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INTERNATIONAL RIVALRIES AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS  
IN THE RED SEA AREA 1918-1939

by

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## P R E F A C E

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the international rivalries and strategic interests of the Powers in this area during the period between the two world wars. As some of the bordering areas were partially independent (Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen) during part or all of this period, their foreign relations with the Powers will be considered. This paper is meant to be primarily an international, political discussion and for this reason, the history of the internal developments of the bordering areas are only summarized in order to give a necessary background for the events as they occurred.

In this paper the details of the various complicated rivalries and strategic interests which evolved in the Red Sea system are examined, but the reader is cautioned, however, not to forget the fundamental reason why this area was important. Its main importance, particularly after the cutting of the Suez Canal, was that it was an all water short-cut between the population masses of Europe and the East. This short-cut was important for three reasons. First, and of most importance, the route through the Red Sea was one of the main arteries of world trade. It was essential to the main trading powers that the route remain open to their goods. Second, the Red Sea was a means of rapid communications by ship between the East and the West, and in addition, the sea itself was a secure area in which to place international telecommunication cables. Finally, the sea was militarily important because it greatly enhanced the strategic mobility of the forces of the Powers. In addition to these factors of world-wide concern, it was also important because of inherent local considerations. Of these, the most unique was its

importance to the Islamic world. The unimpeded flow of the pilgrim traffic was a matter of great concern particularly to the British Empire. Additionally, the economic penetration of the littoral areas was a matter of interest to the Powers. As a result, the events that took place in this area have to be seen in the light of all of these considerations. The overall policies that the interested Powers had in the area were, in effect, the summation of their policies toward the individual considerations and as such varied as the importance of the constituent factors varied.

Before beginning the consideration of this subject, it is necessary to make some general qualifying remarks concerning the subject. Initially, from a physical point of view, the term "Red Sea Area" is used in a broad sense. The area of interest extends from Port Sa'id on the Mediterranean to the Island of Socotra lying at the head of the Gulf of Aden. It includes all the states that border the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Aden, with the following two exceptions: first, Italian Somaliland will not be considered because, even though this area bordered on the Gulf of Aden, it was essentially orientated toward the Indian Ocean; second, Ethiopia will be discussed. While this state did not directly border on the Red Sea, it was intimately connected with Red Sea affairs, particularly during the period under consideration.

The time period covered by this paper is artificial to the extent that it is based essentially on European history. While the conclusion of World War I brought about a fundamental change in Europe, the effect on the Red Sea was initially not great. Only in the latter part of the period were the events that transpired in the Red Sea direct reflections of events that were occurring in Europe. The main problem in selecting this arbitrary

period for study is that all of the bordering areas had their own unique history, and periods of international importance. For instance, in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somaliland, there was a flurry of activity during the period 1880-1906, and then the area lapsed into relative calm until the early 1930's. Thus the history of this area does not neatly fit into the arbitrary period of consideration. The same is true of the other areas which are considered.

It is also necessary to mention that there are inherent difficulties in writing about this subject. Perhaps the biggest problem involved is that the Red Sea is a natural border, a border between Africa and Asia and a border between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. As a result, it is subject to a number of outside influences. It is impossible to write about the Red Sea in a vacuum; it cannot be extracted out of its natural context. For this reason, mention will have to be made in this study of some of the conditions existing in the Mediterranean Sea, Arabia, the Indian Ocean, and Africa, to interpret certain events in the Red Sea.

Another inherent difficulty in writing this paper is that in diplomatic relations it has been characteristic of national governments not to declare openly their real objectives in other countries, particularly not in colonial possessions. With few exceptions, the original diplomatic documents concerning this area are not available. For this reason this analysis will be based primarily on what was being said and written at that time and it is thus subject to errors in interpretation and exaggeration.

The following method will be used for discussing this subject. In Chapter I, the geography of the Red Sea

system is discussed. It is felt that it is important that the reader understand the general inhospitality of the area inasmuch as this partially conditioned the great power interest in the area. Chapter II deals with the history of the area up to the end of World War I. Chapter III is concerned with the developments that occurred between the end of the war and 1935. In a broad sense this period was a continuation of the pre-war conditions. Chapter IV considers the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the effect this had on the balance of power in the area. In this chapter it is necessary to consider more fully certain events occurring at that time in Europe. Chapter V describes the period from the middle of 1936 to the outbreak of World War II. It is an analysis of the reawakening of interest in the area which occurred at that time. Chapter VI is a brief summary of the major trends in the Anglo-Italian rivalry in the inter-war period. This chapter concludes with a short description of conditions existing in the littoral states at the outbreak of the war.



## CHAPTER I - PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE RED SEA SYSTEM

Before the international rivalries and strategic interests in the area between 1918 and 1939 are analyzed, it is necessary to consider the physical make-up of the area. The area will be described in general and then each political unit that existed between the two world wars will be examined separately in more detail. Finally, a few words will be said as to the climatic conditions that exist in the area. (See Annex A for General Map of the Red Sea.)

The Red Sea extends in a northwest-southeast direction for a distance of some 1,200 miles.<sup>1</sup> This sea constitutes a narrow body of water interposed between the Eurasian and African land masses. Structurally the sea is part of the great rift system that extends from the Jordan Valley to the lakes of central Africa. Because of its rift formation, the shores of the Red Sea are little indented and there are few harbors of any quality. The few harbors that do exist in the Red Sea are long, narrow, and deep, penetrating perpendