribes shall be in the hands of the Imam;
4. Sufficient wages should be paid to rulers and employees so that they may not be driven to blameworthy acts by material insufficiency;
5. The Awkaf property must be at the disposal of the Imam to revive the landmarks in the country;
6. Set up the limits of Shari'a law against Muslim and Jewish criminals as ordained by God and carried through by His Prophet, and which have been discontinued by the Turkish Governors as if they were of no mentionable value.
7. To take one-tenth of the naturally watered (from rain) plants; and those watered by wells the half of the tenth, according to the evaluation of experts. If any disagreement should take place, we resort to the laws put down by Abd Allah Ibn Rawaha in the Alkhars; and of the cows, sheep and camels take the legal portion; and of lands that give crops twice or thrice to take half or one-fourth of the tenth and pay the other costs;
8. The gathering of the mentioned income is to be through the distinguished citizens of the country under the supervision of Government officials. If anybody dares to take more than the amount agreed on, his discharge or penalty is decided by the Imam. The Imam is to have no hand in, or connection with, the gathering of the state money;
9. The tribes of Hashid, Khawlan, al-Hada and Arhab are to be exempted;
10. Each party is to hand back the traitors who have taken refuge with them;
11. Declare a general amnesty so that the past may be forgotten;
12. No one from the people of the Book is to be appointed over Muslims;

13. The mentioned decisions are to include San'a and Ta'izz along with their districts;
14. The Government is not to interfere with the Anse or to oppose the Imam in appointing the officials for that district because of the poverty of its people and the scarcity of crops, and for fear of disobedience to Government officials;
15. The protection of the country against foreign attacks is to be in the hands of the Ottoman Government."

These demands were written in April, 1906. Although they are basically concerned with the Shari'a law as the original alternative for the civil code, it is evident that the meeting of such demands meant that the Sublime Porte would have been granting autonomy to Yemen under the Imam. This the Turks were not willing to do. By now the Ottoman Government was tottering and the sultan, Abdul Hamid II, desired the exact opposite. Rather than granting autonomy, the Sublime Porte was bent on bringing under closer control her various provinces. The negotiations failed and the revolt broke out anew. The renewal of the conflict brought a second attempt by the Sublime Porte to reach an agreement with the Imam. In 1907 a delegation of 'Ulema from Mecca was sent to Yemen with the hope of reaching an agreement with the Zaidi leader. The delegation addressed a letter to the Imam asking him to come to peaceful terms with the Turks. The Imam's answer was that he acknowledged Turkish rule over Yemen but that they should also acknowledge his

position, i.e. a return to his former demands. It should also be mentioned here that he drew the delegation's attention to the religious misbehavior of the Turks, and also to the fact that the sultan was deliberately misinformed as to the true situation in Yemen.<sup>41</sup> Still no agreement was reached. However, in 1908, Faizi Pasha--a source of displeasure to the Imam--was ordered to return to Constantinople, and was replaced as governor-general by Hasan Tahsin Pasha. Between the new Pasha and the Imam an uneasy truce was maintained. But it was only to be of brief duration.

In less than two years Tahsin Pasha was replaced by the mutasarrif of Ta'izz, Kamal Bey. He ruled only for about six months, and was replaced by a member of the committee of Union and Progress, Muhammad Ali Pasha. This was in June, 1910. By this time the situation had radically changed. The Young Turk revolution had succeeded; Abdul Hamid II had been deposed; the famous Midhat Constitution of 1876 had been reinstated; and the Committee of Union and Progress, strongly reactionary to any weakening of the Empire or further loss of her domains, was now in power. At the same time the situation had radically changed in the Yemen

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<sup>41</sup>  
Ibid, p. 76.

itself. In Asir al-Sayyid al-Idris had declared a revolt and the entire question of the future of Yemen was now contended for by three groups: the Turks, the Zaidis, and the Idrisis.

No source of Yemeni history of this period mentions the fact that Italy was a mediator between the Imam and the Turks at this time. In July of 1914 a person by the name of Ahmad al-Kipsi contacted the Italians in relation to their policy vis a vis Yemen in 1914. The Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Minister of Colonial Affairs in July regarding this move by al-Kipsi. In response to this query, the then Minister of Colonial Affairs, Count di Martino--who had been a governor of Eritrea--sent back a memo concerning al-Kipsi:

Enclose a memo drawn from official files which will serve as an illustration of al-Kipsi's personality and convince [you] that he should not be trusted. This may serve as a guide to the Ambassador in Constantinople, who may not know the foregoing.<sup>42</sup>

This memo relates the activities in Cairo of Ahmad al-Kipsi--a cousin of Imam Yahya--and also relates Italy's activities on behalf of Imam Yahya.<sup>43</sup> It would appear, therefore, that much,

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<sup>42</sup>  
I.M.F.A. No. 913, dated September 5, 1914. My parenthesis.

<sup>43</sup>  
See Appendix IV, inclusive.



if not all except what is herein cited of the information concerning Italian mediation efforts for the Imam Yahya is to be found in the archives pertaining to Eritrea. This is also true, as will be seen, concerning Italo-Idrisi relations. With regards to Ahmad al-Kipsi it is also interesting to note that he, after 1908, approached the British with proposals in their favor:

... In connection with the existing unrest in the Arab world and the rising in Yemen, I have the honour to report that Sayyid Ahmad Kubsî, deputy for Sanaa, in the Ottoman Chamber, and cousin of the Imam Yahya, today confidentially approached His Majesty's Embassy with the following statements and proposals.... That the Arabs, if driven to choose, would consequently prefer English protection to the rule of the Turk...<sup>44</sup>

In February 1906 al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Kipsi, regarded as one of the most important Sharifs in Yemen, had called on the Royal Diplomatic Agency in Cairo. He had, previous to this, been exiled from Yemen for his opposition to the Turks, and was at the time returning home. After telling the Royal Agent there that he would favor any ventures Italy might make in South Arabia, al-Kipsi asked that the Royal Agent request from the Sultan the necessary money to pay his expenses back to Yemen.

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<sup>44</sup>  
F.O. 371/1231, L 99, Secret and Confidential, from Sir Gerard Lowther, Ambassador at Constantinople, to Sir Edward Grey, February 13, 1911.

On the following day al-Kipsi returned with a letter signed by 18 people--one of whom was his father--requesting that Italy mediate between the Sultan and the Imam. Subsequently, in June, letters arrived from the Imam requesting mediation. A month later another letter was sent by the Imam, this time addressed to the King of Italy. On October 7, 1906, a telegram was sent to the Italian Ambassador at Constantinople to the effect that the King had received requests to act as a mediator. This offer was presented to the Sublime Porte and acknowledged by both the Sultan and the Grand Vizier. The Sultan sent an expression of his gratitude to the King of Italy, and notified him that he had given orders to Faizi Pasha to come to an agreement with the Imam Yahya. Thereupon the Imam, through the Royal Agency in Cairo, was advised to negotiate with the Pasha. After the negotiations, brought on by Italy's mediation, did not reach any settlement, the above-mentioned delegation of Meccan 'Ulema was sent to Yemen to deal with the Imam. It should be noted that during subsequent negotiations between the Imam and the Sublime Porte, the Imam sent a letter to the King declaring his willingness to negotiate peace on the condition that Italian civil servants be sent to Yemen.<sup>45</sup>

As already stated, the negotiations continued without success, and the ensuing truce lasted only until 1911.

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<sup>45</sup> See page 12 of Appendix IV, report from Cairo of August 1st.

THE REVOLT OF AL-SAYYID IDRIS AND THE  
IMAM YAHYA, 1909-1911

It was related earlier how Ibrahim Pasha had divided the rule of Yemen into two areas, Yemen proper under the Imams on San'a, and Asir under Sharif Husein of Abu Arish. Although after 1872 the Turks had subjugated Yemen and Asir once again, and had placed both areas under one vilayat, each area developed its own destiny individually. In the main Turkish forces were constantly involved with revolts emanating from above San'a. Historians of this period throw very little light on the stream of events in Asir.<sup>46</sup> In an account of events in Yemen from 1872 until

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This is due, in part, to Turkish consorship during this period.

1910 predominance was given to the revolts under Imam Yahya. The Imam's demands, during his negotiations with the Turks, had not been agreed to. During the years 1907 through 1911 an uneasy truce existed in Yemen. All this was to change with the rise of the so-called "Mahdi" of Asir, al-Sayyid al-Idris.<sup>47</sup>

In 1908, another important event had occurred which also had a great impact on the affairs of both Yemen and Asir. In this year the Hijaz railroad reached Medina.

The Sultan, Abdul Hamid, a reactionary to the growing demands for reform, modernization, and decentralization, had reinvigorated the position of the sultan as caliph. One step in this direction was the construction of the Hijaz railroad.<sup>48</sup> The railroad, other than easing the hardship of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca from Damascus, served the purpose of bringing the rebellious Arab Provinces closer to the control of Constantinople. The

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Salem, Op. Cit., p. 84, quotes a letter from al-Idris to a friend in Cairo in which Idris stated, 'And these instigators did not cease with this but accused me of being a Mahdi to make light of us and anger the Government. 'The letter had been published in the Cairene newspaper, al-Ahram dated Saturday, August 21, 1909 (5 Sha'ban, 1327 A.H.), No. 9556, p. 1.

48

It might also be mentioned that in 1908 Sharif Husein Ibn 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Aun was appointed, by the Young Turks, the Sharif of Mecca. Hereafter he will be cited as Sharif Husein.

construction of this line had met with constant opposition by the bedouin tribes through whose territory the line had to pass. The railway also had significance for Asir and Yemen as it brought the Turks closer, and the movement of her troops to trouble spots in the peninsula was greatly facilitated. Antonius says:

Hitherto, he [Abdul-Hamid] had had to depend of the slower and costlier sea - transport through the Suez Canal; now he had a railway running entirely in his territory and he could look forward to the day when the line would be carried southwards to Mecca and possibly beyond, to strengthen his hold on turbulent Yaman.<sup>49</sup>

The construction had greater significance in light of the fact that a railway line was also going to be built from Hodeida to San'a, and, no doubt, sooner or later these two different lines would have been joined together. Thus the Imam Yahya was faced with a new Turkish threat.<sup>50</sup> Of greater importance however was the rise of al-Sayyid al-Idris.

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<sup>49</sup> Antonius, Op. Cit., p. 74. Hogarth, Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 117 also states: "Before the nineteenth century the Asian Policy of Abdul Hamid began to affect Arabia. The Caliph, determined to have a way of his own to the Holy Cities and to Yemen... fostered the construction of a railway..."

<sup>50</sup> See page 1 of appendix VIII: "On the other hand, the Imam informed the Wali that even if the Turks should send in one battalion after another the railroad will not be built from Hodeida to San'a." See also appendix XI, and page 2 of appendix II.

In Asir Sabiya became famous because of the tomb of the wali (or saint), Ahmad Ibn Idris. His order, led by his son Muhammad after his death, continued to expand through missionary activity and through the influence of pilgrims who came to pay homage at the wali's shrine. As in the case with other Sufi orders, especially in view of the religious laxity of the Turks and the internecine struggles of the tribes, Muhammad became both a spiritual and a political leader. This growing pre-eminence in Asir affairs centered around Sabiya was inherited by the successors of Muhammad.

There were two lines of descent from Ahmad's son. The first line, or branch, was the children from Muhammad's wife. In relation to what was said earlier about the connection between the Sanusiyah and the Ahmadiyah, we need note that one of the sons of this branch travelled to North Africa and married into the Sanusi family, settling in Kairawan.<sup>51</sup>

The other branch of the family began with the son Muhammad had had from a Sudanese slave girl; this son, Ali, married a Hindu. From this marriage was born the great-grandson of the founder of Order, al-Sayyid al-Idris (1876-1923).

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51

Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 165. This was the son, Abdul-Mit'al.

Of al-Sayyid al-Idris' early life little has been learned.<sup>52</sup> Al-Barakati, a questionable source, states that in 1313 A.H. (ca. 1895 A.D.) al-Idris went to Mecca for a few months and then left for al-Azhar University in Cairo.<sup>53</sup> The Sayyid stayed at al-Azhar for about six years.

The amount of time passed between al-Idris' stay at al-Azhar and his return to Asir is not definitely known. What is known is that he returned sometime around the year 1903. His departure from al-Azhar can be placed approximately in the years 1900-1901. Again, it should be noted that upon his departure from al-Azhar he spent some time studying under the Sanusis at Kufra in Libya. Thence he went to the Sudan where he married the daughter of a sheikh of the Ahmadiyah. However, "he was too

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A jarring example of the paucity of information about al-Idris is the fact that Ingrams, in his book The Yemen, Op. Cit., makes no mention whatsoever of the leader of Asir and his relations with Imam Yahya.

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Sharaf Abdul-Muhsin Al-Barakati, Al-Rahlat al-Yamaniyat, (Cairo: Saadah Press, 1912), p. 4. He goes on to relate that Idris stayed in Cairo for six years "where he contacted a group of corrupted people serving the policy of Italy who showed him their love and friendship and that they were followers of his grandfather Ahmad. He was wholly given to them. They gave the idea to him to take over Yemen and Asir and filled his head with ideas that the Ottoman Empire was unjust, especially to Yemenis, and that a takeover was necessary." Bury, Op. Cit., p. 22 states that the Sayyid started his studies at al-Azhar at the age of twenty.



ambitious to remain in the Sudan, especially as the Idrisi rule, in the hands of his pious father, was losing much of its prestige and power."<sup>54</sup> Salem tells us that al-Idris came to prominence in 1907.<sup>55</sup> Therefore it would appear that between the years 1903 and 1907 al-Idris had succeeded to the headship of the movement in Sabiya, and it is not known whether his father died in the latter year or earlier. By this time he had come to the notice of the Imam in San'a. Of Idris, Hogarth states:

...he had developed into a man of conspicuous physique and mental ability, who was determined to use his superior education and administrative capacity for the enhancement of his estate. The Turks took little heed of him, and the Emir of Mecca ignored the parvenue. But the Imam Yahya, who had watched him organize an effective administration in Mikhlaf al-Yemen, and acquire not a little influence with the highland tribes of southern Asir, welcomed an ally who might cover his rear, when he should move south.<sup>56</sup>

It has been refuted by Salem that al-Idris used machines to influence the tribesmen. He says:

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<sup>54</sup> Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia, Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Salem, Op. Cit., p. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Hogarth, Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 120. Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 288 also speaks of him as "a man of considerable energy and administrative ability."



Idris was the only one who could spread the sense of social justice among the disunited Asir tribes and he did not, in fact, win their favor by using phosphorous, electricity and other inventions as some people accused him; but they used to love him to a degree of worshipping him and executed his orders with complete loyalty.<sup>57</sup>

Most probably, al-Idris learned much about organization and administration during his stay at Kufra. A zawiya (or center) had been established at Kufra by the son of the Grand Sanusi, al-Mahdi, in 1895. This became a new Sanusi capital, as the one founded by his father at Jaghbub was the educational center of the Sanusi Order, while "Kufra was endowed by its situation to act as control center for the Order."<sup>58</sup> In speaking about the Order, Ziadeh goes on to say that "... the Order certainly grew, under al-Mahdi, to be a state within a state, with a well organized system of communication and with a strong hand to control the whole organization."<sup>59</sup> Thus al-Idris had gained first-hand knowledge of how a "state within a state" functioned. He no doubt set about emulating

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Salem, Op. Cit., p. 157. Al-Barakati, writing in 1912 has stated that Idris had "supernatural" powers in the eyes of the tribesmen because he had an electric box in his house that could throw a ray of light in the distance for three kilometers and that this was meant to be the light of God sent to Idris; Op. Cit., p. 9. Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 70, states that, "At Abha al-Idris' name was proverbial as a magician".

58

Zaideh, Sanusiyah, Op. Cit., p. 113.

al-Mahdi once he returned to Asir.<sup>60</sup>

In 1908 the revolt broke out in Turkey, introducing a new Government under the control of the Committee for Union and Progress. The success of the revolution and the reaffirmation of the Midhat Constitution of 1876 raised hopes in the Arab provinces that an era of oppression and discontent had come to an end. These hopes were unfulfilled. One of the basic causes for the revolt had been the apprehensions of the Turks concerning the continual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks, and the Committee, desired reform throughout the empire. This reformist movement did not constitute a step towards recognizing eventual independence of the various peoples forming the empire. Rather, this was a means whereby the Turks might revive it and stand more efficiently united. The Committee of Union and Progress was attempting several means and policies to bring about this closer unification. They had sought to instill in the various peoples comprising the empire a sense of "Ottomanism", and when this did not succeed, they tried "Pan-Islamism".

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See appendix XIV for a description of al-Idris by the Consul General at Hodeida. In reference to the Consul, Fernando Sola, it should be mentioned that he was not Italian, but Syrian and had been friendly with the Italian King Emanuele III as he had been the king's interpreter.

Their next policy, which proved to be fatal for the future survival of the empire was "Pan-Turanism". Ideologically, the leaders had moved from considering a government of all the peoples in the empire to a government founded on the doubtful heritage of the Turks. These ideas, of course, alienated the non-Turkish elements. One of these elements inhabiting a major portion of the empire, were the Arabs.<sup>61</sup> The majority of these Arabs indentified themselves as Muslims first, and inhabitants of a local region second--depending on the conflict this idea had with tribal loyalties and sectarian beliefs. The Arabs, therefore, easily recognized the difference between them and the Turks once the Turks made this question an issue. If Islam and now the caliphate had been the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, both Islam and the caliphate were, first and foremost, Arab institutions and not Turkish. When the new Turks, after 1908, attempted to consolidate the empire further by new administrative and civil codes, they were confronted with the same opposition that the earlier reformers had met in Yemen. This time, however, there were two revolts, one in Asir and the other

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See appendix XXX for Italian correspondence on reactionary Pan-Arabism especially as it concerns the caliphate.

in Yemen. Salem discusses the various causes for the continuous revolts and disorder in Yemen and Asir, and goes further to say that "This troubled condition continued after the 1908 revolution and after the Unitarians [Committee of Union and Progress] had made clear the nature of their policy."<sup>62</sup>

By July 1909, al-Sayyid al-Idris had begun fighting the Turks in Asir. In the letter previously quoted (see above), al-Idris claimed that he cared for the harmony between Arabs and the Government, and related that chaos had been reigning in his country at the time of his return. He went on to say that he had tried to improve the conditions of the tribes on the basis of the Shari'a. Initially, he had been pessimistic about the chances of improving the situation in Asir to the point of departing forever. However, he believed that the people had affection for him and were rallying around him; "The people were seeking me in crowds to improve their state,...and following the path closer to God."<sup>63</sup> It may be added that in this letter, al-Idris referred to himself as "the one poor to God" and "the dispicable one", as well as other similar diminutives.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Salem, Op. Cit., p. 82.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-84.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

Whether or not the revolt of 1909 by al-Idris had initially been a demonstration of displeasure with Turkish rule rather than a movement for independence, it had serious significance for the Ottoman Government.

In the Ottoman Parliament a committee had been appointed to devise a plan whereby, it was hoped, strife in Yemen would be brought to an end. On August 7, 1909, the committee, under Mustafa Asim Effendi, presented a program of six articles concerning the administration of Yemen. These proposals, after various governmental procedures and also after being publically announced, were turned over to the Cabinet of Ministers for their action. Basically, the committee had recommended that Yemen be divided into two vilayats. One was to be under the Imam Yahya in the highlands. The second vilayat was to be formed of the Tihama coastal belt under "a capable and worthy person".<sup>65</sup> These proposals were not carried out because, in the words of Talaat Bey, "of the increasing violence of the Idrisi revolt in Asir".<sup>66</sup> By this time the situation in the region had deteriorated to such a degree that the Italian Government had sent a note to

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<sup>65</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 89-91.

<sup>66</sup>  
Ibid., p. 85. Salem has quoted this from "Al-Ahram", No. 9566, September 2, 1909, p. 1.

the Sublime Porte requesting that precautionary measures be taken by the Turks to protect Italian citizens in Yemen.

Said Pasha was in command of the relief forces sent to Asir, and Sulaiman Pasha was the civil and military governor of the region. Together they had been unable to put down the Idrisi revolt. The British Vice-Consul at Hodeida, Mr. G. A. Richardson, reported:

... Military operations in the Tihama against the rebels have had to be both slow and protracted. ... It was found necessary to bring down reinforcements from San'a ... It is, however, a well-known fact that general Sayyid Pasha, whose force was nearly 4,000 strong at the beginning of October last, has not advanced an inch from Cumfuda, in spite of there being nearly 3,000 troops practically locked up in Abha...<sup>67</sup>

The Vice-Consul went on to relate that one-third of the regular Turkish forces, drawn from the Turco-Bulgarian frontier, had become ineffective because of illness and climatic conditions. He also stated that it was remarkable that the Imam Yahya had shown no activity during this period. By March, 1910, Turkish troops were departing from Asir and the Consul at Jidda, Mr. J. H. Monahan, believed that Asir was going to be evacuated by the Turkish government.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> F.O. 371/1006, No. 5, letter to Ambassador Lowther at Constantinople dated February 2, 1910.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, No. 18, letter to Lowther, March 26, 1910.

The hostilities came to an end because the Turkish officials in Asir had come to terms with al-Sayyid al-Idris. Generals Said and Sulaiman had informed their Government that al-Idris was not a rebel. They stated that he was friendly to the Government, and had agreed to the responsibility of collecting the taxes due to the Turks in Asir. This tax was the regular "Tithes", and al-Idris had agreed to this on the basis that other taxes, "including the 'agham' or cattle-tax were to be abolished".<sup>69</sup> The generals agreed to recommend strongly that Shari'a law be applied "Generally throughout the Assir Sandjak and that the 'Kanon' or civil laws be abrogated."<sup>70</sup> Consul Richardson further stated that, "The Idrisi movement may now be considered to have come to an end."<sup>71</sup>

By January, 1911, it seemed that hostilities broke out new in Asir:

The reason for the assumption of this hostile attitude by Seyyid Idris is the non-fulfillment of the promises made to him last year.... He demands practically autonomy based on Cheri law... We are accustomed to any outbreak in the Yemen being attributed to British or Italian intrigue,

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., No. 8E, Richardson to Lowther, dated April 4, 1910. See also appendix XIII and XIV.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. See appendix XVI for letters from Idris concerning his revolt.



but Seyyid Idris' letter shows the real cause to be the failure of the Turkish Govt. to keep their engagements with the Tribes.<sup>72</sup>

While the revolt continued in Asir, a change of governors in Yemen helped bring about a new crisis.

Muhammad Ali Pasha arrived in Yemen in May 1910, to replace Tahsin Pasha. He was a member of the Committee of Union and Progress, and had been sent to bring the revolt in Asir to an end, as well as to strengthen Turkish control over Yemen. It should be kept in mind that already a plan had been publicized about the division of Yemen into two vilayats. Also, al-Sayyid al-Idris, in 1909, had almost achieved autonomy, and was now in revolt again. In November, 1910, the telegraph lines between Abha and the coast had been cut. In December the Vice-Consul at Hodeida informed Constantinople that:

The general expectation here is that an upheaval in the Tihama will take place coincidentally with that in the mountains under the Imam Seyyid Yahya. In spite of the latter being a Zeidi, and the Idrisee of the Shaftel sect, it is believed that some secret understanding exists between the respective pretenders.<sup>73</sup>

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72

F.O. 371/1231, No. 13, Confidential, letter from Charles M. Marling, Constantinople, to Sir Edward Grey, January 4, 1911. See appendix XX, for the letter of al-Idris stating the cause for the resumption of hostilities. The letter contained in this dispatch, was translated from the Turkish version. See also appendix XXV.

73

Ibid, No. 37/E. Richardson to Marling, December 15, 1910. See also appendix XXII.



However, no anti-Turk activity on the part of the Imam Yahya was noticed until there "was the appearance of armed bands in the vicinity of the capital (San'a), on or about the 12th January last..."<sup>74</sup> Many authors state that there was an alliance between al-Idris and the Imam as alluded to in the above-quoted dispatch.<sup>75</sup> It appears that no such alliance existed. Instead, the Imam seems to have taken advantage of the disturbances in Asir, and the Turks' preoccupation with that area, to gain further concessions as his demands of 1907 had not been granted. This is an important point illustrating the difference in policy between al-Idris and the Imam. As we shall see, Imam Yahya was more adept as a politician than was al-Idris.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., No. 23/E, Richardson to Lowther, April 12, 1911.

<sup>75</sup> Hogarth, Op. Cit., p. 121: "Accordingly, when he [Yahya] renewed rebellion in 1910, Idris followed suit... When Idris's federation had fallen back, the Imam, who had occupied San'a again, but expected less to hold it than compel his enemy to further concessions, broke faith with his unsuccessful ally." King Abdullah, Memoirs, ed. Philip P. Graves, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), p. 73, fn 1. states that Idris took the field against the Turks, "not without the support from the Imam Yahya..."; Brockelmann, Op. Cit., p. 472: "... Yahya with whom he [al-Idris] had allied himself..."; Salem, Op. Cit., p. 156: "Because of that he [Yahya] left his former ally and joined the Turks." "However Jacob does not mention an alliance between the two revolutionaries at this time and Farouhy, Op. Cit., p. 55 only states that Yahya's "insurrection came at the same time as that of the Idrisi..." In appendix XXII the Italians also initially believed that there was such an alliance.

THE ITALO-TURKISH WAR, 1911-1912:  
ITALY AND YEMEN

The interests Italy had in Yemen until 1911 have been previously surveyed. In September of that year Italy declared war against the Ottoman Government because of Libya. The war had great significance for the Red Sea: the Italian colony of Eritrea lay opposite the Turkish possessions of Western Arabia.<sup>67</sup> Italy would take steps to prevent Turkish forces in the Arabian Peninsula from attacking Italian colonial possessions or from proceeding

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76.

See appendix XXXIX: Italy, fighting the Turks, did not, in October 1911, want complications to arise between her and either the Imam or al-Sayyid al-Idris.

from Arabia to aid the Turks fighting in Libya. However, before Italy's intervention in Yemeni affairs can be discussed it is necessary to present the different courses the two revolts, al-Idris' and Yahya's, took. The early termination of the revolt of the Imam, and the continuance of that by al-Idris brought about the first major role Italy played in Yemen.

Through the period 1909 to 1911 things continued to go badly for the Turks in Asir. However, they were more preoccupied with the possibility of the Imam revolting in 1911 than with the revolt already under way in Asir.<sup>77</sup> At the outset of the Imam's revolt, the Turks were prepared to grant the Imam autonomy, and therefore be in a position to deal with al-Idris without the fear of opposing military operations by the Imam on their flank. The British had reported that there was no sign of revolt in the highlands until January, 1911. In the same month, a cable was sent from the Italian Ambassador at Constantinople reporting that:

The departure of troops [Turkish] having slowed down, leads to the belief that the imperial government has sent emissaries to offer to the rebellious chiefs sums of money and a greater autonomy in their regions with more participation in administration by their own people.<sup>78</sup>

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77

See appendix XXVI.

78

I.M.F.A. No. 399, Mayor to Foreign Ministry, dated January 30, 1911.

Besides the fact that the Turks may have been considering negotiations at this time, a subsequent letter sent to Foreign Minister San Gulliano from the Ambassador in Constantinople stated that there had been sufficient transports to ship troops to the fighting areas but that a major cause for the slow movement of soldiers was their reluctance to fight in Yemen.<sup>79</sup> For the above reasons the Turks initially seem to have been prepared to negotiate in favor of the Imam as his revolt broke out at this time.

In late January or early February of 1911 Imam Yahya began besieging San'a. He was heading a force of 150,000 tribesmen<sup>80</sup> who were now better armed because of the war material they had captured in the revolt of 1904. At the same time an expeditionary force under the command of Izzet Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army, arrived at Hodeida and proceeded to San'a to lift the siege. The Wali, Muhammad Ali Pasha, helped break the siege by simultaneously attacking the Imam's forces upon the advent of Izzet's forces.<sup>81</sup> The siege was lifted on April 7th:

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79  
See appendix XXXIII.

80  
Great Britain, Western Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 288.

81  
Both Izzet and Muhammad Ali were not Turkish, Izzet was Albanian and Muhammad Ali was Bosnian. It should also be remarked that San'a withstood the siege because the Turks had learned the bitter lesson of 1904 and were prepared for such an eventuality.

Ottoman troops entered San'a. While the tendency has been to limit the campaign to retaking said city and permanently re-establishing communications with Hodeida, there is advocacy of continuing hostilities to the point of annihilating the rebels. Circumstances would be favorable.<sup>82</sup>

That the lifting of the siege seemed to be only one phase of military operations in Yemen was also reported by the Consul General of Hodeida. He then informed the Ambassador in Constantinople that losses (heavy on both sides) from the fighting and from cholera, along with the need to place men in garrisons in the regions between Hodeida and San'a, had weakened the Ottoman forces under Izzet Pasha.<sup>83</sup> By this time the Ottoman Government had sent 30,000 troops who, although well equipped, were insufficient.

The Ambassador's telegram to the Foreign Ministry concerning the continuation of hostilities seems to have been based on incorrect knowledge. Or perhaps the Ambassador was reporting what appeared to be Turkish policy among the Government officials in the capital. In Yemen the opposite of what the Ambassador had advised was taking place. Thus, in a report from the British Consul at Hodeida to his superior in Constantinople, the following remarks appeared:

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82

I.M.F.A. Telegram No. 350 from Ambassador at Constantinople to Foreign Ministry dated April 7, 1911.

83

See appendix XXXIII. The Consul General stated that losses from cholera alone were 5,000.

Since the last week of April there have been no military operations in the vilayat of Yemen proper, from which time, it might be said, that the revolt in the Yemen highlands, under the Zeidi Imam, collapsed almost as suddenly as it commenced...84

An analysis of Yahya's revolt was contained in this letter. It had cost the Turks three to four million pounds to bring and maintain their forces against the Imam. The Turks did not succeed in accomplishing anything more than driving the Imam back to his former strongholds; but for this they suffered a "serious loss of life, due principally to the ravages of cholera and other diseases."<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the Imam, "who has put the Ottoman Govt. to great expense... has himself been very little hit by the operations."<sup>86</sup>

It is possible that the Government had considered destroying Imam Yahya's power in the Yemen once and for all. But they had previously decided to divide the vilayat making the Imam the vali of the highlands. No doubt if a definite military success had been won by Izzet Pasha Imam Yahya would have not continued as a ruler in Yemen. Force was attempted

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84  
F.O. Op. Cit., No. 32/E, Richardson to Lowther, June 12, 1911.

85  
Ibid.

86  
Ibid.

first, and failing this, the Turks were ready to make concessions. But, as already noted, the main revolt was in Asir and not in the Highlands. Izzet Pasha had ceased military operations. He was, however, preparing for peace in Yemen in another manner: "It is estimated that since the end of April over 80,000 pounds have been distributed in San'a alone with purchasing the submission of the tribesmen."<sup>87</sup> Izzet Pasha was therefore preparing the groundwork for negotiations with the Imam as well as undermining the support he was given by the tribes. By July 31, 1911 the Imam had "deemed the moment ripe for opening the question of arbitration by a noninterested European Power".<sup>88</sup> In return for mediation "(it is as well to notice that they presuppose that the award would place them in a position sufficiently independent to do so)",<sup>89</sup> the Imam was ready to

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87.  
Ibid.

88  
F.O. Op. Cit., No. 80, Confidential report from Mr. Milne Cheetham to Sir Grey with an enclosed Secret report of July 31, 1911 from the Intelligence Department of the War Office in Cairo, dated August 5, 1911.

89  
Ibid.

give Great Britain a concession over mineral rights or a monopoly over trade.<sup>90</sup> This was not the first time the Imam turned to the British. He had done so previously, in 1904, but without success.<sup>91</sup> Whether the British were instrumental in the agreement between Izzet Pasha and the Imam is not known. By May, 1911, the Treaty of Du'an, between Izzet Pasha and Imam Yahya was signed.<sup>92</sup> This treaty incorporated the Imam's earlier demands with some new stipulations which were more favorable to the Zaidi leader.<sup>93</sup> What is important to note at this time is that, after a few months of revolt, the Imam, at little expense, was able to achieve the autonomy he had demanded in 1904. The treaty was not ratified by the Sublime Porte until 1913. Also, Izzet Pasha had to return to Constantinople and defend his agreement with the Imam. However, under the agreement the Imam and the Turks ruled side by side in Yemen until

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90

Ibid.

91

Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 104.

92

See appendix XXXIV.

93

Also, Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia, Op. Cit., p. 114, states that Izzet agreed to pay monthly stipends to the Imam, the Sayyids, and to the chiefs of the Hashid and the Bakil tribes. These stipends were 3,000 T.P. to the Imam, 1,200 T.P. to the Sayyids, and 1,300 T.P. to the tribal chiefs. Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 70, states that "the Imam was glad to let the Turks pay these tribesmen their salaries direct."



1918 when the Turks withdrew from Yemen. Meanwhile the revolt in Asir continued unabated.

Before continuing the narration of events in Asir, it is necessary to investigate the influence the Imamo-Turkish agreement was to have on subsequent events in that country. It would appear that the Imam had revolted in 1911 for the reason of political expediency rather than for any other motive. There is no evidence of any alliance between al-Idris and the Imam Yahya. Rather, the Imam was already aware of al-Idris' rising popularity, especially in the highlands, and this must have caused the Imam some uneasiness.<sup>94</sup> Also, to reiterate, the Imam was aware that the Turks had thought about dividing Yemen at a time when he was considering the eventual takeover of the entire area, including Asir. Salem says that the Imam was far-sighted and, in hoping to rule all of Yemen, was confronted with two facts: 1) the Turks were declining and he was in a position to take their place; 2) al-Idris was becoming stronger in Asir, and the Imam had seriously begun thinking of getting rid of him.<sup>95</sup> The Treaty of Du'an eased Turkish

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<sup>94</sup> Salem, Op. Cit., p. 81 states that the tribes around Sa'da had accepted al-Idris.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 155-156. See also Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 133: "The Imam foresaw the decline of the Turks, and was preparing to succeed them. He started a political campaign of self-expansion... The Imam's activities were considerably hampered by the activities of his rival, the Idrisi in the Tihama." Also on p. 142 Jacob relates: "The Imam of Sana... although he had buried the hatchet after years of strife against the Turks, had, during the latter's struggle with Italy, sat on the fence while he staked out his claims in the Yemen.

efforts to get rid of al-Idris to the advantage of the Imam as well as to their own for their forces were no longer to be dissipated in combating a revolt in Yemen. It does not appear, from the relation of events cited above, that Izzet Pasha had been sent to Yemen necessarily because of the Imam. Instead, it would seem that the Turkish troops were sent to reinforce the soldiers already fighting al-Idris. In effect, the Treaty of Du'an was an alliance between the Turks and the Imam.<sup>96</sup> Whether he fought al-Idris or not, at least he would not be hindering Turkish action in Asir. Jacob relates that he talked with a Turkish official in 1913 who told him that:

The Imam had so far behaved according to plan, and would do so as long as his Arab rival, the Idrisi, was left unsubdued. Thereafter things might alter since the Turks and the Imam distrusted one another. Both however, were in agreement over the necessity of annihilating the House of Ibn Idris.<sup>97</sup>

What the Imam seems to have counted on was that the Turks would soon decline to an extent that the Imam could take over Yemen while they would have gotten rid of al-Idris before their departure. Al-Sayyid al-Idris now fought the Turks alone.

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96

Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 134: "By the 1911 agreement the Imam was entitled to call for Turkish assistance against refractory tribesmen."

97

Ibid., p. 150.

As soon as the agreement between the Imam and Izzet Pasha was signed al-Idris again cut all the telegraph lines and continued to besiege Abha. By this time a new force had taken the field against him: these were the fighters of Sharif Husein of Mecca. In 1910 the Sharif had complained about al-Idris and had requested help against him.<sup>98</sup> Whether Husein was fighting for the Turks or for his own ends<sup>99</sup> is not that important. What need be observed is that al-Idris was, by then, sufficiently strong to pose as a threat to the Hijaz:

Yemen would be much more trouble than it is worth to Turkey were it not that the Turkish Government dare not retire and leave the Arabs to do what they like on the borders of Hijaz, with its holy places. If the Young Turks ever lost the holy places they would instantly loose also their repute and authority with the mass of their Mohammedan followers.<sup>100</sup>

Communications with Abha had been cut in February and the Sharif had received orders from the Sultan to go into

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98

I.M.F.A. No. 744/243, letter from Mayor to San Giuliano, April 17, 1910. See appendix XIV on al-Idris and the Hijaz.

99

I.M.F.A. Telegram No. 3948, Sola to Foreign Ministry: "...Sharif of Mecca is against Yemen not for the Turks but for himself." See appendix XXXV.

100

Spectator, "Turks in Albania and Yemen", vol. 107, No. 4, 331, July 1, 1911, pp. 5-6.

Asir and relieve the city.<sup>101</sup> By April 19, 1911 his forces had reached Lith, a town north of Qunfidha.<sup>102</sup> At Qunfidha he waited for Turkish forces sent by Muhammad Ali Pasha who were coming up from the south. However, these forces suffered a serious defeat at Jizan. This defeat interrupted the campaign against al-Idris and battles were waged until September when Abha was finally relieved. After this, the forces under Sharif returned to the Hijaz.<sup>103</sup> In the same month the Italo-Turkish War began.

Arrangements between the Italians and al-Idris were carried out by the then Governor of Eritrea, Salvago Raggi. The documents concerned with the initial exchange between the Italians and al-Idris are not included in the Foreign Ministry archives of the period dealing with Yemen. It would seem, however that Idris had received help from Italy months after they fall of Abha. Up until the end of June British documents do not mention any Italian involvement in Asir. Jacob states that al-Idris was allied against Turkey when, "he was engaging Turkish Forces in Abha", i.e. September,

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101  
Abdullah, Op. Cit., p. 73.

102  
I.M.F.A. No. 134/3, Op. Cit., see page 3 of appendix XXXIII.

103  
It may be noted here that the fighting in Asir, according to Abdullah, was the reason for his father's decision to revolt against the Turks.

1911.<sup>104</sup> He goes on to relate that the Turks found stocks of Italian and British arms at the town of Hali. This is not, however, proof that there was an Italo-Idrisi agreement at this time. The Italians had attempted, through the Sultan of Lahej, Sir Ahmad Fadl, to bring the Imam in against the Turks but he had refused.<sup>105</sup> Also after the defeat at Jizan, the Committee of Union and Progress had requested Muhammad Ali Elwi Bey, the honorary dragoman of the Italian Diplomatic Agency in Cairo, to come to Constantinople.<sup>106</sup> Elwi Bey was in close contact with al-Idris, Imam Yahya, and the Sanusis. It was hoped by the Turks that he could help them find the means of a peaceful settlement of affairs in Asir. Thus, at this time, the Turks do not seem to have thought there was any Italo-Idrisi agreement. There are however, two incidents which indicate that there might have been Italian activity in favor of Idris before the end of September, 1911.

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<sup>104</sup> Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 125.

<sup>105</sup> Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 128. He gives no dates for these attempts.

<sup>106</sup> F.O. Op. Cit., No. 69, Confidential report from Cheetham to Sir Grey with enclosed secret report of the Intelligence Department, Cairo, June 30, 1911.

As early as August, 1910, an Italian boat had been siezed by the Turkish authorities at Midi. The sambuk had been brought back to Hodeida where the Italian Consul protested that the boat had only put into Midi for repairs. Perhaps there were arms aboard the sambuk,<sup>107</sup> but if so, these would most probably be for sale by merchants and not a source of aid by the Italian Government. More important, al-Barakati states that during the Sharif's campaign in the summer, he had ordered Turkish vessels to bombard the towns of Shaqiq, Wasam and Burak for it was through these three towns that European weapons were reaching al-Idris.<sup>108</sup> He says that these weapons arrived from Massawa, Djibouti and Aden, while going further to state that when the Turks landed at Wasam, some of the inhabitants had raised Italian

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107

Askew, Op. Cit., p. 25 states that the boat was loaded with gasoline and "sundry merchandise". The whole affair seems some-what amusing: the Consul demanded that the boat be returned to Italian control; when this was refused, the Consul boarded the sambuk and raised the Italian royal standard and his own flag. Mohir Bey, the local governor, ordered that the sambuk be fired on by a Turkish gunboat in the harbor, but the commander refused to do so. The incident became a dead letter when an Italo-Turkish Commission could not determine the truth of the matter and the boat was eventually returned to the Italians. The incident was, however, another instance in the rising tempers of both Italians and Turks which finally culminated in war.

108

Al-Barakati, Op. Cit., p. 35.

flags over their houses, "thinking that this would protect them",<sup>109</sup>

It would appear that the nearest possible date for an Italian agreement with al-Sayyid al-Idris is that suggested by Beehler who says that it was made in early February, 1912.<sup>110</sup> This date would coincide with a series of events in the Red Sea and elsewhere preceding this. In December, 1911, "It was reported that 20,000 Arabs were organized in Arabia to attack the Italian colony at Erythrea, and to reinforce the Turks in Cyrenaica."<sup>111</sup> In the following month Italian war-ships bombarded Agaba. After this, the same ships proceeded southwards and bombarded Sheikh Sa'id and Mocha. In the following year, during the month of January, the Italian Red Sea fleet, which had been reinforced because of a threatened attack on Eritrea, located at Qunfidha a group of Turkish gunboats. These were seven in number, and all but three were

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109

Ibid., p. 37. He gives the date for this event as 1329, Jamad, 7 A. H.

110

Beehler, W.H. The History of the Italian Turkish War. September 29, 1911 to October 18, 1912. Reprinted from Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute, with additions. Compiled from semi-official publications of the Naval Ministries of Germany, Italy and Austria, and other thoroughly reliable sources. (Annapolis, 1913), p. 52.

111

Ibid., p. 47.



destroyed.<sup>112</sup> After this, the Italian ships continued southwards bombarding a new Sheikh Sa'id and Mocha, and then northwards dealing with Midi in the same manner. This action occurred on or about January 19, 1912. One week later, a blockade of the Yemeni coast for a distance of 45 miles around Hodeida was declared.<sup>113</sup> Al-Barakati states that, after the Italians had blockaded the vilayat of Yemen and the bombardment of Bab al-Mandab, al-Idris met the Italians at Jizan and "offered his help according to the agreement they had in Egypt."<sup>114</sup> Thus it would appear that, either in the latter part of January or in early February, such an agreement was reached. The author continues: "So they gave him cannons, guns and ammunition and they also gave him soldiers to operate the cannons after being dressed as Arabs."<sup>115</sup> Most probably these

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112  
Ibid., p. 51.

113  
Ibid.

114  
Al-Barakati, Op. Cit., p. 90. There is no known agreement between Italy and al-Idris before this time. The author seems to be referring to the days when al-Idris was a student at al-Azhar.

115  
Ibid.



soldiers were ascaries and not Italians, as Farouhy states that al-Idris had a Muslim officer attached to them from the Italians.<sup>116</sup> No doubt there would have been opposition among the tribesmen if Christians, Italian or otherwise, had landed in Asir.<sup>117</sup> At this time, Italy probably had in mind that an alliance with al-Idris might gain the inactivity of the Sanusis. Askew states that the Sanusi leader sent a letter dated January 31, 1912, to Enver Pasha offering to fight against the Italians.<sup>118</sup> The Sanusi also informed Enver that "he had called all 'Believers' to war against the Italians."<sup>119</sup> Thus, the close relations between al-Idris and the Sanusi provided Italy with another reason for aiding the rebel leader.

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116  
Op. Cit., p. 56.

117  
Jacob, Op. Cit., p. 183 says that when he landed in Asir in 1915 to negotiate a treaty with al-Idris, he was told that Italians had "never landed on Asir's shores."

118  
Askew, Op. Cit., 172.

119  
Ibid. Also, see page 2 of appendix XLVIII on Italy's attitude concerning the ties between al-Idris and the Sanusis.

Neither party gained any decisive benefit from the alliance. With Italian support, al-Idris was able to take the Island of Farasan and continue his revolt against the Turks which was to endure for a long time. He was not secure in Asir until 1915 when he signed an alliance with Great Britain. The Italians' main benefit from this alliance was the tying down of Turkish troops in Asir, who could have been put to better use, perhaps in Libya, and definitely in the Balkans. All told, Italian action in the Red Sea, along with the alliance with al-Idris, was successful:

In the operations in the Red Sea the Italian Navy completely blocked any attack on the Italian colony at Erythrea and contributed greatly to the conquest of the African provinces by depriving the Turks of the reinforcement they expected from Arabia.<sup>120</sup>

Italy continued her relations with al-Idris once the Italo-Turkish War was over. Italian diplomatic correspondence shows that Italy represented al-Idris at the peace conference that was held at Ouchy, Switzerland once an armistice was declared between Italy and Turkey.<sup>121</sup> Italy obtained amnesty from the Sultan for al-Idris, and, when possible,

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<sup>120</sup>  
Beehler, Op. Cit., p. 97.

<sup>121</sup>  
See appendix LIII; and appendixes XL through LIII.

intervened on his behalf with the Turks. Their relations with al-Idris, during the war and after, were one of Italy's major activities in Yemen until the First World War. This relationship and the development of friendly relations with Imam Yahya formed a major part of Italian activity in Yemen that culminated with a treaty of friendship and commerce between Italy and Yemen in 1927, as well as the recognition of Yemen as an independent country.

A P P E N D I X

I

From: Italian Ambassador, Constantinople, December 2, 1904.  
To: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 1573/605

Subject: Hinterland of Aden.

Minister,

My numerous duties have, up till now, prevented me from referring to Your Excellency a controversy that came out some time ago between Turkey and England concerning the hinterland of Aden.

I hasten to repair today this involuntary omission. As you know this hinterland is made up of new "cantons" occupied by tribes under the domination of Sheikhs who consider themselves independent but who, nevertheless, on occasion call upon the British Representative in Aden for protection. Under the pretext that these cantons belong exclusively to her Turkey had, little by little, occupied the major parts. Hence the energetic protests by England who, after many difficulties, ended extirpating from the Sublime Porte their consent to the setting up of a commission made up of British and Turkish officials entrusted with the task of delineating the disputed territories.

In spite of all sorts of obstacles and difficulties raised by the Turks the work of the commission was finished; and decisions were finally sent to Constantinople by which the English Delegates, renouncing their previously claimed frontier demarcations, left to Turkey a zone of some 550 square kilometers.

After all this what remained for the Sublime Porte to do was to ratify the conclusions of her delegates and proceed immediately with the final systemization of the border.

But things in Turkey do not really work so nice and smoothly - many months were in pass - there were many deliberations by the Council of Ministers and renewed **insistent** requests by the British Embassy but the matter did not progress one step forward. Finally Sir Nicholas O'Connor, having lost patience, on the eve of his departure on leave, sought audience with the Sultan and by means of persuasive arguments succeeded in obtaining the formal promise of His Majesty (the Sultan) that the Irade necessary to promulgate the decisions of the commission would be announced without further delay.

No. 1573/605, page two:

The day of Sir Nicholas' departure, whilst I was in conference with the Grand Vizier, a messenger came to the Palace carrying an envelope. His Highness opened it immediately and having recognized its contents heaved a sigh of satisfaction and expressed to me his satisfaction at seeing ended once and for all an affair to which the British Embassy had attached special importance, and, said His Highness, had dragged on far too long.

In my presence the Chief English interpreter was summoned and informed of the long awaited Irade. The Grand Vizier gave an order to his Secretary General to make, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the necessary arrangements for the official communiques to be given to the British Embassy, thus, everything seemed ended to everyone's satisfaction. However, a few days later, when the promised communique of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not been received, the Charge d'Affaires called this to the attention of the Porte and from the confused and embarrassed answer it was not difficult to see that some new complication had arisen.

After several discussions and a strong request for an explanation the truth emerged little by little. It appears that, since the Sultan had had a radical change of heart, and sweeping away the formal promise given previously to the Ambassador, the Sultan had issued a second one in which he refused to approve the agreed delineation and gave orders to the Grand Vizier to re-open negotiations with the British Government.

Faced with such behaviour Marquis Lansdowne did not hesitate to state categorically to Musurus Bey that any attempt by the Sublime Porte to modify the agreement already reached would fail and that thus, any subsequent discussions being superfluous, the necessary steps would be taken to protect British rights in the disputed area.

At the same time the Warship "Prosperine" was sent to the waters of Hodeida with orders, according to reports, to prevent the landing of Ottoman troops in any part of the Yemen.

It would be difficult to evaluate the real motives which caused the Sultan to withdraw the Irade already communicated to the Sublime Porte and to the British Embassy. To the Grand Vizier's mind the possibility should not be excluded

No. 1573/605, page three:

of some secret report reaching His Highness at the last minute and in which would have prompted the Sublime Porte to reproach having ceded, so easily to England, territories belonging integrally to the Yemen.

According to information obtained and from other reliable sources the withdrawal of the Imperial Trade was provoked by news of the arrival in Kuwait of the Major Knox with a large retinue. This senior British officer has ostensibly taken over a sort of protectorate over the regions over which Turkey claims sovereignty. It therefore seems likely that the Sultan wanted to delay the solution of the question of the hinterland of Aden in the false belief that he could bring pressure to bear in London to induce the Government of King Edward to recall the Major.

It is a fact that the Imperial Ambassador received the order to link the two questions invoking as far as Kuwait is concerned to the Agreement of 1901 (vide report of the Royal Embassy of January 4th, No. 11/5) by which England and Turkey had agreed to abstain from any action tending to alter the status quo in this area.

It does not appear that the British Government is disposed to contribute to such a line of thought giving satisfaction to the request of the Sublime Porte.

From what I am told (and by a person well-placed to know) the Marquis Lansdowne has caused Musurus Bey to clearly understand that the question of Kuwait can form no basis of discussions as long as the agreement reached for the delineation of the Hinterland fail to be ratified by Turkey.

(signed) Imperiali

## II

### Report

From: Royal Embassy, London, January 2, 1905  
To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

No: 3/1

Subject: Great Britain's policy in Arabia

Minister,

Further to the report dated 30th ultimate which I had the honor to address to Your Excellency concerning the Yemeni affairs.

The day before yesterday news reached here through the telegraphic agency that the Sultan had finally issued a new Irade in confirmation of the delineation agreed upon, between the confines of the Yemen and the Aden territory although it was added that this Irade was incomplete and does not conform to the conditions laid down previously, in a way to leave room for new difficulties. Having had the occasion, yesterday in fact, to see Sir Nicholas O'Connor, I met at his house the Ottoman Ambassador who was visiting him, and who, from what I gathered, had come to give certain explanations on this matter. I therefore took advantage of this favorable occasion to ask Sir Nicholas in turn.

He told me that the new Irade was totally incomprehensible. On the one hand it indicated a wider scope than the delegates had established of the area in favor of Aden, whilst on the other hand it pointed out a clause whereby England and Turkey should agree not to keep any troops in the respective districts.

Now, observed my colleague, neither did England want to extend the territory adjudged to her by the delineation nor did she intend accepting the clause relative to the stationing of troops being a point which was not dealt with by the delegates.

Furthermore the communique was worded in such a way that it was tantamount to the Sultan demanding, something absurd, the withdrawal of the British garrison in Aden. And even if it was read as hinting at the creation of a neutral zone along the frontier, this too would be impossible.



These difficulties will now be submitted to Lord Landsdowne at his next return to London and certainly there will be new protests from the British Government or even more brisk intervention by it. I should warn Your Excellency of the circumstances leading up to this in order to avoid any incorrect interpretation.

Discussing the serious situation in Arabia with Sir Nicholas, and of the inability of the Ottoman Government to face up to it, I asked him diplomatically his opinion of what could happen if the disorder in those countries took such proportions as to make inevitable a dislocation; whilst, however, expressing my doubts as to whether the present fears were not exaggerated; and if it was truly a question of something more than the usual state of anarchy that has always been present in those parts.

From the answers of my old Constantinople colleague I inferred that he really considered the dangers as being serious and that above all, as a consequence of the financial state of the Ottoman Government, which is even worse lately to the point of paralysing any action by her, neither this state of affairs regarding Arabia seemed satisfactory to him, nor the circumstances indicated by me of the new Hijaz railway whose progress will permit the Sultan to send more garrisons to these remote Vilayats.

(He told me that things had come to such a pass that it would be sufficient for England to lift a finger in order to eradicate any Turkish authority over all these people. But, he added, England did not want and had no interest in taking on such a dangerous responsibility. The only thing of importance to him is that no third Power intrude in the Red Sea, (thus referring to the plan attributed to Germany that she is constantly suspected to be on the look out for naval bases en-route to the Far East).

If at a certain moment, concluded Sir Nicholas, Ottoman authority which has as its primary interest its conservation in the Yemen and the Holy places, became absolutely intolerable, the solution desired by England would be to create an independent state under the ruler of the Imam whose religious and political influence makes him the only one capable of being able to set up a possible government.\*

No. 3/1, page three

As I said this was purely an academic discussion on future eventualities of uncertain date, and which in my opinion, in spite of everything are probably remote.

Nonetheless I thought it opportune to refer to Your Excellency, the British Ambassador's point of view on a question in which the Ministry is especially interested.

(signed) Panza

\* Parenthesis and underlining by recipient ministry.

### III

#### Letter

From: Ambassador, Constantinople, January 3, 1905  
To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

No: 16/7

Subject: Reply to Dispatch No. 568 of December 23, 1904,  
Colonial Office - Hinterland of Aden.

Minister,

With the dispatch indicated above, Your Excellency, drawing my attention to the unsettled controversy between England and Turkey on the hinterland of Aden, had asked me to keep an eye on and keep you informed on this matter.

Referring to the long and detailed report on this subject which I sent Your Excellency via my No. 1573/605 of December 2, 1904 I hasten to tell you that the Grand Vizier has informed me yesterday, and expressed his delight at the happy solution finally arrived at for the controversy under discussion.

His Excellency added that the Sultan had already issued the necessary Irade approving the decision already taken by the Council of Ministers with which was accepted the proposal of the Mixed Commission.

The information given me by Farid Pasha was not altogether correct. I was able to take up the matter a few minutes later after conferring with the British Charge d'Affaires Sir Townley who stated surely that as far as he was concerned he could not consider the incident as settled.

The Irade of the Sultan recognised the delineation established by the Mixed Commission but on condition that in the nine cantons constituting the hinterland England refrained from building fortifications and maintaining armed forces there. Mr. Townley told me that such a condition absolutely could not be accepted by his Government as that would render illusory, even derisory, the Protectorate which since 1837 England claims over her nine cantons.

Mr. Townley added that the Grand Vizier pushing him to induce his Government to declare itself satisfied had indicated to him that, at the most, the condition imposed by Turkey was but a simple formality and that consequently the Sublime Porte would raise no objections whenever England had to send troops to the aforesaid territory. To which the Charge d'Affaires, as is natural, replied that it was not the habit of the British Government to assume engagements it does not want and could not keep up.

Thus the question remains still unsolved as it seems unlikely that the Foreign Office is willing to accept the condition imposed by the Sultan.

It seems very foreseeable that His Imperial Majesty will, as usual, give way at the last moment when he is convinced that England is unmovable in her determination.

(signed) Imperiali.

#### IV

### Presence and Activities of Ahmad al-Kipsi in Cairo

Report, No: 150/32,  
February 8, 1906,  
From: Royal Agent  
in Cairo

In February 1906 al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Kipsi-one of the most important Sherifs of the Yemen returning to his homeland from Rodi with his family where he had been exiled for his opposition to Ottoman rule - stopped in Cairo on the way and got in touch with the Royal Diplomatic Agent. Al-Sayyid Ahmad told the Royal Agent that he had had the honor of having been presented to H.M. the King when he had visited Rodi, and that he had talked to him and interested him in Arab affairs.

In his long talk with the Royal Agent al-Kipsi expressed, spontaneously, a great deal of sympathy for the Royal Government and assured him that he could count on him entirely to favor any trips, exploration or commercial and industrial ventures that the Italians might care to undertake in the South of Arabia.

Before leaving the Royal Agent al-Kipsi told him that the Wali of Rodi, although allowing him to leave, refused means for the journey granted him under the Imperial Irade, and upon which he begged him to send a request to the Sultan, through the Ambassador in Constantinople, to obtain the necessary sum.

The Royal Agent having heard from various sources of the influence that al-Kipsi had on the tribes of Southern Arabia, granted his request, and advanced him the necessary funds for the return trip of his family and in the meantime, informed the Embassy in Constantinople.

al-Kipsi, page 2

Report, No: 253/63,  
March 10th,  
From: Royal Agent

Next day al-Kipsi came again to the Royal Agent and left him a letter with a petition addressed to H.M. the King and signed by 18 people, amongst them al-Sayyid Yahya, the father of al-Kipsi. With this request went their votes for the Government of the King to become mediators between the Sultan and the Imam in order to arrive at the pacification of the Yemen. From information taken from some Muslim nobles in Cairo it was learned of the identities of the signatories and of the great influence they had in the Yemen, but nonetheless, the Royal Agent asked the Consul in Hodeida for all relevant information about them.

Report, No: 608/210,  
March 27, 1906,  
From: R. Ambassador  
in Constantinople

In the meantime, the Ambassador in Constantinople wrote informing that he had passed on al-Kipsi's request to the Sultan, but without indicating that there was no hope in its reception and that an intervention in the Sherif's favor, besides being unfavored by the Sultan, could prove to be harmful to al-Kipsi himself. He therefore preferred abstaining from further related proceedings.

Telegram, No: 968,  
22nd April

The Government convinced by the reasons advanced by the Royal Ambassador decided not to persist in continuing the practices initiated in Constantinople and offered al-Kipsi the amount of 2198 francs loaned to him by the Agent to cover his family's travel. In the meantime the Government cabled the Consul in Hodeida to take the necessary steps for the resumption of the travel of al-Kipsi's family.

al-Kipsi, page 3

Report, No: 175/50  
From: Royal Consul  
Hodeida, May 10th

The Royal Consul in Hodeida who had already been in touch with al-Kipsi's father prior to his repatriation, assured the Government that he would be in continuous contact with al-Kipsi, being aware of his capacity to render remarkable service. But he warned that with the Kipsis one should proceed with great caution as they had given proof of many irresponsible acts, and for which they were already strongly suspected by the Turkish authorities.

Telegram, No: 1660,  
June 26, 1906,  
From: Consul in  
Hodeida

In fact it happened that al-Kipsi's father, having sent the Royal Consul in Hodeida some letters, amongst them was one addressed by the Imam to the Royal Agent in Cairo, in which he sought the mediation of H.M. the King to put an end to the War in Yemen; the suspicions of the Turkish authorities having been aroused, they tried to arrest the bearer of the missive (one of the sons of al-Sayyid Yahya al-Kipsi). Not having succeeded in tracing him, they arrested a brother of al-Sayyid Yahya al-Kipsi from whom they confiscated a letter of al-Sayyid Ahmad addressed to his father in which is pointed out alleged agreements which took place between the Kipsis and Dr. Insabato, and the Royal Agent in Cairo concerning the conclusion of a Treaty between Italy and the Imam. A short while later, al-Sayyid Yahya, father of al-Kipsi, was also arrested.

Telegram, No: 1458,  
July 1, 1906,  
From: Royal Agent  
in Cairo

Following this, instructions were given to the Royal Consul in Hodeida not to get compromised by documentary correspondence with al-Kipsi and to the Royal Agent in



al-Kipsi, page 4

Cairo to take care that in correspondence with al-Kipsi's father to make no compromising allusions and do not make use of the Agency as an intermediary.

Telegram, No: 1779  
July 9, 1906,  
From: Royal Agent  
in Cairo

On July 10th the Royal Agent advised having received a letter from the Imam to H.M. the King. The Imam said he was being slandered with the Sultan and invoked the intervention of His Majesty with the Sultan to possibly obtain the autonomy of Yemen or else an Amnesty for himself and his followers and to rule and apply taxes in accordance with the Shari'a. In which conditions a general peace would prevail. Together with this letter the Royal Agent received many others, amongst them, one signed by 7 tribal Chiefs who promised a general peace based on Italy's advice, also a telegram, from al-Sayyid al-Hussein al-Kipsi in Aden, son of Yahya, in which he asked for money to go to Cairo and deliver a more detailed letter from the Imam.

Telegram, No: 1572,  
July 18, 1906,  
From: Royal Agent  
in Cairo

In accordance with the proposal of the Royal Agent in Cairo the Consul in Aden was informed telegraphically to pass on the letter that the son of al-Kipsi may have and recommending not to give him important sums but just a few thalers to enable him to go back home.

Report, No: 318,  
July 26, 1906,  
From: Consul in  
Aden

The Royal Consul in Aden answered that in execution of orders received he persuaded al-Sayyid Hussein al-Kipsi to return to his country, but nonetheless there were reports that Sayyid had no letters or special information to pass to or inform the Italian authorities and that his mission was most



probably one of joining his brother in Cairo, who would have accompanied him to Aden, to persuade a committee who was waiting a few miles from Aden to follow him to Egypt where one would have reached a definite conclusion to the negotiations being carried out with the Royal Agent.

Telegram, No: 1627,  
July 27, 1906,  
To: Consul, Hodeida,  
AND, Report No: 557  
July 31, To: Amba-  
sador in Constanti-  
nople

At that time it was ascertained that the letter confiscated by the Turkish authorities from the uncle of al-Kipsi was a tissue of lies and maximum prudence was advised to the Consul in Hodeida in this matter and the Embassy in Constantinople was simultaneously informed.

Report, No: 751/273  
From: Diplomatic  
Agency, Cairo,  
September 5, 1906

A short while later from the Ministry of the Royal House came a letter that an Arab, a certain Ahmad Rahi Elkesi Ellomani, had sent a letter from Cairo directly to our Sovereign and in which was expressed favorable appreciation relative to the Royal Diplomatic Agency in Cairo. The letter was communicated to the Royal Agency who thanked the bearer in the manner he thought appropriate; the Charge d'Affaires replied that the letter had not been written by Rahi Elkesi but by the Sherif al-Sayyid al-Kipsi and that it had as its object to ask H.M. the King for mediation to put an end to the war in Yemen.

The Royal Agent referred more-  
over that al-Kipsi often asked him  
what were the Royal Government's in-  
tentions in respect to the proposal  
of the Imam about intervention with  
the Sultan to give Yemen peace and  
order, and showing great worry over  
the fate of his father, insisted that  
the Government intervene to prevent  
any harm being done to the old Kipsi.

Naturally the answer given him by the Royal Agent was dilatory in anticipation of instructions from the Royal Government. However, he pointed out at the same time the necessity of coming to a decision in this connection for more<sup>over</sup> around al-Ahmad had grouped a circle of influence especially English to lure him away from us and over to their side.

Telegram, No: 2398,  
September 27,  
From: Royal Agent  
in Cairo

Things were thus when the Royal Agent cabled that, according to advice given him by al-Kipsi, a certain Ali Ahmad al-Dabati had arrived in Cairo, one of the Qadis of the Yemen, who stated he had a secret mission from the Imam to H.M. the King and which he had to accomplish personally by going to Italy.

It was answered that the Royal Government was studying the question of mediation requested by the Imam and that one was awaiting the decision in an answer from the Ambassador in Constantinople.

Instructions to Royal  
Ambassador in Constantinople relating to  
Italy's action in  
favor of pacification  
of Yemen and of al-  
Kipsi's brother.  
Telegram, No: 2315  
October, 7, 1906

To the Embassy in Constantinople were given the following instructions: that to our August Sovereign were sent petitions from the Imam Yahya, the Kipsis, local Yemeni Chiefs, and followers of the Imam to invoke his great and efficacious mediation with the Sultan for the pacification of Yemen and for the liberation of the Kipsis from Turkish prisons in San'a and that his Majesty, by loyalty and affection for His Imperial Majesty, informed him of the requests that were sent to his aforesaid Majesty and that the Government of the King was very disposed to direct its action to the Sultan's advantage if so desired.

Answer of the Grand  
Vizier and of the  
Sultan

The Grand Vizier made it known that the Government of His Imperial Majesty already knew of the practices which took place between the Imam, the Kipsis, the Royal Diplomatic Agency in Cairo and the Government of the King (Italy), and said that he fully appreciated our loyal and frank communications (exchanges) and that he would refer this to His Imperial Majesty.

The Sultan, upon being informed, ordered that the Government of the King (Italy) be sent an acknowledgement of his gratitude for our intervention for the pacification of the Yemen and that Marshal Faizi Pasha be given orders to come to an agreement with the Imam.

Telegram, No: 2464  
November 16, 1906

The Royal Agency in Cairo was then cabled to inform the Imam by the messenger who came from Yemen (Qadi Ali Ahmad al-Shababi) that H.M. the King, having taken close to his heart the question of pacification of Yemen, had used his cordial relations with the Sultan to obtain it; and that the Sultan, having very much appreciated the intervention of the Government of the King, had renewed the order to Faizi Pasha to come to an agreement with the Imam -

Also, that the King's Government thought thereby to do a favor to the Imam advising him to turn to Faizi Pasha as soon as possible who (from what was told us was provided with ample powers and displays qualities of equity and conciliation).

al-Kipsi, page 8

Telegram, No: 257,  
December 6, 1906

As for the liberation of old Kipsi and his brother, the Ambassador in Constantinople cabled that the Grand Vizier, after having asked for telegraphic news from Yemen, informed that in the past old Kipsi was exiled in Rodi, forgiven 4 years of exile and authorised to return home with his sons. No sooner back in Hodeida he started to agitate with false rebels of the Imam. Following the interception of correspondence, the Wali was obliged to imprison him but no legal proceedings were brought against him following his promise to bring back his sons, and when truly back in Yemen, to give a formal assurance and guarantee, and the Wali would thus be disposed not to give way to the Prosecution General's demand for a condemnation. The Wali counselled that Kipsi and sons should not be pardoned before giving assurances about their future conduct.

The Grand Vizier was sorry not to be able to do more than intervene in favor of al-Kipsi as the matter was the exclusive concern of Faizi Pasha who, by the Sultan's orders, had full power.

Dispatch, No: 6643/3  
January 4, 1907

The news was transmitted to the Royal Agency in Cairo to be passed on to its destination with insistence that the advice of the government of the King be repeated to the Imam, which is to apply to Marshal Faizi Pasha to definitively negotiate the pacification of Yemen and the liberation of the al-Kipsi brothers from the jails of San'a.

Qadi Ali, who had arrived in Aden, left for the interior disheartened by not being able to carry news of al-Kipsi's liberation, and the assurances of the conclusions of peace, and therefore immediately sent a petition to our August Sovereign insisting on our intervention.

Telegram, Cairo,  
March 11, 1907,  
Subject: Action of  
Faizi Pasha against  
al-Kipsi - region of  
Halim

Then on March 11th, the Diplomatic Agent in Cairo cabled news received from old Kipsi that Faizi Pasha, having learned of the arrival of the messenger Qadi Ali, had sacked and burned the villages of the Kipsis to hamper the peace negotiations promised to us and to provoke the Imam.

It was thought better to immediately curtail any further action seeing that this was not welcomed with all the trust we had hoped for -

Telegram, No: 484,  
March 12, 1907

The Ambassador in Constantinople was cabled and given instructions to that effect adding to only call for the Sultan's clemency for the liberation of those who turned to us for help. This was also sent to Cairo.

Telegram, No: 52  
April 10, 1907

It was answered that according to our orders, telegraphic information had been requested from Faizi Pasha who cabled denying that there had been military action, sacking or firing of villages (Kanlan) of the Kipsi family (on the other hand a report from the Consul General in Hodeida partly confirmed the news) and declaring that such news was but self-interested intervention by the Kipsis residing in Cairo.

Report, No: 151/33,  
April 27, 1907

al-Kipsi, page 10

Fruitless Negotiations  
between Faizi Pasha  
and the Imam

From other information it is learned that the negotiations initiated between the mission sent by the Imam and the one nominated by Faizi Pasha led to no good results.

Turkish Mission  
to Yemen

His Imperial Majesty then decided to send to Yemen a commission of Turkish Civil Ulema to study and recommend the necessary measures to stop hostilities and re-establish calm in the Yemen.

No: 923, May 4,  
1907, Liberation  
of Kipsi

Moreover the Consul General in Hodeida cabled that the liberation of al-Kipsi was now an established fact.

Said liberation and the sending of a commission after the attempts made by Marshal Faizi Pasha shows that H.M. the Sultan has great consideration for our intervention.

Dispatch, No:  
29845/440, June  
4, 1907

Following that the Royal Embassy in Constantinople was asked to express our gratitude to the Imperial Government for the liberation of al-Kipsi without forgetting to add that we took an interest simply out of generous humanitarian feelings.

Other letters  
from the Imam,  
see Report of  
Cairo dated March  
1, No: 269/87

In the meantime Qadi Ali, who left Aden on January 12th to inform the Imam about his mission, returned to Cairo in the month of April bringing letters from the Imam, one addressed to our Government and the other to Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Eleushe in Cairo.

Irade of Imperial  
Concessions, Report,  
No: 163/36, Hodeida,  
May 1st

Such letters, which reveal our disinterested aims, were passed on to the Embassy in Constantinople reminding that according to the present state of affairs it was opportune to confirm our attitudes according to the latest instructions and refraining from further action. What is more the Consul General in Hodeida informed that H.M. the Sultan had sent an Imperial Irade to San'a in which he granted to the Yemeni populations a remission of all arrears owed by them to the Treasury for any tax, or government tribute, up to the end of the fiscal year 1321, as well as a general Amnesty for all those accused or condemned for political offences, and that Marshal Faizi Pasha had immediately sent the two Mutasarrifs of Hodeida and Taiz the order to execute immediately the Irade and which, he remarked, was already effected in Hodeida.

Deputation from  
Yemen

In addition His Imperial Majesty had sent an order to the Mission Members asking them to urge the Yemeni nobles and chiefs of the leading tribes to go to Constantinople to expose their desiderata.

From the whole sequence of events it is deduced that His Majesty the Sultan was motivated by the most benevolent and sincere feelings towards Imam Yahya and towards the people of Yemen. -

Report, Hodeida,  
May 21 and 28, 1907

But the aims of the Ottoman mission failed in everything and they took ship for Constantinople with the Modvin of the Wali, H.E. Mahmud Bey, and a deputation of some 40 delegates from the districts of San'a, Ta'iz and Hodeida. -



al-Kipsi, page 12

Mutiny of Turkish officials

In the same period the Turkish officials of the presidio of San'a broke into mutiny occupying the telegraphic office and cabling the Sultan to be paid.

Enemy of the Imam, Letter, July 26, 1907

In a report by Sir Caprotti to the Geographical Society it is submitted that the Imam not only had to fight against the Turks but also against the Arab followers of his adversary al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Dagani who was perhaps supported by the Turks.

Return of the Yemeni delegation, Report from Constantinople, July 22, 1907

The delegation of Ulema and Sheikhs of Yemen returned in the month of July after having had discussions with a special commission of the Palace on measures to restore calm in the Yemen.

Opinion of the Hon. Aubrey Herbert, Report of 1st and 25th July

The Ambassador in London reports that the Hon. Aubrey Herbert, veteran of Yemen, does not exclude the possibility of the pacification being obtained through concessions and agreements and that there is a lack of cohesion and agreement amongst the Arabs and that British policy considers making use, at the right time, of the aversion that the Arabs have for the Turks.

Other letters from the Imam, Report from Cairo 1st August

The Imam, through the usual messenger, sent H.M. the King a letter asking him to continue his peace-making action with the Sultan and saying that he will send, through us, a letter to the Sultan to inform him that he is ready to negotiate peace on condition that there be Italian civil servants sent there.



Turkish Mission,  
Ferit Sabet, Report  
from Hodeida of 15th  
August 1907

Following declarations of the Deputation of the Yemen and of letters from Arabs the Sultan sent to Yemen, on the same ship which carried back the Deputation, another delegation headed by Ferit Sabet, Aide de Camp of His Imperial Majesty and composed of 2 senior generals and officials. This Mission, like others, has a mandate to study the conditions of the region and more than anything else to check the Civil and Military Administration (expenditures).

Aref Bey and Mohsin  
al-Rassas. Muhammad  
Bey Abu-Sultan.  
Report from Cairo  
of September 9, 1907

In the meantime the Cairo Royal Agency reported that Sayed Ahmad Kipsi had told them that the Turk, Aref Bey, a political refugee from Constantinople, had informed him that the English wanted to bribe him, and that, in fact, 2 gentlemen dressed in Muslim fashion, introduced themselves to him, and that he knew one of them to be the English Educational Advisor, Sir Douglas Dunlop and who told him not to turn to Italy but to England if the Imam wanted to liberate Yemen. Moreover Ali Bey told him not to trust a certain Mohsin al-Rassas, a Yemeni, who spied for the British Agency and the Turkish High Commissioner and that, learning from our informer Muhammad Elwi Bey, who was with Mohsin, was reprimanded because he was in relations with Aref Bey who was a spy of the English and Mukhtar Pasha; that Abu Sultan, a Bedouin Chief and a friend of the Bey, had been placed near our informer to watch over Italian actions concerning Tripolitania and Yemen.

Finally the Royal Agency said that the Bey had declared that al-Kipsi, through the illness he suffered, had become (even) sillier and had

found Aref Bey and thus constituted a danger for us and it was advisable to make use of him instead of Mohsin al-Rassas.

Mr. Serra was convinced that Aref Bey was a Turkish spy and that Mohsin Bey was a beggarly fellow who tried to sweep information together to sell to English and Turkish emissaries.

Mission of Ulema of the Hijaz, Report from Hodeida, September 26, 1907

By order of the Sultan, in the month of September, another commission of 11 Ulema, one of whom was from Medina, arrived in Hodeida from Mecca to confer with the Zeidites in order to induce them to submit to His Imperial Majesty.

Report, Constantinople, October 22, 1907

The Marquis Imperiali reports that the new Mission, according to information collected, is one of the feeble ways of action devised by the Sultan to try and substitute the failure of his arms in Yemen by negotiation.

Report, Hodeida November 6, 1907

And in fact the Mission of the Hijaz Ulema had no success and it seems that the Zeidite Ulema even rejected the sacred Islamic doctrines of the notables of the Holy City.

What the Sultan of Zanzibar said of Yemen - Report, London, November 18, 1907

The Ambassador in London refers to a conversation of his with the Sultan of Zanzibar who declares that Abdul Hamid is convinced that it is impossible to subject the Yemen by force of arms.

Secret correspondence between Imam Yahya and the Sultan. Report from Hodeida, December 20, 1907

Other letters from Imam to H.M. the King and to the Sultan, Report, Aden December 20, 1907

From information received by the Consul in Hodeida from San'a it seems that al-Sayyid Yahya (Imam) maintains secret correspondence with the Imperial Palace.

He then sends to Cairo, via Aden, the same messenger Qadi Ali, bringing 3 letters (one to H.M. the King, one to the Sultan and the other to our agent in Cairo) having him accompanied this time by al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Kipsi in Cairo.

In the one of H.M. the King he says that "the people of Yemen, close to Italian possessions hope that H.M. the King, by the friendship which links him to the Sultan of Islam, be the intermediary for the good and security of the Yemen, preserving the rights of the Sultan of Turkey but respecting the true heritage of his ancestors."

In the one of the Sultan he says: "to have clemency for the people of Yemen by a general pardon, and to deign to accept the demands agreed upon to obtain the assurance of the action of his Government agreeing to follow the way of the Imam and which has been followed in the past by his predecessors. That, up to now, he had had no answers to his previous letters and which he believes did not reach their destination because of his Minister and representatives who hide the true facts accusing us of crimes we do not commit!".

Information on a  
Yemeni Mission.  
Report, December  
24, 1907

The Royal Agency in Cairo then passes on some information given them separately by the Kipsis and the Mohsins and which afterwards, are found reproduced in a correspondence, true or false, from Aden in the number of December 18th of the newspaper "Le Progres", the Italian director of which declares to Mr. Serra, that the newspaper is in the pay of the British Agency. Which partly aroused the doubts of Mr. Serra who tried to ascertain the attitude of the Royal Government in the present events in the Yemen that the British Government attach much importance to such information for the upheaval of those populations surrounding her colonies in Arabia.

In this report of the "Progres" it is said that the Imam "is making a last effort to avoid bloodshed. He has just sent a delegation of 3 people of his entourage to Constantinople, and who will be joined, so it is said, by his representative in Egypt. This delegation which, I have just learned, is backed by a foreign power whose name I have not been able to ascertain, will pass through Cairo. It will submit to the Islamic Congress in the Egyptian capital the question which is the object of its journey to Constantinople and will probably have a meeting with the Khedive".\*

Report, December  
31, 1907

In addition the Royal Agency in Cairo reports that Qadi Ali arrived in Cairo and gave him an open envelope from the Consul in Aden, saying that it had been opened because he had suspected that the letters from the Imam had been taken from the envelope of the Imam and left on deposit with

\* Translated from French.

the Consulate in Aden, because they were addressed to the Agency; but Mr. Serra suspects that Qadi Ali, who did not know of the antagonism between the Bey and al-Kipsi, had been duped by the latter, and has opened the envelope to give information to a certain Aref Bey who spies on our actions.

Mr. Serra then says that the Imam's messengers say that al-Sayyid Yahya (the Imam) would condescend to the proposals of the Sultan - of leaving him master of the tribes and country peoples probably paying a small tribute and leaving San'a to the Imperial Government - but refuses to take up regular residence in town as he fears reprisals by the Turks and that he would only accept if the proposals were made to him by a new Turkish Commission in Yemen but with the presence of an Italian Commission so that the Sultan respect any pacts that might be established.

Sending of the letter addressed to the Sultan  
Dispatch of January 25, 1908

The letter of the Imam to the Sultan was sent to the Marquis Imperiali so that it would reach its destination but not without an explanation of how the letter had reached us.

Report, No: 111/42,  
February 8, 1908  
of Agent in Cairo

In the meantime the Royal Agent reported that Qadi Ali, with Hussein al-Kipsi and Ahmad al-Kipsi, had been several times to ask him if he had received an answer from Rome in connection with the letters of the Imam to H.M. the King and the Sultan. The Royal Agent, sticking to general topics, drew Ahmad al-Kipsi's attention, to the news published about the negotiations of the Powers in Constantinople on the question of

Macedonia and led him to believe that in view of the various questions of general politics now being thrown up in Constantinople, it was not the right moment, in the interest of the Imam, to insist in the sense requested with the Sultan as he would become needlessly suspicious.

Having then impressed on al-Kipsi the usefulness of returning to the Imam he refused allegations that the Imam had been captured and shot by the Turks but it must be considered that al-Kipsi did not intend giving up easily the fl2 monthly paid by the Royal Government. In other interviews al-Kipsi asked if Italy was disposed to helping the Imam with money in his war against the Sultan, if he needed it or asked for it. But it seems that such an insidious **request** had been suggested to him by Aref Bey and the Royal Agent thought it wise to answer him by saying that if it replied in the affirmative it would be tantamount to making a hostile declaration to Turkey, and which was absurd, as Italy and Turkey were on friendly terms.

Report, February  
8, 1908

In a report on the political service to the Agency in Cairo this is how the Comm. Giacomo de Martino expressed himself referring to al-Kipsi: "In our political actions in Yemen we have mainly used the Kipsis but I hear that they have lost their former importance. As reports from Mr. Serra show, Ahmad Kipsi, a very nice figure of a bedouin, has let himself be taken in by Aref Bey who is considered, and whom I too consider, to be a spy of the Sultan.

I have tried to open the eyes of the Yemeni but he answers, swearing that Aref Bey is his friend and that he would never have betrayed him, but apart from that, although he was ready to comply, he would never have sincerely followed my request to break with Aref Bey and I thought it useless to provoke the disobedience of the Yemeni. Consequently Ahmad al-Kipsi is no longer a secure instrument but for all that, I do not believe it convenient to give him up, in as much as his family seems to retain enough influence in the Yemen.

I will try to get him to leave for the Yemen as soon as we give him an answer, whatever it may be, to the Imam's last letters; but I fear that he refused for the reasons that he certainly runs the risk of being imprisoned by the Turks. It would thus be necessary to know from our Consul in Hodeida the true value of the Kipsi family, in order to decide according to the circumstances if it suits us to continue the monthly subsidy of 12 sterling paid to Ahmad al-Kipsi".

Report No: 162/64  
February, 19,  
1908

On February 19th Ahmad Kipsi brought to the R. Agent a letter addressed to Dr. Insabato which accompanied a letter from the Imam. The Imam recommended firmly to Insabato to give his help to Kipsi, whilst the letter of Kipsi had nothing of interest except that of the peace which took place between Kipsi himself and the interpreter, Mohammad Ali, a peace desired and obtained by the R. Agent.



al-Kipsi, page 20

Telegram No: 490  
of February 22nd.

They cabled in the meantime, requesting the answer to be given to the two representatives sent by the Imam. They, because of the delay, demanded money in order to live, and stating that as soon as an answer was received they would send it with Qadi Ali and Hussein Kipsi, reserving to Ahmad Kipsi leave for another occasion in conformity with the ordinances laid down by the R. Government in the dispatch of February 15th.

Report No: 183/73  
of February 24th,  
1908

In the meantime Kipsi, whilst announcing that there were two horses with the Consulate in Aden sent by his father: one in homage to the King and other for the Head of the R. Agency, passed on two letters to the R. Agent in the first of which he asked for money and in the second, addressed to the King, he asked for an answer to the Imam's letter. The R. Agent passing on these letters added: "in all that refers to Ahmad Kipsi it should be born in mind that he is totally under the influence of the Ottoman secret Agent, Arif Bey."

Telegram No: 524  
of March 2, 1908  
Agent in Cairo

In respect of the Imam's letter the R. Agent was informed that one was delivered to the Sultan and the other to H.M. the King and that whilst the Sultan may have perhaps answered directly, our Sovereign wished for speedy pacification in the Yemen. At the same time he was asked to send the two messengers with this verbal answer and also to be ready to send a third messenger at the first opportunity.



al-Kipsi, page 21

Report No: 224/85  
of March 7, 1908

According to the R. Agent, Kipsi, continuing relations with Arif Bey, had become a passive unconscious pawn,\* and one began to consider the necessity of giving him the sack. He had by now lost all value for us and the 300 francs paid monthly were wasted.

Report No: 252/914  
of March 9th.

Consequently the R. Agent several times pointed out to Kipsi the opportunities of going back to the Yemen with Qadi Ali, saying that the Imam would not view favourably such a long absence by one of his faithful followers.

Kipsi then sent a letter to the R. Agent in which he asked for a written guarantee by the Sublime Porte safeguarding life and liberty for himself and his family.

Report No: 321/116  
of March 25th,  
1908

Qadi Ali, one of the bearers of the Imam's letters, having gone, the state of Kipsi's relations with the R. Agent continued to worsen. Already before his departure a lively dispute had broken out between Qadi Ali and Kipsi; Qadi Ali having accused Kipsi of treachery and of having given himself to Arif Bey. Concerning this the R. Agent expressed himself as follows:-

"This quarrel comes at the right time for us. Since Ahmad Kipsi is no longer worthy of our trust it is good that Qadi Ali who, please note, is the only true emissary of the Imam, informs his Principal of everything."

\* Underlined by the sender

The R. Agent, in view of this, tried even harder to overcome Kipsi's hesitation and persuade him to leave as quickly as possible and further proposed to the Government to either send him away with the necessary funds for himself and his family's travel or suspend his monthly allowance for it had now become necessary to get rid of this troublesome individual no matter how great the financial sacrifice.

Dispatch No: 284  
of April 16th to  
Ambassador in  
Constantinople

At the same time the R. Embassy in Constantinople was informed and asked to take the necessary steps to get a formal assurance of freedom for Kipsi and his family for his return to the homeland and the R. Consulate in Hodeida was written to, requesting as much information as possible about Kipsi and his family.

Telegram No: 137  
of May 2nd, 1908

The R. Ambassador replied advising against acting on Kipsi's behalf because on the one hand, at that time threats of sending out a squadron did not favour informal actions; and on the other, any promises made to us would not guarantee Kipsi's not being imprisoned once he was back in the Yemen. He therefore proposed that it was advisable to only pass on officiously a petition about Kipsi addressed to his sovereign.

Telegram No: 1251  
of May 3rd, 1908  
to R. Agent in  
Cairo

Having had this answer the R. Agent was written to asking him to act in this sense for Kipsi with a view to settling this question once and for all.

Report No: 176/28,  
18 May, from Con.  
Hodeida

In the interim the R. Consul in Hodeida, who had been asked for information on Kipsi, replied saying that Kipsi's father could be classed as being amongst the people who were most listened to and held in greatest consideration by the Zaidite regions and that the son, Ahmad, although having no great influence or reputation with the Zaidis, was reputed to be a shrewd and intelligent man.

Report No: 696/230  
of June 3rd, 1908  
from R. Agent in  
Cairo

Conforming to ministerial instructions the R. Agent in Cairo had the necessary communications made to Kipsi offering him payment of the trip for him and his family plus 40/- sterling to pay off his debts. However Kipsi did not accept the offer very willingly and kept insisting that the R. Government procure him safe conduct from the Sublime Porte. Consequently the R. Agent proposed that his monthly subsidy be suspended with effect July 1st and tried to induce him to take up residence in Aden, and be at the disposal of the R. Consul, "It now being necessary to terminate relations with him given that any eventual inconvenience resulting from the termination of relations with him would certainly be less serious than those arising from their continuation."

Telegram, June  
16th, 1908 to  
R. Agent in Cairo

The solution put forward by the R. Agent was approved by the R. Government -

However, as was foreseeable, Kipsi started to use threats, saying that he would use against us documents and letters which he claimed to possess, and maintaining that the stoppage of his monthly allowance was not authorized by the R. Government, he

al-Kipsi, page 24

sent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a petition for the continuation of the allowance granted him up to now; and in another petition to H.M. The King, expressed the intention of going to Rome if he did not receive an answer to his demands.

Telegram No: 1890  
of July 11th, 1908  
to R. Agent in Cairo  
and Dispatch No: 260

At that point I informed Kipsi that the R. Government approved of the information sent by the R. Agency and of the suspension of the allowance and that his planned trip to Rome was useless because it would not be worth it. At the same time it was advised not to push Kipsi to take up residence in Aden because even there his intrigues could be prepared and arouse the suspicions of the English authorities, and it was suggested that the only solution was repatriation.

Report No: 923/-  
324 of July 29th,  
from R. Agent in  
Cairo and No; 386  
of September 8th

However Kipsi continued to be evasive, using the same threat of compromising documents, until he learned that the Sultan had granted an amnesty to all political refugees. He then declared that he would leave as soon as he was sure of the sincerity of such an amnesty; provided, however, that the R. Government paid for his trip and his debts according to previous promises.

Telegram No: 2884  
of October 24th,  
to R. Agent in  
Cairo

The R. Government, considering that Kipsi's operation had become useless following his misbehavior and that his presence in Cairo might be harmful to our interests, authorized the R. Agent to give him the requested

sum of 95/-sterling.

Report No: 1330/-  
469 of November  
4th, 1908

Kipsi accepted the offer; but fearing that he would pocket the money and use it for the total payment of his debts and thus refuse to leave, we tried to persuade him to accept payment for his trip expenses in Suez at the moment of his boarding the ship. Such dealings having failed, the R. Agent asked the R. Government for instructions.

Telegram No: 3233  
of November 19th  
from Agent in  
Cairo (1908)

In the meantime Kipsi directly requested other sums in petitions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was answered that they could not be granted; and informed the R. Agent in Cairo to make sure that the authorized amounts be effectively used for Kipsi's repatriation; and that, in case of refusal, the agreed donation would definitely be suspended.

Report No: 1402 of  
November 25th, 1908  
from R. Agent in  
Cairo

In conformance with the instructions received the R. Agent agreed with Kipsi that he would leave on December 1st and that 40/-sterling would be given him in Suez by the R. Consular Agent at the time of his departure as he had stated that he did not even have this sum to go to Suez; and he was also paid the other 47/-sterling so that he could settle his debts before leaving.

Letter

From: The Royal Consul General, Hodeida, June 7, 1909

To: H.E., The Ambassador in Constantinople

No: 310/35

Subject: Officers, Officials and Servants of the Court of  
Abdul-Hamid, exiled in Yemen and Hijaz.

I have the honor of informing Your Excellency that on the first instant, the Ottoman ship, "Hagin", arrived at Hodeida with revolutionary soldiers expelled from Constantinople and also 190 personalities belonging to the number of those attached to the court of the ex-Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, all being exiled to Yemen and Hijaz. Among them are Major Generals, Brigadier Generals, officers of inferior rank, officials, and ten eunuchs. One of them, Liva Cazef Pasha, died of cerebral congestion as soon as he arrived in Hodeida. Only 50 of the exiles are destined for Hijaz; the rest will be retained in Yemen and will serve their sentences which are still to be pronounced in Constantinople.

We cannot yet interpret what effect those deportations will have in Yemen and Hijaz on the Arab population. The outward attitude of the people would appear to be one of indifference and skepticism.

Sincerely,

Most respectfully yours,

Royal Consul General

F. Sola

Letter

From: Royal Consul General, Hodeida, June 7, 1909  
 To: H.E., The Ambassador in Constantinople.

No: 313/36

Subject: Arrival at Hodeida of two young officers as secret emissaries of the Committee of Union and Progress.

The freighter "Hagin" arrived on the 1st instant laden with troops and personalities who had been in the attendance of the ex-sultan Abdul-Hamid and exiled to Yemen and Hijaz; there also arrived two young Turkish officers, Hayati Effendi and Shukri Bey. These two had no particular mission on board as concerned the soldiers or the political exiles. When they landed they avoided all connection with the local authorities and above all with the highest ranking and most influential personality in the country, a certain Shuray Pasha, who did his best to contact the above said officers whose attitude made him uneasy considering his ambiguous past; but all his efforts remained fruitless. The interpreter (dragoman) of this consulate had some direct interviews with the officers and with great diligence was able to ascertain that they were secret agents of the Salonika "Committee of Union and Progress". They were sent to Hodeida to investigate the state of affairs here in regards to the new regime. It seems that, based on what information they have been able to obtain during their short stay in Hodeida, their impression as to the general state of affairs in the country is not favorable.

The emissaries of the Young Turks must have gotten their information from a good source as the whole state of the administration in Yemen has not undergone, up to now, any worthy change of notice or praise. Everything continues, as in the past, under the old regime. The essential thing, and the fundamental basis for any sound administration: honesty, integrity and the righteousness of the officials does not seem to have penetrated into the inclination and spirit of the representatives of the new regime who exercise their functions in this province.

No: 313/36, page two

One of the officers mentioned, Hayati Effendi, left on the Italian ship "Po" on the 9th instant; and the latter, Shukri Bey, returned by the same ship "Hagin" on the 6th instant. Both of them were to return to Constantinople and Salonika as soon as possible.

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed)R. Consul General  
F. Sola



Letter

From: Diplomatic Agency of H.M. King of Italy, Cairo,  
 November 30, 1909  
 To: H.E. Sir T. Tittoni, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rome  
 No: 1477/542  
 Subject: Yemen

Dear Sir,

"L'ITALIA ALL' ESTERO" (Italy Abroad) No. 20, October 20 publishes an article by A. Balducci, in which he affirms that the Zaidis of Yemen have strong and important influence in Egypt and that "their aspirations are backed by the high ecclesiastical school", and maintains that a program of political and economical Italian activity would have been of "easy actuation had our Diplomatic Agency in Cairo exercised better its mission and accepted the offers made to it by influential Yemeni chiefs who reside in Egypt."

The premise about the relations of the Zaidis with the Egyptian Arabs is false; as false as is the statement about the activity of this Royal Office.

I have the honor of sending a report about the first point, made by our Royal Interpreter, Sir Crolla.

After accurate inquiries the results show how unfounded is the idea that the Zaidis form a 5th Sunnite community or rite.

In Egypt they are very few, about half a score; it is false that the high ecclesiastical school in Egypt supports them; they are not even admitted to the Muslim University of Al-Azhar. It is not true that the tomb of Sidi Zaid (founder of the sect) is in Cairo; it is in Medina; finally it is not true that the Zaidis are in touch with the Senussi.

The question as to whether the Zaidis are Sunnites (that is the Orthodox Rite which is predominant and official at Constantinople) or Shi'ites (dissident heretics) is of practical significance. As a matter of fact, I have there a report of this Royal Agency, October 7, 1909, No. 302,

in which, contrary to the ministerial despatch of July 1, 1909, No. 135, and some articles of "TIMES", it maintains the thesis that the Yemenis follow the Sunnite doctrine instead of the Shi'ite. This affirmation of the Royal Agency is made, as it is stated in the relation itself, in connection with the entreaty made at that time by the rebel Imam of Yemen to interpose our mediation to the Sultan of Constantinople; it was to make sure that beside the rivalry of temporal power between the contending parties (Imam and Ottoman Government) "there did not exist another one of pronounced religious character".

With the dispatch November 13, 1909, No. 339, the ministry answered that it had considered the content of the report in the action initiated to the Sultan on the subject of the entreaty of intervention addressed to us by the Imam.

I really wanted to investigate in what way this Royal Office could be led into error and the explanation was given to Sir Crolla by Sheikh Elaishe (mentioned in the report of October 7, 1906).

Both Muhammad Ali Elwi Bey and Sheikh Elaishe have now confirmed to Sir Crolla that the Yemenis are Shi'ites and not Sunnites; but the latter added that three years before, he himself and his friends, did their best to make this Royal Agency believe exactly the contrary; that is, that the Yemenis were Sunnites.

They did this because, at that time, they were in favor of an intervention of the Royal Government in Yemen and they had all the interest in showing, as unexisting, any dissidence of a religious nature.

Here is then another proof of the dishonesty of the then official interpreter of this Royal Agency, Muhammad Ali Elwi.

I have not words to thank Your Excellency for having sent me as R. Interpreter, Sir Crolla. Thanks to him I could renounce the distrustful help of that local official.

As far as the activity exercised by this office, I mention that three years ago the Imam of Yemen really asked for the mediation of H.M. the King in his struggle against the Government of Constantinople. After the Royal Embassy offered its good offices to the Sublime Porte, this was courteously but firmly refused by them. The war against the rebels in Yemen was considered as an internal question and closed to foreign interference. I remember that we had to work to dissipate the suspicion caused by this step. I remember too, that the Sublime Porte pointed out that it was a matter of rebels against the religious law.

After such a result, it is more than understandable that the second request for mediation made by the Imam in the following year could not be taken into consideration by the Ministry. This was the result of "the offerings made by influential Zaidi Yemeni chiefs resident in Egypt", to which Mr. A. Balducci is referring. But it is necessary to specify that those chiefs were Sidi Ahmad al-Kipsi and Qadi Ali Shatabi, exactly those who, together with Muhammad Ali Elwi, really cheated the Royal Government.

I sent these gentlemen back to their country after Your Excellency (dispatch February 16, 1908, No. 31) notified his intention "that this Agency should avoid by all means, all connections with individuals who were unsincere, who could endanger our situation, and even worse, as in the case of the above mentioned gentlemen.

From all this it is evident how completely groundless is the remark made about this Royal Office by this journalist. This Ministry will notice the perfect conformity of the thesis supported in 1906 by Muhammad Ali Elwi, Sheikh Elaishe and his companions, and the thesis supported by "ITALIA ALL' ESTERO" (Italy Abroad) about the religious rite of the Yemenis. It does not seem too much to suppose that the article of Mr. A. Balducci was inspired by someone who, at that time, had found a source of profit in the net of intrigue contrived around this Royal Agency. These intrigues, because of the affrontery of the interpreter Muhammad Ali and the dissention caused by his deeds, had become some time later, the table-talk of the Diplomatic Agencies in Cairo.

No. 1447/542, page four

As to the opportunity of exercising a political action in Yemen it is not up to me to decide. But I can affirm that, if the Royal Government decides to exercise its activity in that region, about whose fate we certainly cannot remain indifferent because of its geographical location, it surely will not be from Cairo that the affair can be settled. And this for the double reasons, as I have shown above, that in Egypt there are no serious influential Yemenis; and that, in this country, where the political police are well organized by the English, we shall always be acting rashly under the inevitable control of the British authorities.

Yours most respectfully,

(signed) G. de Martino

Attached to a report from Cairo, November 30, 1909

Copy:

A short account on the Zaidites in connection with the article published in the magazine "L'ITALIA ALL' ESTERO" (Italy Abroad) on the question of Yemen, No. 20, October 20, 1909.

The succession to the Caliphate, left by Muhammad to the choice of his companions, was one of the main causes for the split which has arisen in Islam since its beginning.

The Arab Sunnite Muslim authors do not perfectly agree on the number of the sects, which for one reason or another, separated from the Sunna and which constitute today as many heretical sects. Yet, eight schools of etherodox doctrines are generally known. These ones are subdivided into many other fractions and reach the number of 72 sects, a number which the prophet had foretold in a famous "hadith" condemning them all to damnation.

Among these schools there excels, because of the number of adherents, that of the Shi'ites, subdivided into three great sects: The Zaidieh (or Zaidis), the Ghulat and the Imamieh. This school, among other discords with the Sunnites, rejects the first three Caliphs and acknowledges the fourth, Ali, as first and lawful vicar of Muhammad.

The Zaidieh are subdivided in their turn into three main fractions which are: the Jarudieh, the Sulaimanieh and the Batirieh. The Zaidis are therefore considered by Muslim doctors to be a fraction of the great Shi'ite family. They do not constitute either a congregation, a community or a 5th Sunnite rite as the author of the article erroneously claims. The Muslim orthodoxy recognizes only four Sunnite rites which rule it and constitute it.

Who affirms the existence of a 5th Sunnite rite would be a heretic.

report of November 30, 1909, page two

In Yemen the Zaidis are the majority but do not form the mass of the population: they are far from being spread throughout whole Muslim world! In Egypt they are in very small number. They are just a few scores. In Cairo there are not thirty in all.

The author of the article has evidently fallen into a mistake affirming that the high ecclesiastical Muslim school in Egypt supports the Zaidis.

To prove the contrary it is enough to refer to the fact that the Zaidis are not admitted among the students attending the university of "Al-Azhar". On the contrary they are excluded, as are all the Shi'ites. The three or four Zaidi students who are now enrolled at the RUAK of the Mosque of "Al-Azhar", in order to be admitted, had to declare themselves as members of the Shafite or Hanafite community.

Another mistake into which the author of the article has fallen lies where he affirms that Sidi Zaid is burried in Cairo. Everybody knows that the tomb of Sidi Zaid is in Medina. In Cairo there is a mosque dedicated to his memory (Makan) where they claim that the head of Sidi Zaid is kept as a relic. Finally the author of the article says that the Zaidieh are in touch with the Senussi.

This information is completely new for all those who are in touch with the Senussi.

(signed) L. Crolla

Letter

From: Consulate General of Italy, Hodeida, December 15, 1909  
 To: His Excellency, the Honorable Sir T. Tittoni, Minister  
 of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 661/126

Subject: Political news of the Plateau.

Dear Sir:

In a letter which I have just received from San'a, Sir Caprotti sends me news of some interest regarding the actual political state of the plateau.

I have the honor of sending Your Excellency an extract of said letter from the above gentleman, in which the news is referred.

Sincerely,

(Signed) F. Sola

The Extract of a letter sent by Sir G. Caprotti from San'a to the Royal Consul General of Italy at Hodeida, December 4, 1909

Imam, Turks and Arabs- Who can see really clear in this matter? It seems that between the Imam and the Turks there exists a real entente cordial. (This is probably because of the universal progress which has imposed this fashion.) And indeed the Turks have made their Taksilat (collections) from the borders of the Imamate and even in districts under his government as near as San'a without any incident.

On the other hand, the Imam informed the Vali that even if the Turks should send in one battalion after another from San'a to Hodeida, the railroad will not be built. At the same time I know he continues to recommend to the Muggadem (leaders) and the Sheikhs, who would like to start warfare just to fish in troubled waters, not to make any reprisal and even less so, attacks against the Turks, with whom he is always negotiating for peace and for concessions which will never be granted.



No: 661/126, Extract, page two

It is a fact, however, that at present the Imam would not find the people disposed to rebellion; he could only rely on the tribes in the north, like the Hashid, Du Muhammad, Du Husein, etc., who did not submit to the Turks.

It seems that those from Blad Amdan, bordering the district of San'a, have refused to fully pay the taxes to the Imam. At the insistence of the Imam, they answered: Expel the Turks and we shall pay everything to you.

If we have to believe everything they say in the district of Banu Matar and Anis, there would be several muggadem with 2000 or more armed men ready to stop the advance of the engineers who have to study the tracing of the railroad. This may be true, but it is difficult to obtain exact information.

Everything is reduced then to a question of money: Thalers. When well distributed, and the Arabs interested begin to experience its great utility without working for it, the Imam will not be able to do anything because the parties interested will be the most ardent defenders of the railroad's construction.

It seems sure that the Vali has arranged for himself a transfer to another post on the basis of a medical report.

Two travellers left this morning who had arrived four days ago; really, it is crazy to ride for eight days or even ten days to remain here for just three days. They will probably publish interesting articles and perhaps even an interview with the Imam.

(Signed) G. Caprotti



Letter

From: Italian Ambassador, Constantinople, December 18, 1909.  
 To: His Excellency, Count Guicciardini, Minister of  
 Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 2954/932.

Subject: Railroad Jibana-San'a.

Dear Sir,

The information that your Excellency requested with dispatch No. 29 (Central Div. of Colonial Affairs)\* November 27th, about the participation of Italian capital in the enterprise for the construction of the railroad branch Jibana-San'a was already contained in my report No. 843, dated November 17th, and of which you acknowledged receipt with dispatch No. 831 (Div. III, Sect. II, Pos. 17/46)\* dated November 30th. This dispatch arrived on the same day as the other, No. 29, that is, on the 11th instant.

I avail myself of this occasion to assure Your Excellency that in conformity with the instructions of your dispatch No. 831, I have not failed to give confidential information to the Royal Consul General at Hodeida about the news furnished by Knight-Commander Fernandez concerning Italian participation in the enterprise. I remain,

(Signed) Imperiali

\* Paranthesis by recipient.

Letter

From: Diplomatic Agency, Cairo, December 19, 1909.  
To: His Excellency Count Guicciardini Minister of Foreign  
Affairs, Rome.

No: 1557/574.

Subject: RAILROAD IN YEMEN; Answer to dispatch No. 94,  
November 27, 1909 Centr. Direct. Of Colonial Affairs.

Dear Sir,

According to the instructions contained in the dispatch quoted above, I shall do my best to investigate what is the real situation about the participation of Italian capital in the enterprise of the railroad Hodeida-San'a, although it would be convenient to get news on the subject from Paris, Constantinople and from the "Credito Italiano".

I remember though, that last September in Italy I saw Knight-Commander Fernandez who assured me that Italian capital would contribute (I don't remember in what proportion)\* to the above said enterprise. I have no reasons to suppose something inexact from Knight-Commander Fernandez, the more so because he would not have any interest in doing so.

The fact that the name of Fernandez is unknown to Sir Sola, as it appears from a report annexed to the above said dispatch, does not mean anything because at Constantinople everybody knows that Fernandez is (or at least was, at the time of my stay there)\*\* an eminent personality of high finance.

On examining the data at my disposal, it rather looks to me that there is indeed a sharing of Italian capital in the enterprise, and that the administration and financial direction of the business is in the hands of those who started it, and who, as everybody knows, are French; and that the engineer, De Violini, was not thoroughly informed of the composition of the financial group.

As it is a French initiative, I think that the enterprise will always have a French character in spite of a participation of Italian capital, except in the case of eventual unforeseen changes in the board of directors.

No: 1557/574, page two

But in spite of this, the simple participation of Italian capital may constitute a good advantage as regards a political point of view. Above all the establishment of economic interests there may give value and strength to interests that circumstances may oblige us to protect on that coast of which we cannot disinterest ourselves because of its geographical position.

I have the honor of enclosing a translation of a letter from Hodeida published in the local "Mokattam" about the work of the railroad in question and about the probable attitude of Imam Yahya. With kindest regards,

(Signed) G. De Martino

Letter

Connected with dispatch No. 1557/575, Royal Agency in Cairo, October 19, 1909.

Subject: Railroad in Yemen.

From a letter written to the "MOKATTAM" from Hodeida and published on October 7, No. (?):

The railway commission charged with tracing the railroad between Hodeida and San'a in Yemen continues in its work with diligence and speed.

In its operations on the side of Hodeida it has already reached Cape Bagel and has explored Ras al-Katib which will be the port of Yemen. From this point the railroad will start for Hodeida and from there it will continue for San'a.

They are hopeful that the work of tracing the line will be accomplished within three months. There is some fear, though, that Imam Yahya will oppose the work half-way near Wadi Safwa. Reports coming from that area say that Imam Yahya is preparing to resist. There is no need to fear for the engineers marking out the railroad because they will be escorted by a good number of soldiers.

(Unsigned)

Letter

From: Consulate General, Hodeida, April I, 1910.

To: H.E. Count F. Guicciardini. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 193/26.

Subject: Anglo-French syndicate to study oil-layers in Farsan and an anthracite mine between Mocha and Aden.

Dear Sir,

I had the honor of sending Your Excellency a report on the same date, No. 190/29 about the French engineer, Alexis de Pauliny, who was sent to Yemen by an Anglo-French syndicate to study the construction of a new railroad between Mocha and San'a independently of that of Hodeida-San'a.

He has also been entrusted by the same group of financiers to study the oil-layers in the Island of Farsan to the north of region of Hujariya, between Mocha and Aden, some 50 or 60 kilometers from the sea.

Some years ago, I had written to the Ministry about this coal mine. As engineer de Pauliny told me, they gave him some specimens from the mine and he understood immediately that it was not a matter of coal, but of anthracite, a mineral of little value and for the extraction of which, particularly considering the conditions in Yemen, added the engineer, would not be rewarding enough. The agent for the building of the railroad, Mocha-San'a, and for the exploitation of the oil fields on the Island of Farsan and of the mine of coal or anthracite in Hujariya, is an Ottoman subject from the Island of Candia. He has arrived here together with engineer de Pauliny,

With kindest regards.

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed) F. Sola

P.S. I inform you that I am sending a copy of the present report to the Royal Embassy at Constantinople in this very envelop. I am going to send another copy to the Government of Eritrea.

Letter

From: The Ambassador, Constantinople, April 17, 1910.  
To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister  
of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 744/243.

Subject: Yemen.

Dear Sir,

The news about conditions in Yemen is contradictory; according to Government officials conditions have bettered; according to others they are menacing. The dispatch No. 149/9 sent by the Royal Consul at Hodeida on March 14th, to the Ministry and to this Embassy, gives the explanation for such contradictions.

While Said Pasha, commander of the relief forces in Asir, and Sulaiman Pasha, civil and military governor of the region, thought that they could assure to Sublime Porte that the selfmade Mahdi, al-Sayyid al-Idris, was a devout servant of the Sultan and of the Imperial Government, the Grand Sherif of Mecca is now asking for help against him.

While two regiments, back from Yemen, were most admired during a parade in honor of the King of Serbia, the Minister of Interior was deluding himself in thinking that he would not have to send any more troops there besides the seven battalions which still remain under the command of Sulaiman Pasha. But now, because of recent events, a new expedition may be necessary.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Mayor

Annex to Re. No. 237/35, April 30, 1910

From: Consulate General of His Majesty the King of Italy,  
Hodeida, April 30, 1910  
To: Royal Ambassador, Constantinople.

His Excellency the Governor, Maher Bey, paid me a visit recently and told me that, from an accurate enquiry which was ordered by him in the districts of Jizan and Sabiya, it is clear that the agreement between Said and Sulaiman Pasha and al-Sayyid al-Idris constitute a monstrous hoax detrimental to Turkey. The presumptive Mahdi, without manifesting hostile sentiments towards the Sublime Porte, is developing with marvelous success in invading and expansionist action towards the border of Hijaz and on the vast plateau of Najid. This leaves little doubt as to what his real aim is: to establish a dominion of his own and his absolute independence as soon as possible in the wide regions where he exercises a prevailing influence today undisturbed. Maher Bey has told me also that the alarm launched by the Sherif of Mecca to the Sublime Porte had complete justification as proven by successive events.

Indeed, added His Excellency the Governor, a short time after the cable of the Sherif of Mecca to Talaat Bey, 20,000 armed men of al-Sayyid al-Idris moved from the northern border of Asir and invaded and occupied the territory of Taif (the only, and richly fertile, oasis in the Hijaz), as well as the areas bordering in which extend as far as Lith on the sea coast.

Maher Bey stated of having faithfully informed the Imperial Ministry of the Interior about the results of the mission and of the incursion into the territory of Hijaz by the Lord of Sabiya. This incursion reveals, by itself and with great eloquence, the personality of the great Sheikh and his sentiments towards Turkey. With a justly embittered mind, the Governor of Hodeida ended his account by telling me that Talaat Bey, in spite of the exact and grave news that he, as governor, had cabled him, took the liberty of praising the above mentioned military negotiators with an unconceivable and culpable frivolty.

The general situation regarding the false Mahdi is an increase in the size of the immense North Yemen region which could rightly be called the "Mahdi Region". I may say that

information coming to me from different sources confirm fully my ideas as expressed continually in all the dispatches I have sent to this Royal Embassy regarding the religious, political, and social designs of al-Sayyid al-Idris. This unsympathetic and vulgar son of Islam, drawing from the teachings of the Quran (this museum of immoral, uncivil and criminal principles) clearly means, as many other nefarious correligiousists before him, to abuse the good faith of the social community--anciently saturated with education and intellectual brilliance, but since then precipitated, by virtue of the inauspicious doctrine of the Quraishite, into the gloomiest abysses of worthless and delinquent, human society--in order to uscorp transient dominion, certainly not of long duration without paying heed to the turbulence of public order and to the political-social upheaval that will be derived from it.

(signed) F. Sola



From: Royal Embassy, Constantinople, May 24, 1910  
To: H.E. Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of Foreign  
Affairs, Rome.

No: 1162/402

Subject: Construction of railroads in Yemen.

Dear Sir,

I refer to the account sent to the Ministry by the Royal Consul General in Hodeida on April 1st, concerning the construction of a railroad in Yemen of which a copy was sent by Sir Sola to this Embassy. According to news gathered by Knight-Commander Fernandez, I should like to inform Your Excellency that the representative of the company which has applied for the permission to build the railroad Hodeida - San'a, Mr. de Pauliny, has come to Yemen on his own initiative, without any previous agreement with the Imperial Government.

Knight-Commander Fernandez excludes the possibility that the Sublime Porte may grant the permission of building a competitive line to that of the company.

This is clearly shown by the fact that the Ministry for Public Works pressed him<sup>to</sup> shorten the terms already fixed in the convention, so that the work may be started on September 1st.

Of what I have related, I have already informed the Royal Consul General in Hodeida.

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed) Mayor

Copy of report

From: Royal Diplomatic Agency, Cairo, June 6, 1910

No: 769/272.

I have the honor of sending Your Excellency these two translations: one is a summary of a letter sent by al-Idris of Yemen to a friend of his in Cairo; the other is a summary of two letters sent to al-Idris by the Imam of Yemen, Yahya Hamid al-Din.

Sincerely, etc.

(signed) G. de Martino

Summary of letter

From: Al-Idris, April 10, 1910 (Rabi Anal 1328)  
To: A friend in Cairo

Published: in full in the newspaper Al Ahram of May 24, 1910.

Al-Idris has received the editions of the newspaper Al Ahram and thanks the editors of the paper for having drawn, in the interest of humanity, the attention of the Ottoman Government to the true state of things in Yemen.

Since, if they had listened to the intrigues of those who assisted in a hostile attitude towards al-Idris a general rising would have been provoked among the Arabs from the extreme borders of Yemen as far as Mecca, including Asir, which in Arabia represents the head in comparison to the body.

He cites the campaign of Muhammad Ali as an example, and concludes by saying that if today they tried to stem the Arab revolution by force, this campaign would have been costly and disastrous. The policies of the Ottoman Government, on the other hand, yielding to wise advice, has brought good results. On the contrary, whoever advocated the use of force was an enemy who tricked the Government while pretending that they were its friends. This was the case with a member of Parliament who resigned because the Government had not acted accordingly.

Al-Idris does not understand what that deputy really wanted when peace had already been restored to the country through the good offices of Commander Said Pasha and of the Mutasarrif of Asir, Sulaiman Pasha, and Sheikh Muhammad Tawfik. Did he really want to see people dying? This fellow, as all the other members of Parliament from Yemen and Hijaz, has made the people really suspicious of the Chamber of Deputies.

It is observed, for instance, how al-Ahram has referred to two proud members of Parliament from San'a, who approached the Wali flattering him constantly, while he was the actual cause for the serious revolution in his district which obliged the government to send in troops at heavy expense. The army was then divided into two parts: one under the direct command of Said Pasha, who reestablished peace in the country, introduced reforms, and led the population to recognise the Sultan; and the other was commanded by Rifaat Pasha under the orders of the Wali. It was the Wali who ordered his troops to campaign against the tribes in the district of Hodeida., It developed into a disaster, and it would have culminated in a general uprising were it not for the advice of al-Idris, who told the tribes to remain quiet. You wonder then why those two members of Parliament praised the Wali, Hassan Takhsin Pasha, so much when he was the real cause of that rebellion which ended so soon after he was replaced. But what is most astonishing is that those two deputies were attending to the interests of the Wali more than to their own people, as if the people were not aware of their betrayal.

At that time negotiations were being carried out between al-Idris and the Government through the good offices of Commander Said Pasha. These were a real success and settled everything in the best manner.

Luckily Said Pasha had been contacted by Sheikh Muhammad Tawfik for whom al-Idris holds sentiments of deep affection and gratitude. It was Sheikh Tawfik who informed Said Pasha about the situation and showed him the good intentions of al-Idris towards the Government and the falsehood of the accusations launched against him. It was he who endeavored to induce the high officials of the Ottoman Government to meet personally with al-Idris in

order to remove all misunderstanding. Shortly after, in a locality known as "Jizan", a meeting was held between Said Pasha and al-Idris. This was related by the newspaper in Constantinople and succeeded in showing the true situation.

Said Pasha then went to Kamaran to contact telegraphically the Sublime Porte. He found that, along with the support of the Minister of War and the Grand Vizier, there was the opposition of the Wali of Yemen and the Mutasarrif of Hodeida. The negotiations then came to a standstill until the Ministry fell. During this time Said Pasha continued his enquiries and investigations, aided by the Mutasarrif of Asir, Sulaiman Pasha, the son of Ali Kemali, one of the best officials of the Government.

With the fall of the Ministry, the Wali and Mutasarrif of Hodeida were relieved of their posts and negotiations were resumed. Said Pasha, accompanied by Sulaiman Pasha, Sheikh Muhammad Tawfik and many other personalities met recently with al-Idris. This meeting was marked by perfect agreement. Staff Officer Fuad Bey kept an account of the meeting. It will be published by the newspaper in Constantinople. Sheikh Muhammad Tawfik said that he would have it published in Cairo after a translation into Arabic is ready.

At this point, al-Idris is pleased to acquaint his friend with the text of a letter sent to him by Mutasarrif Sulaiman Pasha. In it he appeals to his religious zeal, to his influence and his good will in order to ensure full protection to the people in matters of material, moral and religious interests.

After this second meeting, Said Pasha, accompanied by his attendants, went to Kamaran to contact the Government of Constantinople by cable. He then returned to al-Idris with the agreement approved.

Al-Idris ends his letter thanking the Lord for having made him triumphant over his enemies such as al-Buni, who is being prosecuted in San'a; such as that merchant from Luhaiya who was in touch with our Government and went in vain to Massawa to seek Italian protection; and such as the Wali, who went to Egypt pretending to be sick, while he really fled from his responsibility.

"And now concludes al-Idris, thanks to divine benevolence, the situation has improved a lot; the Government applied to us in his needs; the Arabs help the Mutasarrif in the installation of the telegraph line from Luhaiya to the chief town of the district by supplying poles and guaranteeing the security of communications. All these things would not have occurred if force had been used against the population.

In a word to end, we even help the Government to collect the taxes and we hope to make thousands and thousands of pounds flow into the Government coffers before the end of this very year."

Al-Idris ends his letter by sending his greetings to Rauf Pasha, to the first secretary, Hassan Bey, to the second secretary, Hikmat Bey, and to His Excellency, Mukhtar Pasha al-Ghazi.

(Signed) Crolla

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Extract from the Arab Cairo newspaper Al Ahram of May 27, 1910.

Some Yemeni notables residing in Egypt had written to al-Idris asking him to maintain good relations with Imam Yahya Hamid ad-Din. In order to show that there has not been any conflict between him and the Imam, al-Idris added to the letter sent to his friend (and published in Al Ahram on May 24, 1910) the copy of two letters addressed to him by the Imam himself.

They were published in full by the paper.

One of these letters is dated Muharram 1327 (January, 1909); the other Regale 1327 (June, 1909).

They contain demonstrations of friendship and of reciprocal esteem as well as gratitude for all that al-Idris had done in the interest of the faith and for the union and harmony of the people of Yemen.

(Signed) Crolla

XVII

From: Royal Embassy, Constantinople Terapia, July 4, 1910.  
To: Marquis Di San G<sup>u</sup>illiano, Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Rome.

No: 1679/581.

Subject: Railroad Jibana - San'a.

Dear Sir,

I continue the subject of the report of this embassy dated December 13, 1909, No. 2954/932, to confirm what my predecessor related on November 17, 1909 in No. 2710/843.

I have the honor of adding that the CREDITO ITALIANO is interested in the construction of the railroad Jibana - San'a. I learned that from a letter of Engineer De Violini sent to me by the Royal Consul General in Hodeida.

According to information sent to me by Knight-Commander Fernandez, the negotiations concerning the business should be proceeding well.

The Company which was granted the concession should have already presented the Imperial Government with the plans of the line in construction. The work should start next October, as it has already been approved by Parliament.

It remains only to solve some difficulties raised by the local authorities who would like to introduce a deviation in the line in order to avoid a piece of funicular-road, which, according to the project, would be constructed in order to overcome a sudden steep slope, thus avoiding helocoidal tunnels which would be too costly.

Knight-Commander Fernandez is not impressed by such difficulties. He hopes to overcome them easily as he stands on firm ground in the negotiations and has already seen the outline of the work which would be modified.

With kindest regards.

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed) Mayor



From: Royal Ambassador, Constantinople, Terapia, July 6, 1910.  
 To: His Excellency, Marquis de San Giuliano. Minister of  
 Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 1723/595.

Dear Sir,

The project of the railroad in Yemen in which the CREDITO ITALIANO has a share of 5% has been presented these days to the Turkish Minister for Public Works, Mr. Haladjian Effendi. He will submit it for the approval of the Council of Ministers at its first meeting. The Great Vizir and the Minister of Interior, Talaat Bey, are favorable to it and without doubt it will be approved. The construction Company will be granted the exploitation of it for the state. It is composed of some credit institutes led by the Banque Francaise pour le Commerce et l'industrie and some financiers among whom is Dr. Del Porto, a French Levantine. He is a relative of some of the magnates (CASTELBOLOGNESI) of the CREDITO ITALIANO, who drew him into business.

It seems sure that the project will be adopted because the original tracing has been properly modified at the suggestion of Muhammad Ali Pasha. According to the original project the railroad from Hodeida was to lead to Manakha and from there directly to San'a.

The second branch presented enormous technical difficulties and involved great construction expenses to as much as 700,000 francs per kilometer.

The new tracing from Manakha would turn to the south towards the region of Ta'iz and then turn to the north in the direction of San'a.

In this way, not only the technical difficulties and the consequent cost will be less, but the line will be more than 200 kilometers longer with a total of 440 kilometers, instead of 208, and will pass through fertile regions and well populated areas.

The branch that I shall call Manakha - Ta'iz - San'a, would cross a country which is refractory and little known to civilisation. It is the same where Benzoni and Burchardt met their deaths. It has to be studied. The work of the first branch Hodeida - Manakha, a little more than 100 kilometers, should begin by next October.

No: 1723/595, page two

Knight-Commander Fernandez has insisted on the building of a telegraph line along the railroad.

There were puerile opposing reasons such as that the telegraph does not work properly in too hot countries. He answered mentioning our lines in Eritrea and Benadir. He has not lost the hope of having his idea adopted.

With kindest regards,

(Signed) Mayor



From: Royal Ambassador, Constantinople, Terapia, October  
27, 1910.  
To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs, Rome.  
No: 3516/1110.  
Subject: Railroad in Yemen.

Dear Sir,

The concession of Hodeida - San'a railroad by a group of capitalists led by the "Banque Francaise pour le Commerce et l'Industrie" is still the object of negotiations between the group itself and the Imperial Ministry of Public Works. But negotiations seem to fail because of a discrepancy between the parties concerned for the price per kilometer which differs 1,000 Turkish pounds between the requesting party and the offering contractors.

The contractors wish to establish an amount of six or seven thousand Turkish pounds. The Ottoman Government offers only five or six thousand. The contractors calculate the expenses from the cost per kilometer of the railroad of Djibouti. That would have been 65,000 francs for a railroad gauge of 1.05 meters.

The construction of the line in Yemen implies additional expenses; for example between the port of Jibana and that of Hodeida the building of a breaker some 17 kilometers long to protect the line from the monsoons is foreseen.

This information was sent to me by Knight-Commander Fernandez. I have no means to ascertaining it for the time being.

With kindest regards,

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed) Mayor

Letter of al-Sayyid al-Idris addressed to the Turkish Foreign Minister, November 27, 1910.

I know that Your Excellency is far-sighted and bent on bettering the Empire. Now, every wise man admits that to bring the affairs of the Yemen into a prosperous condition would be to save the Empire from a great embarrassment. In order to protect their freedom and their honour, the people of the Yemen have sacrificed all they possessed and for years have shed their blood in war and strife. While I was in Egypt I heard of these painful events and unceasing wars, and I wept with emotion. The blood of both parties is pure and faithful. There is no religious law which allows the shedding of the blood of one of the children of Islam, and from the point of view of justice and equity, Islam makes no distinction between Moslems and Jews, Christian and heathen. It is a great duty, incumbent on every Moslem, to defend his rights and his honor. It is our duty to be faithful to our non-Moslem subjects and to those to whom we are bound by treaty, and yet we wrongfully shed the blood of our brothers in the faith. I have repeatedly informed you that I did not come here to quarrel and fight; it is a result of the entreaties and requests of the people that I have taken on myself this heavy burden.

I have repeatedly urged the Ottoman Government to put the provisions of the Sheri law into practice and to give up tyranny and oppression. I have proposed that the work on which I am to be employed should be assigned to me. I do not seek any worldly profit; I simply wanted to be means of good in desiring to save the poor of the Yemen - who, naked, hungry, and helpless, await death - from the hand of oppression and tyranny. In a short space of time I have won the allegiance of the tribes and have entered into treaty and agreement with them. Imam Yahya too offered me, and is still offering, his services. My influence has extended to the Hedjaz and Irak. I desired to do the government a good turn, and intended to rouse the affection of the people towards it. Unfortunately, I have been unable to convince the government of the sincerity of my intentions. My efforts have gone for naught, and I ~~am~~ brought into shame and contempt in the eyes of the tribes. Had it not been for my entreaties and prayers, the Yemen would long ago have been in flames from end to end. Said Pasha and Suleiman

Pasha assured me, both in your name and in that of the Minister of War, that my proposal had been accepted and would be acted upon. You know that it is not right to go back on these assurances and understandings which were made to me officially. I am not afraid of the Turkish Government; I studied the matter from all points and tried to improve our mutual relations. There is no difference between the vali you have sent and the old ones. His maintenances and employment of the old officials show that his sole object is the perpetuation of abuses. Let that suffice. We will admit that formerly the country was under a reign of despotism and self-interest, which had forgotten the idea of justice. Now you are in a regime of justice and constitutionalism. What have you done up to the present? Have you made any attempt to do such good as will make people forget the tyranny and oppression of the Turks? No! Your arrogance is maintained and is even increasing. Although God commands believers to be brothers, you attack the possessions and honor of the Arabs. Your constitution is a meaningless phrase. We have found out who are the instigators; the truth cannot be concealed.

My last proposal, then, is this: The Sheri law must be enforced from Assyr to San'a, and from San'a to Ta'izz and Hodeidah; you must consent to the inspection and control of all the Sheri (religious) and civil judges; all the old officials must be changed; the troops must be stationed in San'a itself and in a few coast towns and forts to be selected, and the military leaders must not interfere in matters touching the civil administration and the collection of taxes; the government taxes must be collected by commissions composed of persons elected by chiefs and notables and paid into the local treasury, and the laws must be modified to allow the balance of the Yemen taxes to be paid into the treasury when the sums due for education and for the Sheri judges and other officials have been paid. The maintenance of peace and order in this country and the punishment of criminals and brigands must be handed over to a police commission composed of men, and the officers shall be men of well-known honor, integrity, and piety. If the employment of non-local men be permitted, the practice must be to employ them in places to be decided upon. I will wait one month from this date for an impartial commission to be sent by the Sublime Porte to decide upon these proposals and other reforms, and will not give ear to my deputies; but I am compelled to tell you, with the greatest regret and sorrow, that if you do not vouchsafe

a reply within that time, I shall go back on all the understandings I have entered into in order to become free in my every act and circumstance.

From: T. T. Parvis, Architectural Engineer, Cairo, January  
9, 1911  
To: His Highness.

Your Highness,

I was unable to wish you goodbye due to your sudden departure. I now send you my greetings and best wishes for the coming new year, including these for the success of that question no less close to my heart than to yours. As soon as I know something on the subject, I will not fail to let you know.

During the last few days that you were here, there arose a certain misunderstanding about which I learned only today and which I wish to clarify at once.

The Consul, for reasons having nothing to do with the school, tries to do me damage whenever he can. Two weeks ago he sent me a letter of a very displeasing tone, asking about the plans for the schools in Cairo which I drew up five years ago. In order not to answer in the same tone, I did not answer at all but asked Sir Di Martino to do it for me. This was the beginning of a new misunderstanding about which I learned today. I hasten to clarify this with the letter itself of which there is only one copy enclosed herewith. As you were here just a few days ago, you may have been wrongly informed so I hasten to explain it to you as I value your opinion highly.

The Ministry must have been informed of the affair concerning Izzet Pasha. This is a case pending in Damascus with an Italian constructor, who, availing himself of his situation in Turkey, would like to extort him. The Pasha, basing his claim on a clause of the contract which submits to arbitration any eventual controversy arising from the contract, would like to submit to the arbitration of the Italian consul in Beirut or Damascus. The constructor, contrary to the spirit of the contract, would like to take the case to court. Now Izzet Pasha has asked for the intervention of the Italian authorities in order to exercise pressure on that fellow and brought the attention of our Government to the problem through Sir Di Martino. But is it really expedient for the Government to intervene? Would it arouse the suspicion of the new regime? On the other hand, is it convenient to disregard it completely?

A solution could be that one offered by Izzet Pasha himself. He would like me to go to Damascus on his account to settle the matter directly with the constructors. In consideration of my professional position, I would not arouse any suspicion.

I would be ready to go, but I would like the Ministry to assure me of the support that I could apply to them only in a case of absolute necessity. I have already written to Marquis Salvago Raggi concerning this subject asking him to bring this to the Ministry's attention.

I hope that you will take an interest in finding the best solution which will not involve the Government and which will not place us on bad terms with Izzet Pasha. We never know what he may become.

With deepest regards,

(Signed) Engineer T. Parvis

P.S. As you are a member of the Embassy of Constantinople, I think that this information may interest you. It was furnished to me today by two cousins of al-Idris, who are on a visit to Cairo and who called on me.

Sulaiman Pasha wanted to advance into the center of Asir and force the hand of al-Idris, but he was prevented from this and so he thought of imprisoning some chiefs of that region. Al-Idris telegraphed to the Government, denouncing the agreement concluded last year with Said Pasha, and saying that he himself was going to free the chiefs. And indeed he marched on Abha; he besieged and captured it imprisoning all the Turkish officials. He then ordered all the water-wells to be garrisoned.

Turkey removed the governor, Sulaiman Pasha. He was replaced with Said Pasha and recalled to give an explanation as to the action taken on his own initiative.

As soon as Said Pasha arrived, all prisoners on both sides were released and everything is quiet. The only fighting was that of the men of Imam Yahya under the command of al-Makhdad against the Turks who really had the worse of it.

Of real great importance is the fact that both Imam Yahya and Ibn al-Saud recognise the authority of al-Idris who was able to subject Imam al-Dahian for Imam Yahia, thus putting an end to their rivalry.



From: Consul General, Hodeida, January 11, 1911.  
 To: His Excellency, Baron E. Mayor des Planches, Royal  
 Ambassador of Italy in Constantinople.

No: 26/2.

Subject: Actual Political Situation in Yemen.

Mr. Ambassador,

I have the honor of informing Your Excellency that the general political state of Yemen is now less satisfactory. In various parts of the Vilayat some rather grave revolts have broken out. These are most probably a prelude to a general revolt backed by all the forces of the Great Zaidi Imam united with those of the self-made Mahdi, al-Sayyid al-Idris.

There were several important engagements. One of these at Wahlan (not far from San'a on the San'a - Dhamar road) between the forces of the Imam and the Turks in order to divert their attention from a convoy transporting machinery for the production of cartridges, and some machine guns. The convoy was coming from the English border near Qa'taba. This Turkish force (two or three battalions) had indeed been sent by the Vali to capture the above said war material.

In the encounter the losses of the rebels, whose number was 1500 men, seems to have been some 60 dead and 130 wounded. They assured though that all the material safely reached its destination: the camp of the Imam.

The losses of the Turks are not known, but the fact that the Imperial troops went back to San'a, having stopped to pursue the rebels without capturing the war material, implies that they must have been rather heavy. This happened some 20 days ago.

I came to know that lately there was another clash between the rebels and the Turkish troops, some four hours' march from Ta'iz or more precisely, al-Kahda. The Turks had the worst of it with rather heavy losses, among whom was a field officer and two others. Also, I have been told that the Vali has sent a reinforcement of ten battalions there and as he had a small number of troops at his disposal, was obliged to recall a battalion which, up to the day prior, had been garrisoning the city.



Information is coming in that Tawila, a large town, defended by a strong Turkish force, lying to the west of San'a (at some four days mountain march) has been besieged by a strong force of the Imam. This force is commanded by a certain Boni Pasha, an ex-Sheikh of the Sheikhs of the Sulel tribe (a tribe in the regions between Hodeida and Luhsiya).

He was loyal to the Government until last year. Then he was exiled to San'a after a political trial; he escaped from San'a some 15 days ago and offered his services to the Imam who made him a commander of one of his detachments.

For some time now, in the evenings, the rebels have taken a liking to shooting into the city of San'a from the surrounding neighborhood. Lately, at Rada, they blew up a large tower (situated about an hour's carriage ride from the towns) by the use of a mine. A few days ago they did the same to a fort after surmounting the city gates.

Today we heard that the mail, which left for San'a on the 7th instant, had to stop at Mafack (between Manakha and Suk al-Kaniss, which is about a 12 hours' walk from the capital.) It stopped because the road, being infested with rebels, was impassable. At Suk al-Kaniss itself (10 hours from the chief town) the garrison is seriously engaged with the rebels whose objective, in correlation with that of the above said detachments, is to cut off all means of communication of the regional capital with the main capital in order to make easy its siege, as had occurred during the insurrection of 1904-1905. The telegraph line with San'a does not work. It has probably been cut by the rebels.

I have from a reliable source that the Vali has asked for strong reinforcements from Constantinople. They say that the Imperial Government is going to send 40 battalions; up to now, however, only 2,000 recruits have arrived during the past 20 days. I doubt that Turkey is actually in a position to send such strong reinforcements to Yemen.

The self-made Mahdi, al-Sayyid al-Idris, seems to consider himself already independent. He continues to arm the tribes which recognize his authority, and these tribes grow in number everyday. In all of the area, which little by little has come under his authority, there is no trace

of Turkish authority. Lately he has threatened to even march further into the south. Because of his alarming actions, the Imperial Government has sent another mission headed by the famous Said Pasha (and with him also Sheikh Tawfik, who was a schoolmate of al-Idris). This mission arrived at al-Qunfidya towards mid-December and then went to Jizan. It had to try to meet al-Idris again in order to discover his real intentions and to lead him, at any cost, towards better counsel. This mission has arrived today at Hodeida to report on its activity to Constantinople; however, a person was referred to me who is close to the secretary of the above mentioned Pasha. He told me that al-Idris did not want to see the members of the mission. He refused to go himself to Jizan nor would he receive the mission at his residence at Sabiya.

From new reports the alliance of al-Sayyid al-Idris with the great Zaidi Imam (Yahya), for a common action in order to over-throw the Turkish yoke once and for all, is already a fact.

The propoganda made by Sherif Pasha, leader of the radical Turks in Paris, and that of the "Young Arabs" in Cairo, seems to have gained many adherents in this region; and if the Ottoman Government continues to delay in taking serious measures by sending a strong contingent of troops, these Arab provinces can easily escape from its domination; but to repeat, I don't know if the Sublime Porte is in any position to send the necessary reinforcements.

Because of the inexperience of the Vali (who is also the commander-in-chief of the troops) and because of the small number of forces at his disposal, thus being ineffectual even a few hours' march from Hodeida, the tribe of Zaraniq is perennially rebellious. They collect tolls on all goods passing through Zabid and two months ago cut the telegraph line between Hodeida and Sheikh Said (Bab al Mandab).

Lately, there has arrived here, as a guest of the British vice-consul, a certain Mr. Wavell, Scottish, who was, and still may be, an officer of the English army. He was in the campaign of Transvaal and lately was with the marines abroad the ships stopping arms smuggling in the Persian Gulf. He professes himself to be a Muslim, going by the name of Hajj Ali, and as such he was introduced to the local authorities by the English vice-consul himself on the occasion of one of the last official parties.

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Through the vice-consul he requested permission to go to San'a but this was refused by the Wali. He then left for Aden with the above mentioned English official. When he arrived in Hodeida, together with the same official, he secretly left for the interior and has now been in San'a for a number of days. He is amply accredited to a business firm. Moreover, Sir Caprotti tells me that he (Wavell) has astronomical and geodetic instruments, and that he probably has, along with everything else, a mission to trace a road between San'a and Mecca, where he says, he went on a pilgrimage two years ago.

Yet, comparing the information I have received these days about the clash between the rebels and the Turkish troops (because of the introduction of war material supplied without a doubt from Aden, the use of which is still certainly unknown to the Arabs), and then Wavell's trip to San'a disguised as a Muslim, I am inclined to believe that the two facts are linked together, and that the English Government may not be completely out of it. Wavell may very well be an English secret agent placed at the disposal of the Imam as an instructor.

Most respectfully yours,

(Signed) F. Sola.

XXIII

From: Consul General, Hodeida, January 16, 1911.  
To: His Excellency Baron E. Mayor des Planches,  
Royal Ambassador of Italy in Constantinople.

No: 33/3.

Subject: Relations of the Government of Aden with the Zaidi  
Imam; Political Situation in Yemen; Situation in  
Asir in relation to "Mahdism".

Mr. Ambassador,

I refer to dispatch No. 26/2 that I had the honor of sending to Your Excellency on January 11th, and especially to the part of it which relates to the journey to San'a of Mr. Wavell or the relations which most probably run between the English Government and Zaidi Imam.

I must add today the news gathered from a really reliable source and which seems to me worthy of note. Indeed, I am assured that within 40 days a messenger of the Government of Aden will leave for Hodeida and from here he will go into the interior carrying letters for the Imam, who will then give him the answers, for the above said Government. On the other hand, the suspicion grows stronger and stronger that Wavell must have gone to the Imam as an instructor for the use of the artillery which the Imam has had in his possession since 1905 when he captured Turkish cannons in the fall of San'a.

The general political condition is deteriorating day by day. The Arab insurrection movement against the administration of Yemen spreads more and more.

San'a is in a precarious position and the rebels seek to isolate it completely by cutting off all means of communication between it and the other parts of the province.

The telegraph line has been cut everywhere and the civil and military authorities of Hodeida, in order to communicate with the Wali, were obliged to send a gunboat to Mocha in an attempt to have their correspondence reach the capital through the use of trusted couriers.

Today news spread that also San'a has been attacked by the Imam's followers; they say that the mail which left here on the 7th instant succeeded in reaching San'a on the 14th. This has not been confirmed.

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The major cause of this serious danger into which this province is going to fall must be attributed to the inexperience and the unmannerly folly of the actual Wali who was sent to govern the harshest, and most probably, the most important province of the Empire by (that idiot and fatal being to his country who is) Talaat Bey, the little scrupulous poor telegraph employee, presently the Imperial Minister of the Interior.

Confirmed is the news that is spread throughout the country that the Sublime Porte wants to send 36 battalions here to force the country into submission. They also say that seven of these battalions are already en-route from Salonika. They say also that a cruiser, "Fatih Bilad" along with four other gunboats of the same type as the two already serving along the coasts of Yemen and Hijaz will be sent from Constantinople.

The actual political state of Asir is no less critical than Yemen. Abha, its capital, situated amid the mountains, has been severely besieged for a long time by the followers of the self-proclaimed Mahdi. They absolutely do not recognize the Imperial authorities and do not suffer any interference by them in the vast zone from Luhaiya to the boarders of Hijaz and thus find themselves almost under the control of the Mahdi empire.

As I had to relate in the preceding dispatch to Your Excellency, General Said Pasha, who besides the special mission entrusted to him by the Sublime Porte, was made the civil and military governor in Asir, could not advance a single step into the country as al-Sayyid al-Idris refused to have any contact with the envoy of the Sultan.

I have been assured that the self-made Mahdi has accompanied his refusal with words and estimates less than respectful about the Imperial Government and Said Pasha himself - the same one who last year had to deal diplomatically with al-Idris for the pacification of the country. Together with the first secretary and the chief accountant of the governorship of Abha, whom he had brought with him from Constantinople, Said Pasha was forced to return to Hodeida. He telegraphed immediately to the Sublime Porte (sending the cable with the gunboat which had gone to Mocha) explaining the results of his mission and expressed the opinion that in order to reach his post at Abha and subject Asir and the regions under the domination of the self-made Mahdi, he would need at least 25,000 men - apart from those needed in Yemen. Otherwise, nothing could be done.

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The envoy of the Sultan, so I am told, has not yet received an answer from the Sublime Porte.

Sincerely,

(Signed) F. Sola

From: T.T. Parvis, Cairo, January 20, 1911

Subject: Note on the Senussi

These days, a Senussi from a Zawia near Bengazi wrote that in that region and at Tripoli a kind of pass-word has spread to oppose the Italians and to favor the Germans, and that even the Turkish authorities are doing so. He asks: isn't Italy more friendly to our community? (congregation).

The local German Agency, contrary to ours, seems to be developing action in favor of the Senussi.

It sent to al-Ashar for Sheikh Muhammad Osman, the most influential man of the Ruak of Bornu, and told him that Germany would like two ulemas from Bornu who knew that language beside Arabic in order to make them judges in German Bornu and to have them as mediators with the Senussi with whom they want good relations.

The Agency stated that Germany is a friend of the Muslims and of the Senussi and that she is ready to help them whenever she can. It declared that Baron Oppenheim would come to Cairo at the beginning of this month while another Baron who would remain there to enter into negotiations while the former would go to Baghdad. Sheikh Muhammad declined to give an answer. He asked us if this action is prejudicial to the Senussi.

He assured me of keeping us informed on everything at the right time and that he would not take any decision without our advice.



From: T. T. Parvis, Architectural Engineer, Cairo, January  
20, 1911

Subject: Note on the Events in Arabia

From a letter which has arrived from Sabha to a resident of Cairo, I had the confirmation of what I had already known. That is: Sulaiman Pasha wanted to penetrate into Asir; al-Idris gave him to understand that it would be contrary to the agreement signed last year with Said Pasha. In spite of this Sulaiman Pasha entered Asir and imprisoned some chiefs. Al-Idris telegraphed the Turkish Government declaring himself free from the agreement concluded the year before and threatened to intervene with arms if the chiefs were not set free at once. Turkey answered by promising to send Said Pasha again and to recall Sulaiman to answer for what he had done on his own initiative. In the meantime, al-Idris had the work on the telegraph line, al-Qunfidha Mecca, suspended and ordered all the tribes dependent on him to be ready to defend themselves and to protect the wells.

From another source I came to know of an armed clash between the Turks and the Zaraniq, marauding tribes between the cities of Hodeida and San'a. They were driven off after leaving 180 men on the ground and killing 100 Turks.

Similarly I was informed of another clash near Ta'iz by a letter from al-Makdad writes that as he was holding a very good position his losses were insignificant in proportion to those of the Turks. The Turks had 200 dead and about 400 wounded. They were forced to withdraw to Ta'iz while al-Makdad pursued them despite the Imam's order to retreat to San'a because of negotiations between al-Idris and Said Pasha, who had arrived from Turkey to replace Sulaiman Pasha.

The Turks do not mention the second incident. They seem to confuse it willfully with the first one. This makes me think that the negotiations between al-Idris and Said Pasha have failed.

A cable says that San'a has been taken by the Arabs and that the Turkish officials have been made prisoners.



Instead of San'a, the capital of Yemen, it is probably Abha, the capital of Asir, where Sulaiman Pasha is with all the other Turkish officials. Indeed they seem to be the prisoners of al-Idris at Abha, a town not far from Sabya, and the main headquarters of al-Idris. Imam Yahya marches on San'a, while Abu al-Saud is pointing north. The bedouins dependent on him attacked Bassura.

Evidently it is a general movement of the Arabs against the Turks. It seems that there will be shortly a similar one in Tripolitania, sponsored by the Sanussi, who are in continual correspondence also; because I know that there are, in certain points of Egypt, couriers and very swift camels, always ready to do this service.

Several months ago I had asked al-Idris if he had thought of preventing an eventual massacre of Europeans along the coast. This would have provided a pretext for European intervention. He answered that he had provided for the security of the lives and goods of all the Christians, adding that the struggle was against the Turks and not against the Christians or Europeans. They will be respected and protected everywhere.

A very high personality who was in the Turkish Government did not conceal the gravity of the situation pointing out that, different to what had occurred earlier, the solidarity of the Arabs is now general. This constitutes a considerable force; on the other hand, Turkey is rather weak and troubled by internal struggles as well as in constant danger of war with her neighbors. He added that at least one month and a half are needed before Turkey could send 20,000 men and that such a force is far from being sufficient for the task. It is expected that Turkey will have to yield to the Arab's demands.

The Arabs had been ordered to deliver all their arms and they did not do so; they were ordered to accept Turkish judicial officials and these were not accepted; they were ordered to allow garrisons in Asir and other regions and they refused to let them pass. Even the taxes (Zaka) in Asir are collected by al-Idris who should pass them over to Turkey; in a word, this is all a methodical

action to obtain complete independence from the Ottoman Government.

Even from a religious point of view the Caliphate of Muhammad<sup>2</sup> is not completely recognized yet in many regions they still mention Abdul-Hamid in the prayers. In general, they think of al-Idris as the probable caliph of tomorrow. Many Muslims really think that great events are in store, and that al-Idris, after being victorious in Yemen and in Asir will pass to Medina and then over to Palestine, and then return to establish himself permanently in Mecca - the seat of the new Caliphate.

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Hamed Bey Abu-Sultan, the bedouin chief residing in Cairo who owns a lot of land around Ismailieh, told me that two months ago an English mission of about 20 persons was at Aqaba to trace the Turkish-Egyptian border. Abu-Sultan maintained that they prepared a line of defense against an invasion from that side.

From: Italian Ambassador, Constantinople, January 20, 1911.  
 To: His Excellency, Marquis San Giuliano, Minister of  
 Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 239/68

Subject: Arabia.

Dear Sir,

The day before yesterday I telegraphed to Your Excellency in No. 41, that the political conditions in Yemen were worsening and 30 battalions were sent there.

A cable received today from Aden says that al-Sayyid al-Idris and Imam Yahya have declared war on the Turks. An Ottoman general was saying yesterday evening to our military attach that they were not too afraid of the insurrection in Asir as much as that in Yemen. They hope, though, to overcome both with the use of force and with promises of autonomy.

Such promises had already been made during the Grand Vizirate of Hilmi Pasha, when the ex-Vizir Farid Pasha was the minister of the interior and there was a common accord between the two statesmen. But the promises were not kept and this, together with other mistakes, is one of the causes for the present situation.

The same general said that in order to be effective, the expedition being organized should be preceded by "Turkish pounds" and "accompanied by railroad cars." The railroad is beyond reality, but the "Turkish pounds" can be found.

In the meantime, even though there is a scarcity of soldiers, unless they want to strip regions and borders which are threatening revolt, they have managed to put together three divisions; one is destined for Asir; the other two, for Yemen. Each division is composed of three regiments, with two machine-gun companies, some mountain batteries, some squadrons, and some Corps of Engineers detachments equipped with heliographs. Every regiment is composed of three battalions with some additional battalions of "Redifs" from Anatolia (Konia) and Smyrna, the total number being therefore 30 battalions. Each division is furnished by one of the three first Ordu, with the addition in each one of them of a battalion of "Redifs."

Sincerely,

(Signed) Mayor

XXVII

From: Diplomatic Agency, Cairo, January 20, 1911.  
To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 179/58.

Classification: Confidential.

Subject: Insurrection in Yemen.

Dear Sir,

There are many who say that Izzet Pasha al-Abd, the old omnipotent secretary of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, who is now residing here, is not a stranger to the events in Hawran and Yemen. It would be difficult to prove that Izzet Pasha is plotting with the Arab rebels, but it seems likely. It is certain that Izzet Pasha and the Khedive are in close contact. In the past dispatch, I have related how the Khedive had made recommendation to me concerning the Izzet-Denti dispute.

Yesterday I had an audience with H.H. and again he warmly recommended that I do my best in favour of that "poor Izzet". During the conversation he told me that during these days he had seen certain relatives of al-Idris (the famous rebel chief of Yemen) who have returned to Egypt. They praised the treatment they had received at Massawa where they were given a warm welcome and easy terms for customs. And H.H. had words of great praise for al-Idris and for his capabilities. From this we can infer that the Khedive happens to be in a relationship with al-Idris.

In former dispatches (particularly with dispatch No. 1499/533 dated December 7, 1909 on the voyage of the Khedive to Mecca)\* I explained the tendency and the aspirations of H.H. for the political future of the Arab race. On the other hand, the Khedive does not conceal his dislike for the Young Turks, who are now trying to get in touch (as I have already related)\*\* with the Egyptian Nationalists. Considering all this, I would not exclude the possibility that the Khedive and Izzet Pasha may be plotting, in an oriental way, with the rebels in Hawran and Yemen.

Without a doubt the English know everything.

Yesterday I met Izzet Pasha al-Abd, whom I have known for several years. I asked him what his opinion was concerning the situation in Arabia. Izzet, who knows those regions and peoples better than anyone else, told me that the gravity of the situation depends on the probability of an agreement between Imam Yahya and al-Idris. He said that if the two got together the position of the Turks would become really serious. At the time of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, he added, "we tried every means to divide them, and in this we succeeded." The newspapers state that the rebels are before Hodeida and if the Imam captures Hodeida, continued Izzet, it is not so sure that the Turks will be able to land there as the Imam has the cannons that he captured two years ago at San'a. The Turkish forces, counting those that are on the spot, and those that are going to be sent, will amount to 50,000 men. But this number is entirely insufficient if it is to be divided into two expeditions, one against al-Idris and the other against Yahya. In case they wanted to reinforce the army, they would employ detachments of "redifs"\*\*\* who would be less adaptable for such a campaign. Yemen, concluded Izzet Pasha, was rightly called the cemetery of the Turkish armies.

I had the impression that Izzet Pasha knew something more about the possible agreement between the Imam and al-Idris, and it is natural to think that his efforts were aimed at this result. On the other hand, Farid Pasha, the ex-Grand Vizir, with whom I had an interview -- which forms the object of a separate dispatch--told me that he does not think that al-Idris and Imam Yahya could come to an agreement because they are divided by quarrels of a religious character.

Sincerely,

(Signed) G. de Martino

\* This was either lined out or underlined by recipient Ministry.

\*\* Same as \*.

\*\*\* Underlined.

XXVIII

From: Diplomatic Agency, Cairo, February 6, 1911.  
To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 221/74.

Classification: Confidential.

Subject: Engineer T. Parvis and Muhammad Ali Elwi.

Dear Sir,

I have the honor of acknowledging receipt of dispatch No. 9, dated January 21st (General Secretariat), and I will be grateful to Your Excellency if you would send me the answer of Sir Bernabei to the assertions of Engineer Parvis for my information. Engineer Parvis came to see me some days ago about the famous Denti-Izzet Pasha affair. I gave him the proper communications according to dispatch No. 3, January 11, Division 7, Section 1 (I answer to that dispatch with my No. 218/73, of today).

Engineer Parvis, when talking to me, takes all the precautions to dissimulate his hostility to my office and to my orders. He told me that he is actively working to arrange that al-Idris and Imam Yahya ask for the mediation of H.M. King of Italy in the war that they have conducted against the Ottoman Government.

Along this line he had someone write to al-Idris. He does not think that both the King of Italy and the Ottoman Government will refuse, but he considers that the simple request of mediation constitutes a great advantage for Italy.

In the course of my interview I learned that Engineer Parvis frequently visits the house of Izzet Pasha al-Abd and he did not exclude the fact that the latter is connected with the events in Yemen. I do not exclude that the proposal of Engineer Parvis may be the result of a suggestion of Izzet Pasha himself.

As I do not know with exactness the course of events in Yemen, the Italo-Turkish incidents at Hodeida, and our state of relations with the Sublime Porte, I abstain from expressing my opinion about the activity of Engineer Parvis to which I was, and am, completely an outsider. Yet, I



think that the Sublime Porte will consider with hostility the eventual demand of mediation and any activity of ours in that direction. I remember that in 1905-6 while I was at Constantinople Imam Yahya, encouraged by some Yemeni friends of Muhammad Ali Elwi, asked for the mediation of the King of Italy. Sultan Abdul-Hamid responded with resentment to the approaches made by the Royal Embassy, pointing out that rebels in Yemen were also religious rebels because they did not recognize the authority of the Sultan, who had been pricked on the most sensitive point of his susceptibilities.

Although the Young Turks have they themselves brought up the religious quarrel which divides the rebels of Yemen (as it appears in the \*Jeune Turc of Constantinople, No. 20, January 24, and I take the liberty to point it out to Your Excellency) from the new regime, the religious controversy might not have the same importance. It might even be expedient for the Royal Government, under certain circumstances, in the guise of an indirect reprisal, to favor or provoke a request for mediation on the part of the Yemenis. This is not for me to judge. But, if by supposition, such were the intentions of the Royal Government, I take the liberty to express a subordinate opinion that Muhammad Ali Elwi and Parvis are not the most qualified instruments for it.

I would rather believe that an eventual initiative in that direction should be entrusted to the prudent and intelligent initiative of Marquis Salvago Raggi, who would have more than one occasion to exercise a profitable activity without fear of any untimely involvement, considering the frequent relations of the Yemenis with Massawa.

On the other hand, the activities of Muhammad Ali Elwi and Parvis are not free from inconvenience as far as secrecy is concerned and have always an official or officious appearance because of the position of Muhammad Ali as honorary interpreter of the Royal Agency. This will probably be exploited by others against us, even to simply ascertain the real attitude of the Royal Government.

I remember that in a recent interview that I had with the Khedive, H.H. asked me: "What is your interpreter, Muhammad Ali doing?" I answered: "Je l'ai mis de cote parce qu'il me donnait trop de tracas." (I have put him aside because he caused me too much trouble.) H.H. replied: "Vous l'avez mis

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de cote, tout-a-fait tout-a-fait?" (Have you put him aside completely?) Your Excellency will recall that last spring the Khedive, on the subject of the Sanussi, told me to be on guard for Muhammad Ali and that "he could have placed me in serious embarrassment". And now, thinking about the relationship that exists between the Khedive and Izzet Pasha, as I have related in other dispatches, I ask myself if the recent inquiry of the Khedive was not motivated by this last move of Muhammad Ali and Parvis. And if such be the case, we need no further proof of the little prudence of these individuals.

Anyway, what Parvis has told me deserves to be considered by the Ministry; also because this countryman of ours has informed me that Count Aldobrandini Malvezzi, who, as we know, is in contact with Dr. Insabato, of whose profession he is unaware, is writing an article on the political situation of Yemen for the Nuova Antologia.

Sincerely,

(Signed) De Martino

\* my underlining.



Telegram

From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, February 11, 1911.  
To: Italian Embassy, Constantinople.

No: 525.

"Novol Vremia" publishes some cables according to which the Turkish press accuses us of inciting and helping the Arab insurrection in Yemen. As Your Excellency knows, this is false, and we do not wish anything else but the peace of that country. We are ready to do the utmost to second the work of pacification of this Government, which should not allow anybody to excite Turkish public opinion unjustly against us in this manner. I leave it to Your Excellency to judge the best time to mention this to Rifaat al-Hakki.

(Signed) San Giuliano.

From: Consulate General of H.M. The King of Italy, Hodeida,  
March 6, 1911.

To: His Excellency, Baron E. Mayor des Planches, Royal  
Ambassador at Constantinople.

No: 94/6.

Subject: Recent Political Situation in Yemen; Arrival of  
Troops; Military Operations.

Mister Ambassador,

Continuing the subject of my dispatches Nos. 26/2 and 32/3 of January 11 and 16, I have the honor of informing Your Excellency that the general political situation in country is still unchanged.

In the various parts of the province, the uprising is always sustained with a fervor by the Arab rebels and Turkish authority is practically nominal and limited to a few towns along the coast.

In the actual insurrectional movement in Yemen, there is something more than the usual uprisings of the Arabs against the Turkish Government. It is beneficial to observe a movement with a solid basis, connected and premeditated strictly with the Pan-Arab idea which has been budding for several years throughout all the regions of the peninsula until entering this year into a final phase of action. Egypt has been the centre of this activity under the benevolent shield of the Khedivial House and of the constellation which has been formed around Izzet Pasha, the ex-second secretary of Abdul-Hamid. Indeed, I heard from a reliable source that in the present Pan-Arab movement there is also the idea, advocated by the leading men of the nation, to proclaim the decadance of the Sultan of Constantinople from the Muhammadan Caliphate and assign the supreme dignity either to the Khedive of Egypt who would be proclaimed King of Arabs, or instead to the Grand Sherif of Mecca. The Zaidi Imam Yahya, as well as his ally, al-Sayyid al-Idris, the self-proclaimed Mahdi, also take a very active part in this nationalistic cause.

In Asir the city of Abha continues to be besieged and for the time being the Ottoman Government, totally absorbed by the necessity of reoccupying the plateau of Yemen, up to now is unable to prepare an expeditionary force able to liberate the capital of the said province. Meanwhile, I am

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told that al-Sayyid al-Idris has considered fortifying some strategic positions of this region; they speak of a fortress built on Jabal Nadir (a mountain in the region of Midi).

Up to today, only 10,000 men perfectly equipped, of the expeditionary force destined for Yemen, have arrived; to this contingent we must add 2500 recruits who arrived in December and who are now more or less trained. The troops are concentrated at Ubal. Last week four battalions, detached from them, succeeded in entering Manakha by entering along a very difficult road spreading the siege along the part near the Hodeida road. For two or three days goods could be sent to and from Manakha.

Unfortunately among the troops, first here in Hodeida and also at Manakha, cholera has claimed many victims, and certainly this factor is becoming more and more serious and could have some really bad effects on the moral of the troops.

The Commander-in-chief of the operational forces, Izzet Pasha, arrived some days ago on the destroyer "Hamidie". This war-ship is still in the bay and has been joined by the destroyer "Peiki Sheuket". Certainly this display of naval strength, united with the perfectly equipped troops who have arrived, did not fail to produce a certain effect in the country.

Anyway, before continuing on the Manakha-San'a road, they will wait for the remaining battalions to bring them up to full strength.

In the south of Yemen, in the region of Ta'iz, there is no lack of troubles. The Qaimaqam of Hujjeria, a certain Zia Bey, was assassinated and different places have been occupied by the rebels sent there by the Imam; for instance Jabal Badan, Yarim and Dhamar.

Very interesting news has come to me from Mocha, the source being the Qaimaqam of the city himself. He was entrusted by the Wali to inquire and report on a landing at Ras al-Aara on December 23, of 20 English or Prussian workers sent to the Imam with ammunition and machinery. The main objective is to repair cannons and rifles and to produce

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ammunition at the Imam's headquarters. It seems that later other landings have occurred in the same locality, with arms and mountain cannons destined for the Imam. It seems that he has now received them.

While the Imam has found a new place to supply himself with arms, al-Idris seems to receive large quantities of them from al-Gaz and even from Midi.

The general plan of the expedition to capture San'a encompasses the march of three columns, one through Manakha, another through Ta'zi (and indeed 1300 men from those which landed here were shipped to Mocha whence they were sent to Ta'iz) and a third column via Hajjia-Hajjur. Every column should be composed of nine battalions of Nizames and four of Redifs.\*

Nothing was heard of the famous Mr. Wavell after his arrival at San'a a few days before the hostilities broke out; persistent rumors here in the city have it that after staying a few days in San'a he left there to go directly to the Imam's camp.

In Turkish circles a certain resentment is not hidden against England for her interference in the Yemen question in the favor of both the Imam and al-Idris.

Sincerely,

(Signed) F. Sola

\* my underlining.

From: Consul General, Hodeida, March 6, 1911.  
 To: His Excellency, Baron Mayor des Plaches, Ambassador  
 of Italy, Constantinople.

No: 98/7.

Subject: Railroad in Yemen. Start of Operations.

Dear Sir,

Referring to my previous dispatches on the subject, I have the honor of informing Your Excellency that the Ottoman Government has at last decided to give the concession of the construction of the railroad between Hodeida and San'a to a well known French company.

In this way the enterprise has entered into its active phase and the engineers of the Board of Works have already arrived here 15 days ago. Their chief is a countryman of ours, Engineer De Violini.

The works are divided into 2 sections: the plain section, and the mountain section.

The execution of the first has been entrusted to the division of engineer De Violini, the second one, that the mountains, is under the direction of the French engineer, Mr. Nenneyton. The latter, though, has to study a new tracing following the region south of Hodeida (Hodeida, Beit al-Faqih, Zabid and Ta'iz) to arrive at San'a through Yemir - Dhamar in the mountains. The tracing has the advantage over the first (Hujjeila, Wadi Sahan and San'a) to cross very fertile regions, which for the importance of their commerce, will compensate for the expenses, besides avoiding difficulties of construction presented by the first project.

As soon as Izzet Pasha, Commander-in-Chief of the actual military expedition in Yemen, arrived at Hodeida, the works were immediately inaugurated. The consul was invited to the solemn ceremony and was given the same honors as to the above mentioned general, together with whom he had to cut the soil.

With kindest regards,

(Signed) Sola

From: Ambassador, Constantinople, March 16, 1911.  
To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 1230/328.

Subject: Yemen.

Dear Sirs,

The English Embassy is the best informed about what is happening in Yemen and Asir. The English Military Attache is informed of all arrivals of troops and ammunition there, and of all troop movements and so on. He informs our, and other, military attaches on the progress of the campaign there. Therefore the information gathered from this source has a special authority among the contradictory reports which are spread concerning the campaign.

The sending of troops is extremely slow "like drop by drop", according to another military attache; this is not because of any lack of transport ships, but rather because of the reluctance of the officers and soldiers to leave for Arabia. For fear of mutinies, whose effect would be most pernicious to the present enthusiasm for the reorganisation of the army and its progress achieved under all respects, and even in discipline, the departures are delayed. The Minister of War personally visits the barracks. They use all means of persuasion but with little effect.

Some days ago there were rumors that eight soldiers of one batallion were executed at Scutari, in front of Constantinople, because at departure time the battalion refused to leave. Truly, no one knows if there were executions, but six or eight soldiers have disappeared.

Transportation represents an enormous cost for the Imperial Government. Some time ago fabulous sums were mentioned. As the Government was caught unawares, without ships and coal, it has had to undergo all kinds of oppressive levies.

Sir Gerald Lowther told me of a transport ship which cost 15,000 Turkish pounds, while its journey with cargo from Constantinople to Hodeida would barely cost 10,000 pounds.

No: 1230/328, page two

In Yemen, however, things do not seem to be as bad as is generally believed. Naturally we cannot put too much faith in the reports derived from Ottoman cables as they are either highly altered or fabricated. And more, people think it proper to believe the exact opposite of the reports.

It happens, however, that from among the other sources, the English Consul at Hodeida recedes from his former pessimism and admits that, in the long run, the Turks may overcome the Arabs either by means of arms, money, honors or promises of more local autonomy. The Ministry of Interior has set up a special Commission to study this question of local autonomy. In the Turk's favor is the absence of the Arab Chiefs; according to what my English colleague has been led to believe, neither Imam Yahya nor al-Sayyid al-Idris would be found fighting with the tribes combating the Turks. The question is whether they are unconvinced of the outcome or perhaps have deserted the cause. In any case, while they are absent, the war or guerilla-war cannot but lose its impetus.

Cholera does not caused such terrible slaughter; it is mild. The dead could not be much over 300.

The day before yesterday Mahmud Shefket said that within two months the campaign will be over.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Mayor



XXXXIII

From: Consul General, Hodeida, April 19, 1911.  
To: His Excellency, Baron E. Mayor des Plaches, Royal  
Ambassador of Italy, Constantinople.

No: 134/3.

Subject: Political Situation in Yemen and Asir; Military  
Expedition.

Mr. Ambassador,

I refer to previous dispatches No. 26/2 and 93/8 dated respectively January 11th, 16th and March 6th sent to Your Excellency about the above subject.

The advance of the expeditionary force under the command of Izzet Pasha ended around the 7th instant with the liberation of San'a from the siege of the Imam's army.

The resistance met from Manakha to "Sinan Pasha" (eight hours from the capital) was not too heavy on the Arab side. They seem to have limited it to disturbing the wings of the force with night and surprise attacks.

I have been assured that the losses of the Turks are rather heavy because, besides combat losses, the military forces were struck by cholera which spread among the troops.

On the other hand, the Turkish army was met with strong resistance along the last stretch of road between "Sinan Pasha" and San'a; it seems that along this stretch the definite advance had to be subordinated to a preventive reoccupation of some strategic points which were in the rebels' hands.

In various skirmishes the Turks lost four cannons and two machine-guns. There was then a decisive battle which permitted the general advance and the entry into San'a by the expeditionary force aided by a concomitant sally of the group besieged in San'a under the command of Muhammad Ali Pasha.

The number of losses on both sides in this battle is not known; however they seem to have been heavy. Thus the most pressing phase of the operations came to an end with the recapture of the Manakha-San'a road.



This recapture, which certainly costs a strong reduction of the effective number of troops under Izzet Pasha's command because of the losses of soldiers and the dislocation of strong detachments along the most important points of the road, introduces the second, and rather difficult, phase of the enterprise. It implies the task of putting down completely the revolt and to subdue the country which still remains in a deplorable and dangerous state of anarchy.

But this state of things shows that the effort made by the Ottoman Government in sending 30,000 perfectly equipped men was insufficient. (I say perfectly equipped as far as to this port, at least, because it seems that once they went into the interior they were caught up in serious logistical deficiencies caused by a lack of preparation and means of Transport.)

I have been informed that Izzet Pasha has asked for a supplementary 12,000 men, to fill the gaps made by disease and the war, in order to have a stronger force of mobile troops apart from the effective soldiers required for garrisons.

Up to today, a close computation gives a loss of 5000 men, principally from cholera.

The detachment of troops, approximately 3000 men under the command of the well known general, Said Pasha, and which, after the liberation of Hajja was separated from the main body of the army and sent on to Zaidiya and Canaus to march on San'a, seems incapable of carrying out its objective. It had to stop for a time at Zaidiya and Canaus because of the heavy daily losses of men by cholera.

Of the third detachment of troops, some 2000 men, which from Mocha were to reach San'a via Ta'iz, Yarim and Dhamar, nothing positive is known. By a dispatch dated April 1st, and received from the R. Agent of Mocha, it appears that said detachment had succeeded in pacifying the region of Ta'iz, and was able to reoccupy Jabal Maderi, Yarim and Dhamar.

Today they announce that the main body of the Turkish army at the command of one of the best generals, Riza Pasha, has left San'a in the direction of Sha'ra to decidedly attack the Imam in his residence.

No: 134/3, page three

The latter has fortified the already impregnable position with the cannons he has taken from the Turks in 1905. Certainly the march will be one of the most difficult.

We must remember, on this subject, the attempt made also in 1905 by Ahmad Faizi. This attempt met one of the most terrible and disastrous defeats ever received by the Turks in Yemen. If at that time Ahmad Faizi succeeded in saving himself from total destruction and from he himself falling into the hands of the Imam, it was due to the marvelous help received from some battalions rushed to the place from Hajja at the command of the famous general, Yusuf Pasha, (who was hanged by the Young Turks after the proclamation of the constitution). He, with a strenuous march, was able to reach the place in time to protect the retreat of the few troops who had remained with Ahmad Faizi.

I have no means of ascertaining the truth about the above said expedition of Riza Pasha, as no courier has arrived from San'a since April 12th.

We would be inclined to think that the aim of the Imam in offering so little resistance from Manakha to San'a is due to the fact that he wants either to let the expeditionary force enter as deep as possible into the interior or that he wants to attract it directly into his own regions around Jabal Sha'ra and so to draw it far from its supply centers.

It is certain that the concentration of the troops in San'a will require an immense quantity of victuals. Considering the state of the roads and the lack of means of transport, this is really difficult to achieve.

In the last part of my report No. 94/6, March 6, speaking of the English ex-officer, Mr. Wavell, I related reports spreading in the city according to which he had gone to the headquarters of the Imam. These reports were groundless; because, from a letter sent by Mr. Wavell to the British Consulate after the liberation of San'a, it appears that he is still in that city; but he is regarded with diffidence by the local authorities and is closely watched by them.

Also Sir Caprotti confirms what I have just related, because he himself did not escape a certain surveillance.

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The news from Asir is really interesting. The Sherif of Mecca and his son have now arrived at Lith (north of Qunfidha) with a very large army, as they say, of Kabilia. They are strengthened by some Turkish battalions with artillery detached from the Hijaz garrison.

The first objective is to free Sulaiman Pasha, always besieged in Abha, capital of Asir. After this, the forces will be directed against al-Idris, the self-made Mahdi, in order to capture him and annihilate his dominion.

As I referred with my previous dispatches, while al-Idris was holding the city of Abha in a state of siege, he did not cease to dedicate all his activity in fortifying some strategic point in the region that he has conquered and in arming his followers. The false Mahdi is therefore well prepared to sustain the attack that the Sherif of Mecca has accepted to launch against him on behalf of the Turks.

Naturally with this new Turkish policy of putting the Arabs of Hijaz against those of Asir, things will become complicated and will certainly produce real sad results for the future of the country; and Turkey, after all, will not be able to avail herself of these internal struggle which she supports and encourages.

Just lately, as an act of defiance, the people of al-Sayyid al-Idris attacked five sambuks laden with victuals and, they say, ammunition. These had been anchored in a lonely bay at an hour's distance from Qunfidha. They succeeded in capturing two of them, capturing also an officer and two Turkish escort soldiers as well as a negro sailor of one of the sambuks who could not manage to escape. Prisoners and booty were escorted to the residence of al-Idris. This happened in spite of the fairly numerous naval forces along the coast where the destroyer, "Paki-Sheuket" and the well known gunboats ply, and while the cruiser "Hamideh" was at Karaman.

The Cruiser, "Hamideh" must have left for Constantinople just a few days ago with Salih Bey aboard, who is the Ottoman commissioner for Midi affairs.

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For some time the gunboats have been keeping a closer watch on smuggling. In about one month they seized four sambuks flying the Ottoman flag and trying to land goods on the coast between Fazza and Khokah (south of Hodeida).

As the sambuks were Ottoman the procedure, not standing on ceremony will be to seize at once the cargo and the boat; on the other hand, the tribe of Zaraniq, to which the smugglers belong, threatens to recut the telegraph communications. This leads us to believe that, in the end, these sambuks will be given back. I shall continue about them later.

Sincerely,

(Signed) F. Sola

Conditions of the Treaty Between  
 the Imam Yahya and Liwa Ahmad Izzet Pasha  
 (Known as the Treaty of Du'an)<sup>1</sup>  
 1 Thilqi'da 1329 A.H. (May, 1911)<sup>1</sup>

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- 1- The Imam appoints the judges of the Zaidite sect, informing the Vilaya of that, and in turn the Vilaya will inform the Istanbul so that the Sheikh al-Islam will confirm the appointments.
- 2- A higher court will be formed to look into the complaints presented by the Imam.
- 3- The headquarters of this court is to be in San'a, and the Imam will appoint its head and members, their appointment to be confirmed by the Government.
- 4- The sentence is to be sent to Istanbul for confirmation by the Sheikh al-Islam and the declaration as the will of the high ruler, and that only after the governor has sought conciliation and failed; the sentence is not to be executed until after the confirmation and declaration on condition that it does not exceed four months.
- 5- If any of the officials, rulers and workers, abuses his position, the Imam has the right to report that to the Vilaya.
- 6- The government has the right to appoint executors of the law (Shari'a) who are non-Yemeni in places inhabited by people following the Shafi'i and Hanafi sects.
- 7- Mixed courts are to be set up with Shafi'i and Zaidi leaders to look into cases of differing sects.
- 8- The government is to appoint muhafizin under the title of mubashirin for the circuit courts that roam the villages to look into cases involving the Shari'a, and that to avoid the troubles and inconveniences that are taken by those who have need to go back and forth to the government stations.
- 9- All matters pertaining to awkaf and wills are to be in the hands of the Imam.

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1. Treaty is translated from Salem, Op. Cit., pp. 495-497.

- 10- The government appoints judges for the Shafi'ya and Hanafiya excluding the mountains.
- 11- To declare a general amnesty for past political crimes and matters and taxes of the principedom.
- 12- Not to collect the state charges for ten years from the people of Arhab and Khawlan, because of their poverty and bareness of land, and for their complete ties with the government.
- 13- The state revenues are to be levied according to the Shari'a.
- 14- Any complaints from the collectors of the state money to the judges of Shari'a or to the government should be looked into by these, and the sentence-passed carried through.
- 15- The Zaidites have the right to present gifts, either directly or through the masheikh of the Dawla or rulers.
- 16- The Imam has to hand one-tenth of his income to the government.
- 17- No revenues are to be collected from Jabal Ashsharqi /a mikhlaf of Anis whose people are in dire poverty and their houses were destroyed in the past battles/ for ten years.
- 18- The Imam is to set free all the hostages he holds from the people of San'a and its districts, Huraz and Umran.
- 19- The officials of the government and the followers of the Imam may go to all parts of Yemen provided they do not disturb peace and order.
- 20- Neither party may go beyond their assigned frontiers after the Sultan's firman, confirming these conditions, has been issued.

Letter

From: Ambassador at Constantinople, Terapia, July 2, 1911.  
 To: His Excellency, Marquis di San Giuliano, Minister of  
 Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 2833/816.

Subject: Asir.

Dear Sir,

High official Ottoman circles now acknowledge that a strong detachment has been ambushed by rebels and suffered losses. But the Minister of War denies that these would amount to 2,000 or 2,500 men. He reduces the number to a few hundred. The Military Attache, Sir Marro, estimates the situation as follows: Izzet Pasha remains in San'a; he does not pursue Imam Yahya; he plans on pacifying the nearest tribes, and seems to have possibilities of success.

The Amir of Mecca on the other hand readies to attack al-Sayyid al-Idris with ten battalions and five or six thousand of his men. Although the population of Asir in of the Shafite rite, it seems that the prestige of his dignity does not produce the effects he had hoped for.

The followers of al-Idris augment rather than diminish. Hence a certain hesitation on the part of the Amir to attack. Some battalions sent into the interior some weeks ago got into contact with al-Idris' forces but withdrew. Then Muhammad Ali, Wali of Yemen, sent five or six battalions to reinforce the Amir Hodeida. They were the ones who were ambushed near Jizan.

Muhammad Ali will now march with other forces in an attempt to reach the Amir at Qunifidha, whence he would move to liberate Abha which is surrounded by rebels. He will first move against Sabiya, the residence of al-Idris. At any rate, Abha continues to resist. The reason for attacking al-Sayyid al-Idris is that they fear the religious influence that the new Mahdi is continually acquiring.

Al-Idris does not have any right to use of the title "Sayyid" which would mean a relationship with the family of the Prophet. He was born in Sabiya, leading twon of Caza in Asir. As a boy he went to Egypt to study where he remained for many years. He is a learned man, but more than that he



No: 2833/816, page two

is clever and cunning. As soon as the constitution was proclaimed he returned to Sabiya; where, they say, he started to act with the support of high Ottoman personalities who had sought refuge in Egypt to escape the punishment due for their unjust exactions under the old regime.

He preached at first to the bedouin, telling them to live in good harmony, to avoid all effusion of blood and to respect the rights of others. He had thousands of bedouin listeners who became his fanatical disciples. He won other adherents by his generosity and many from among ignorant tribes by his fame as a wonder-worker through the use of physical apparatus, projectors and so on.

At first he professed pacifism and obedience to the Young Turks. Gaining strength, he proclaimed himself Amir of Asir and rebelled against Ottoman authority, beseiging the capital Abha; which, as I said, continues to resist.

Besides the other losses suffered in the battle of Jizan, the Ottoman troops incur daily losses from sunstroke, dysentery and cholera.

In view of this, the Government, considering the demands of Izzet Pasha, have decided to send new reinforcements, victuals and munitions. These will be transported aboard the ships, "Kizil Irmak" of the Ottoman Company of Navigation, and "Kaiseri", chartered for this purpose.

In Asia Minor, the great seedbed for soldiers, the mobilization of a new division of redifs\* has begun.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Mayor

\* Underlined by sender.



Telegram

From: Consul General, (Hodeida), Asmara, July 22, 1911.  
 To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 3502.

39, (Hodeida, July 19. I continue the subject of my Cable No. 36.)\* The situation in the region of the Mahdi grows a little worse because of general fear for the exceedingly precarious condition of the troops with a great and impressive mortality rate as well the resolute attitude of the hordes of the Mahdi. In short, as an answer to the peace overtures offered by the local government, he asks for absolute independence for the region where he exercises his influence.

I have read some of the letters sent by the Mahdi to his special envoy actually in Hodeida. In them he writes that if the Ottoman Government does not accept the conditions that he offered and resumes the war, he, the Mahdi, will bring in all his forces, adding that the peace and the uprising in Yemen depends solely on one of his nods. The special envoy of the Mahdi has not been given a good welcome and may leave soon. The famous Wali, because of the actual disasters, is still in Jizan without being able to advance.

I have learned that the colonel, who disappeared after the disaster in Jizan, took shelter during the night with the Mahdi.

About three battalions still remain there protected by gunboats; with great expense they are sending to Luhaiya and Jizan what little water arrives from Aden and Perim.

They say that the Sherif of Mecca is advancing towards Abha, which is now the main, and the most important, knot of the controversy. If he succeeds in capturing that stronghold, the power of the Mahdi will diminish considerably for the time being. In case of the contrary, the dominion of the Mahdi will soon expand throughout the whole of Yemen and then, in agreement with the Imam, would constitute a really grave danger for Turkish domination in this country.

A Turkish officer assures me another thirty battalions of reinforcements have been destined for Yemen as the first expedition has been virtually and unbecomingly lost with immense financial and political damage to the Ottoman Government.

No: 3502, page two

The Red Sea will be the tomb of Turkey, and this probably not too far off. Your Excellency may be sure of that.

For economical reasons, I would like to ask Your Excellency to send this cable to the Royal Embassy in Constantinople.

(Signed) F. Sola

\* This sentence was lined out by recipient ministry.

P.S. I answer to the ministerial dispatch of the 6th instant of the Colonial Office which just arrived:

I confirm completely the reports of the Jizan disaster which was more terrifying than how I have described it.

The fact is known by all; I presented my courteous and deep condolences to the local authorities.

The Turkish losses in that disaster amount to 3000 men who died partly in combat and partly of thirst; also their animals died of thirst. Many were led from Hodeida to Jizan to bury the dead. This could only be partially accomplished and so they engaged the porters to carry the corpses and carrion in order to throw them into the sea.

Today cholera has broken out among the troops in Luhayia.

(Signed) Sola.

Telegram

From: Consul General at Hodeida, Massawa, 18 August 1911  
 To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome.  
 No: 3948.

42. Hodeida, 15th August. I have received Your Excellency's cable No. 3009.

Betraying its duty the Government of Yemen has transmitted distorted, or at least inexact, news to the Sublime Porte. They, in turn, alter the truth regarding the information which was referred to them concerning events in Yemen per official communications to foreign embassies.

As for the other embassies, if they lack exact news on the real state of things it is due to the inefficiency or carelessness of the respective representative on the spot.

The disaster of Jizan was narrated in horrifying particulars to me even by Turkish officers who took part in the action.

The general political situation of the country remains persistently unvaried; for about 20 days there has been perfect calm; no Turkish military operations, no fighting, not even hostile acts between the enemy camps. This is partly because of the fact that this Muhammadan month and the next, of Ramadan, are holy months for Islam. It would be a horrible abomination to profane them with the shedding of blood between the faithful.

It is also partly due to the need and desire of the Turks to let the present killing season pass and to eventually resume hostilities in October, as many times I advised the civil and military authorities to do, expressing a sentiment of compassion and humanity.

It is pitiful humiliation for the military authorities to go begging for the benevolent cooperation or neutrality of many Arab sheikhs to whom the authorities bestow conspicuous presents of money as well as investitures. This way they hope to come to a friendly end of the controversy and to avoid further military action without surrendering too much

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to the Mahdi. These tactics do not seem either shrewd or sufficient in their aim to me. The mind of the Arabs has completely severed itself from that of the haughty and oppressing Turk, and the events will fatally continue their course despite momentary and necessary pauses.

It would be most puerile to think that the Gran Sherif of Mecca is presently acting out of sympathy or fealty towards Turkey. On the other hand, with surprising ability he uses arms, Turkish money and soldiers to fight the Mahdi whose dangerous and threatening rivalry he fears, and not without reason.

The reconquest of Abha has not yet been confirmed by well-informed Arab circles in spite of today's announcement which was groundless. If the Sherif of Mecca has entered Abha, it was surely done without fighting and with the consent of the neighboring tribes after a large donation of money.

However it may be, this important event will surely and greatly damage the Mahdi's situation, as I stated before.

At Luhaiya everything is quiet now and a good part of the population has returned to the city.

Cholera rages more and more among the troops, and has also entered Hodeida.

I would like to ask Your Excellency to transmit this cable to the Royal Embassy.

(Signed) Sola

Letter

From: Diplomatic Agency, Cairo, September 19, 1911.

To: Marquis Di San Giuliano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rome.

No: 1603/607.

Subject: Yemen.

Last week, some Arabic newspapers in Cairo stated that Ottoman Troops had won decisive successes, and this on the word of a person who claims, without foundation, to have friendly relations with the Sherif of Mecca. Simultaneously, news reaching us from Constantinople, (and there is no doubt about their source), was entirely contradictory. They said that the Sherif of Mecca had won great victories over the tribes who follow Muhammad Ali al-Idris, adding also details of his victory and declaring that Abha had been liberated. All of this is absolutely incorrect.

In fact, Imam Yahya has suspended his fight against the troops that the Sublime Porte has sent to Yemen; this is not due to any successful action by the Imperial troops but rather because of the concessions that the Ottoman Government had given to the Imam. Neither was he asked to alter his relations with al-Idris and in fact accepted the new situation with his blessings.

It is well known to Your Excellency that on several occasions the rebels of this Ottoman province have offered their submission to the Sublime Porte in exchange for specific privileges and recognition of some of their rights. The Sublime Porte has refused at times and made promises at others which were not kept later and which have therefore prolonged the rebellion of the Arab tribes. Now the Porte has spontaneously offered Imam Yahya more than what he had ever asked for, and the latter has accepted only after having requested al-Idris' advice and with whom he felt agreement over the fact that it was probably better to adhere to the Ottoman propositions with a reserve to take up the fight whenever the promises were not kept. Hence the announced submission of the Imam would only be his adherence to the Ottoman Government's desire to terminate the war. The Government of Constantinople would be entirely wrong to think that with the concessions they had succeeded in separating the Imam from al-Idris since both were still in total agreement.

This news was also confirmed to me by Muhammad Ali al-Idris and who said he had had the same news direct from Yemen. Besides, he assured us that during his recent trip to Crete he had been invited by some members of the "Committee of Union and Progress" to go to Constantinople and put forward the demands of his friends in Yemen, and that he did not dare go there for fear of being attacked.

Muhammad Ali's words are always listened to with great reserve. They are valuable only when they confirm what already appears from the little news one has concerning the daily situation in Yemen; and which is that the submission of Imam Yahya is not a consequence of victory by the Turkish troops and does not prove that the rebels have weakened. The concessions made by the Ottoman Government prove in fact that the struggle against the rebels was not as successful as they had expected and that they realised that they were not able to control or subdue the tribes in revolt.

Grimani.

From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, October 14, 1911.  
To: Embassy, London.  
No: 131.

Subject: Conflict between Turkey and Italy: Insurrection  
in the Yemen.

Dear Sir:

I beg to send to Y.E. a copy here enclosed of the Report of the Charge d'Affaires in Cairo bearing No. 1603/607 of September 19, 1911.

In fact it appears that following large concessions made by the Ottoman Government to Imam Yahya and Muhammad Ali al-Idris, the revolt in Yemen has been for the moment suspended.

I hasten to bring this to Y.E.'s attention since this present situation excludes for the time being possible complications that might arise from any military action that we might be compelled to take against the Turkish fleet in the Red Sea to prevent the premeditated attacks against Massawa and Assab and against our trade in these regions.

(Signed) San Giuliano



From: The President of the Council, Giolitti, Rome,  
October 19, 1912.

To: H.E. Marguis Salvago Raggi, Eritrea.

I follow up my telegram of today concerning the line of conduct to adopt in respect of Sheikh al-Idris after the conclusion of peace with Turkey, and answer the part of Y.E.'s report No. 1475/75 of the 3rd instant which refers to the same subject.

Y.E.'s observations regarding the convenience of some action of ours to ascertain a sure and definite position for the aforesaid Sheikh in Yemen were not overlooked by this Government and our concern in this matter has not been lacking. But it has been impossible to transform the rebellious image of Idris into a belligerent one in order to settle his interests and situation in an international treaty. In fact, the first objection lodged against our attempts in his favor, and maintained with firmness, was that Turkey could not consider Idris, who was a rebel before the declaration of war, other than a rebel even now, despite our help and encouragement during the period of hostility. Evidently from this criteria the trade of pardon and amnesty concerning him was compelled.

On the other hand during the rather long period of fighting al-Idris did not, inspite of our help, obtain any successes, or establish any achievement, for example: the defeat of most of the Turkish troops, or the occupation of such important localities as Hodeida and Luhaiya, which would give even to a rebel an exceptional position and give our negotiators some argument to oppose the Ottoman point of view whose logic and truth one could not fail to recognise. It would in fact, have been quite difficult denying Idris' revolt as not independent from the War or admitting that his actions had had some weight (serious effect) on the state of the war itself.

Under these conditions (in these circumstances) our very insistence on a theme--which even to our point of view held little weight--would have then closed every



possibility of helping him in the confidential and officious way as was done.

This is to show Y.E. the goodwill of the Government to intervene in favor of al-Idris and especially for these reasons (manifested from the weak, tardy, and disjointed actions deployed by him in our favor) outlined by Y.E. any suggestions that Y.E. might be able to give me in the future in this respect would be examined by the Government with a view to finding a proper solution in agreement with al-Idris' interests in as much as they are linked with those of Italy in Eritrea and the Red Sea.

The President of the Council.

Giolitti

Telegram

From: Asmara, November 7, 1912.  
To: H.E., President of Council of Ministers, Rome.

No. 16725 - Y.E.'s letter of October 19th has just arrived and I understand fully the reasons for which the R. Government has had to limit itself to obtaining amnesty for al-Idris. In my telegrams 15806, 15840, 16145 and 16147 I was not reverting to the past but simply asking for instructions as to the communication to be made to al-Idris, since I thought it better that he be informed by us of the treatment that the R. Government had obtained for him. Now, I pray your Excellency to tell me what answer to give to his request for a person to be nominated by the R. Government to carry out negotiations for his pardon with Turkey as I cabled per No. 16390 of 2nd instant. Al-Idris is waiting for an answer.

Perhaps the new Consul, who is on the point of going to Hodeida, might take charge of this without doing much to wound Turkish susceptibility. Eventually I would put at his disposal an intelligent native who is on good terms with al-Idris. I pray you to cable me if you are able to give him a promise of benevolent informal intervention by the R. Embassy in Constantinople on the question of his fate. It would be advisable to do this without delay as al-Idris Hersi, whom Y.E. mentioned in the telegram of November 4 last, and whom I have known for many years, is now free in Aden and he tells me of a probable agreement between al-Idris and the Imam, provoked by the Sultan of Lahej. I'll try and get more accurate news about this.

(Signed) Slavago Raggi

**XLII**

From: President of the Council of Ministers, Rome, November  
9, 1912.  
To: Minister of Foreign Affairs

In conjunction with the telegram of the Governor of Eritrea No. 16725 sent directly to the Secretary General of that Ministry it seems to me opportune that Your Excellency also look at the last letter addressed by me setting forth arguments to the Governor of Eritrea, himself, as well as a copy of the letter of Sheikh al-Idris who has been the subject of these exchanges. I believe that within the limits indicated by Marquis Salvago Raggi and for the reasons he added, one might try and help al-Sayyid al-Idris informally and circumspectly in his dealings with the Turkish authorities in Yemen and with the Government in Constantinople. If such is also Your Excellency's opinion I would be grateful if you would give the necessary instructions to Marquis Salvago Raggi as well as to Marquis Garroni.

(Signed) Giolitti

President of the Council of Ministers

Telegram

From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 8, 1912.  
To: Italian Embassy, Constantinople.

No: 4720.

Classification: Confidential.

Al-Sayyid al-Idris, for whom the Royal Government obtained amnesty has asked that a person be delegated by the Royal Government to attend the negotiations for his pardon by the Turks tantamount to a guarantee that the treatment obtained for him be implemented. It would not be against our interest to try and help al-Idris informally and with circumspection in his dealings with the Turkish authorities and also their Government.

The Royal Consul to-be in Hodeida could be given this responsibility for that which concerns the local authorities, without hurting the susceptibility of Turkey.

In the meantime to al-Idris, who is expecting an answer, one should give the assurance of an informal beneficial interest by Your Excellency in his fate.

It being in our interests to retain al-Idris' friendship I pray Your Excellency to see if and how an informal action of yours, conducted with great circumspection, could be effectively justified as in everybody's interests and desired aim; that is the pacification of Asir and to open up the country to profitable commercial exchanges.

I do not lose sight of the difficulties in view of the delicacy of the subject touching Turkish sensitivity. In any event it is urgent that an answer be given to al-Idris. Therefore I pray you to cable me as to what has been done.

(Signed) San Guiliano

Telegram Copy

From: Embassy in Constantinople, Pera, December 12, 1912.  
To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

No: 7670

Classification: Confidential

82. Your Excellency's telegram No. 4720. I'll take care of the matter which is most delicate.

In the meantime please send me a copy of the Italo-Turkish Agreement concerning al-Sayyid al-Idris as soon as possible as nothing has come out concerning him in the Treaty of Lausanne.

(Signed) Garroni

Telegram:

From: Ministry of Colonial Affairs, December 15, 1912.  
To: Government of Asmara.

No: 10218.

Classification: Confidential.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided to send Consul General Toscani to Hodeida who will leave on the 22nd instant going to Asmara to confer with Y.E. and thence to Hodeida on a warship which could remain for a few days.(Stop) Toscani has instructions which will be communicated to Y.E.(Stop).

For your guidance I transmit a telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent on the 8th instant to the Embassy in Constantinople and to which an answer is awaited:

Al-Sayyid al-Idris, for whom the Government of the King had obtained amnesty, has asked the Governor of Eritrea that a person be nominated by the Royal Government to attend to the negotiations with Turkey for his forgiveness. This is tantamount to a guarantee that the treatment obtained for him will be carried out. It would not be unadvisable to try and help al-Idris informally, but cautiously, in his dealings with the Turkish authorities and also with that Government.

"The Consul-to-be in Hodeida could be entrusted with that which concerns the local authorities without hurting Turkey's susceptibilities. In the interim, al-Idris, who is expecting an answer, could be given an assurance of Y.E.'s benevolent unofficial interest in his fate; it being in our interests to keep al-Idris as a friend. I pray Y.E. to see if and how any action of yours conducted with great caution, could be efficiently explained, in the sense that peace in the Yemen should be the wish of all concerned in order to open the country up to the benefits of mutually beneficial exchanges.

I do understand the difficulties presented by the great delicacy of this question which deeply hurts Turkey's susceptibility. In any case it is a matter of urgency

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that al-Idris be given an answer. I therefore request you to cable me what has been done. Naturally all of this could not be done without the agreement of the Ottoman Government."

(Signed) Colosimo

Telegram

From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 16, 1912.  
To: Italian Embassy, Constantinople.

No: 4872.

Classification: Confidential.

Your

82. There are no Italo-Turkish Agreements for al-Idris. (Stop) Our negotiations could at most, and with great difficulty, obtain for al-Idris and Irade of amnesty by the Sultan, seeing to its being issued before the Treaty of Lausanne could be signed. (Stop). The Ottoman Government objected that al-Idris, a rebel even before the Italo-Turkish War, could only be considered as a rebel at present.

It was therefore not possible to have al-Idris as a belligerent. From these criteria, an Irade of Pardon and Amnesty was issued by the Sultan, a document already generally known about.

(Signed) San Guiliano



Telegram (copy)

From: Embassy in Constantinople, December 17, 1912.  
To: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

No: 7783.

Classification: Confidential.

33. Your Excellency's telegram 4720. Concerning the difficult subject of al-Idris I thought of initiating discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointing out the shared interest in the pacification of Asir and with a view to the resumption of normal relations between Arabia and our colonies. I have therefore offered a representative of ours in the negotiations between al-Idris and the Ottoman Government.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has told me that al-Idris does not accept the amnesty and in an aloof matter puts on an air of wanting to continue his opposition.

He has informed me that in this Ministry of Interior there is a commission (on which al-Idris has a representative) charged with defining all the divergences relative to this affair. He wishes to confer about my conversations with his colleague in the Ministry of Interior and in the meantime has thanked me for my offer.

(Signed) Garroni

Letter

From: Di San Guiliano, December 21, 1912.  
To: Sir Odoardo Toscani, Consul General, Hodeida.

Classification: Confidential

Mr. Consul General,

Your Excellency, appointed Consul General in Hodeida, will go there by the first week of next month stopping en-route in Asmara to discuss with the Governor of Eritrea the affairs of the Yemen.

Once in agreement with him you will embark in Massawa on a warship which will take you to Hodeida. The ship can stay for a few days in Hodeida.

The main aim of your actions must be the fruition of our prestige that our war-like action on the coast of Arabia has gained for us with the populace for the implementation of our political and economic influence in Arabia, in our relations with Eritrea and the Muslim world. These aims can only be obtained through the pacification of the country and our sole wish should be this.

One of the most important chiefs, al-Sayyid al-Idris of Asir, rebelled prior to the Turko-Italian conflict and is still rebellious even though he had help from us during the war.

The Ottoman negotiators diametrically opposed our desire to favor al-Idris with their objection that Turkey could not consider him as a belligerent--even though he received encouragement and help as a rebel during the Turko-Italian war--because he was a rebel before the war. And it should also be borne in mind that the Ottoman Government (and their negotiators at Ouchy were their spokesmen) considered it dangerous to give preference to al-Idris as long as it was in their interests to maintain a balance between the 3 major leaders of Arabia - the Sherif of Mecca, the Imam Yahya and al-Idris himself.

In view of his particular situation before and during the war it was not possible for our Ouchy negotiators to obtain for al-Idris anything other than the Trade of Amnesty and Pardon of the Sultan with the understanding that he should be the Favored one before peace could be declared. It was done according to the above mentioned criteria embodied in the Trade of the Sultan.

As soon as al-Sayyid al-Idris heard of the imminent peace between Italy and Turkey he asked the Governor of Eritrea that a person, nominated by the Royal Government, attend the negotiations relating to his pardon by Turkey almost as a guarantee that any treatment granted him would be fulfilled.

The Governor of Eritrea, basing himself precisely on the great importance for us of not losing the fruits of our recent war-like actions in Arabia, believes it useful to retain al-Idris' friendship who might be called to exert considerable influence in the Muslim world, and whom we believe to be attached to the Senussi by very close ties.

All this could be useful in every way in excluding foreign influence and would help in bringing about the resumption of commercial exchange between Eritrea and Arabia.

Marquis Salvago Raggi has proposed that the Consul to be appointed in Hodeida be charged with attending the negotiations between the Turkish authorities and al-Idris for his pardon, and that the Royal Embassy take an informal benevolent interest in his fate with the Porte.

This had to be told to al-Idris in answer to his request.

The very way the question of al-Idris was dealt with in Ouchy made immediately clear the extreme delicacy of any intervention of ours; but within the limits defined and for the reasons added by Marquis Salvago I believe that one could, with great circumspection, and in agreement with Turkey, try and officiously help the Sheikh in his dealings with the local authorities and with the Government of Constantinople in the common interest of obtaining, through the pacification of Asir, the growth of exchanges between Arabia and Eritrea.

Through the telegrams exchanged with the Ambassador in Constantinople of 8th and 17th instant (hereto attached) Your Excellency will notice how much was done up to now with the Ottoman Government who has not given conclusive answer, but who has stated that al-Idris has not accepted Amnesty.

In such a situation the friendly and efficient intervention of Your Excellency if welcomed by the local authorities could now be much more useful since it should not be excluded that al-Idris has adopted this attitude due to his mistrust of Turkish promises and in the hope of his asked-for friendly intervention of ours between him and the Turkish authorities in the negotiations for the pacification.

On the basis of this information and the consideration outlined, you may, after having conferred with the Governor of Eritrea make the necessary adjustments in your behaviour vis a vis the local authorities and al-Idris.

Your Excellency is authorised to correspond directly with the Governor of Eritrea and send copies of your reports to him to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, to this Ministry and to the Ambassador in Constantinople. I beg you to acknowledge receipt of this dispatch.

(Signed) San Guiliano

Telegram

From: Minister of Foreign Affairs.  
To: Embassy, Constantinople.

No: 4939.

Classification: Confidential

Your 88, Al-Idris. After what Y.E. cabled me about al-Idris's attitude an informal intervention by an official of ours in the negotiations between al-Idris and the Ottoman Government could be very useful to the Porte.

I am thus awaiting your next telegraphic communication after conferring with the the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior in order to place a norm in the instructions to be given to Sir Toscani. He will leave for Hodeida on the 22nd instant to take up his duties as Consul General there. Toscani will go to Asmara to confer with the Governor of Eritrea and following this will go to Hodeida on a warship. Please inform the Grand Vizier of Toscani's appointment, who is known to him personally.

(Signed) San Giuliano

Telegram copy

From: Asmara Government, December 27, 1912.  
To: Ministry of Colonial Affairs.

Classification: Urgent.

I only answer now No. 10118 being for some time without telegraphic communications. In truth its two months now that would have been urgent to answer al-Idris and I hardly believe that another similar occasion will come up for our country.

My telegrams concerning direct communications with al-Idris being unanswered I was forced to limit myself to indirect communications thanks to which we are still on good terms with al-Idris.

As soon as the Consul General of Hodeida reaches here we will cable Your Excellency to inform him of the situation in order that the Government may formulate suitable instructions for the Consul-General of Hodeida and, eventually, cable the direct communications to al-Idris.

(Signed) Salvago Raggi.

Telegram copy

From: Ministry of Colonial Affairs, January 1, 1913  
To: Government of Asmara

No: 5

Your 19461. Our direct communications with al-Idris without the prior agreement of the Ottoman Government are considered dangerous by the Royal Government. Since creating doubt in the mind of the Ottoman Government would render abortive or even harmful our officious intervention in favor of al-Idris and which as Your Excellency knows must be in agreement with the Porte.

It was therefore impossible to give instructions to Your Excellency without first knowing the result of the steps taken by the Embassy in Constantinople. From my telegram No. 10204 you know what the answer of the Turkish Foreign Minister has been up to now. Al-Idris does not accept amnesty. In this situation the necessary orders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been sent on December 12th to Consul General Toscani who will give a copy to Your Excellency on his imminent in Asmara.

(Signed) Colosimo

Telegram

From: Asmara, January 3, 1913.  
 To: Ministry of Colonial Affairs,  
 No: 202.

105. I refer to my No. 19461. The Consul General of Hodeida has arrived and conferred with me. On December 6th al-Idris wrote an intermediary note saying that after the departure of Izzet the Turks have adopted a conciliatory attitude, and Said Pasha, the present Wali, wrote him saying that he is making efforts to bring about peace between him and the Imam.

Al-Idris adds that he has received a telegram from the Grand Vizier announcing the imminent arrival of a person sent by the Sultan to al-Idris. He says he is looking forward to his arrival in order to know the Turkish proposal and he doesn't seem to be against the meeting.

I think it opportune to let al-Idris know by the usual indirect method that the Italian Government has not ceased to be interested in him and to this end sends to Hodeida a Consul General whom it trusts could eventually continue the action via the local authorities in Hodeida which the Ambassador in Constantinople is explaining and to which is attributed the present soft attitude of the Turks and the telegram of the Grand Vizier.

I suggest asking al-Idris if it is true that he has a representative close to the Ministry of Interior in Constantinople.

I am awaiting news of the present intentions of al-Idris and the decisions of the Royal Government resulting therefrom as well as the subsequent news from Constantinople so that as soon as the Consul General reaches Hodeida he might implement normal relations with the Ottoman authorities maintaining as much as possible an appearance of reserve with regards to al-Idris.



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In the meantime he will see to the installation of a provisional consulate. As soon as this is done and Your Excellency's telegram arrives, the Royal Consul General will be able to leave whenever authorised by the Ottoman Government.

(Signed) Salvago Raggi

Telegram

From: Ministry of Colonial Affairs, January 10, 1913  
To: Governor of Asmara

No: 394

Classification: Confidential

Your 105. I confirm to you the dispatch of this Ministry No. 72 of December 21, 1912 concernign the instructions given by the Ministry (of Foreign Affairs) to the Consul General in Hodeida.

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In order to emphasize the delicacy of our position vis a vis al-Idris, I think it necessary, recalling on what I remember from when I was a negotiator for Italy at Ouchy, to better explain and confirm what is unclear in the aforesaid instructions, concerning al-Idris. In the negotiations at Ouchy our direct action in favor of the Sheikh had to be halted in front of the unshakable determination of the Ottoman delegates who saw in our intervention a depreciation of Turkish sovereignty and Ottoman prestige in Arabia and a threat to the relations and balance between Imam Yahya and the Sherif of Mecca who could have been induced to revolt had this agreement been made for al-Idris. The Ottoman delegates threatened to withdraw if we persisted. However, they did not exclude, once peace was concluded, that the Ottoman Government would do something in favor of al-Idris, of the things we had asked to get directly for him.

This explains how it was only possible, and this not easily, for the Italian delegates to obtain the Irade of amnesty in the ways and conditions well known to Your Excellency.

Given these precedents it is evident that any actions of ours in favor of al-Idris or an intervention as intermediaries which did not have the agreement of the Ottoman

No: 394, page two

Government would not only be abortive but harmful to those interests which we want to protect for al-Idris and ourselves.

We consider that at the right moment and with caution we could still take action in Constantinople and Hodeida in favor of the Sheikh but with great tact and in agreement with the Ottoman authorities.

As for communications with al-Idris in order to maintain contact with him since direct methods are absolutely excluded, I believe that Your Excellency can keep up, but without any of our engagements, with indirect communications to which you allude in your telegram, and see that in the same indirect way, be well explained to al-Idris the necessity and usefulness for him, of our present cautious reserve.

(Signed) Bertolini

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The primary sources utilized in preparing this study are: diplomatic correspondence of the British Foreign Office and India Government as well as that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Historical Archives Section) of the Italian Government.

The Foreign Office and India Government documents cited in the bibliography are those available in Jafet Library of the American University. Their scope is limited, hence further research on this topic necessitates the acquisition of more of these important documents which have now been released by the British Government for public use.

To obtain films of Italian diplomatic correspondence it is necessary to apply to the Director of the Historical Archives section in person. It should be noted, for the scholar who attempts further study of these sources, that the person in charge of microfilming has the additional duty of being part-time courier for the Ministry. He is only able to microfilm documents when not occupied with other duties.

The copies of Italian diplomatic correspondence obtained, as well as those reviewed at the Ministry itself, show that a wealth of material as yet not placed before the reading public--in Italian or in English--is of primary importance in the study of the modern history of Yemen. This is also true concerning the entire Middle East. In the words of the writers of Western Arabia and the Red Sea, "During part, at least, of the Turkish occupation the Italians appear to have had a far stronger consular representation than Britain in the Yemen."<sup>1</sup>

Italian diplomatic archives are organized according to packets and positions. The archives used in this research are those entitled "Political Relations with Yemen" and are contained in packets 174, 175 and 176 in position 17/46. These documents are not always in chronological order and thus present a problem to the researcher. Also,

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<sup>1</sup>  
Great Britain, Op. Cit., p. 307.

copies of a document found in one packet may also turn up in another packet. This becomes more problematic as telegrams received from without the Ministry were copied and distributed in as many as twelve copies. Also, it was not until 1912 that a separate ministry was formed to handle colonial affairs; hence there is a mixture of documents related to foreign affairs with those related to colonial affairs.

Two trips to the Ministry were needed to obtain the documents. One in July 1966, and the other in December 1966. The vast amount of material available concerning this subject could not be fully examined and utilized. Further research must be done in the enormous amount of material classified under "Turkey". Also, of special import, are the following series of documents which are available for research:

- Pac. 144 - Pos. 17: "The Red Sea."
- Pac. 530 - Pos. 159: "Arms and munitions out of use, sold to foreign countries, 1891-1916."
- Pac. 530 - Pos. 160: "Permits to military officers on foreign missions, 1891-1916."
- Pac. 661 - Pos. 820: "Railways and diverse concessions in the Ottoman Empire and Asia."
- Pac. 759 - Pos. 1147: "Eritrea: Political Relations".

In general, Italian diplomatic correspondence for the period 1891 (and before) to 1914 may be reviewed, but permission is usually necessary for documents dated 1900 and after.

All bibliographies concerned with Yemen during the period 1904-1911 illustrate that the greatest amount of literature published in Western languages has been in Italian. These sources, up to the present, are not available here. Many articles written about Yemen are not found in the bibliographies. I list these sources--those cited in bibliographies but not available here as well as other sources--herein for the benefit of those considering further reading. Also included are some related works in English not presently available. An asterisk (\*) following these works is for those ordered through Jafet Library--the Acquisitions Department--and have not yet arrived.

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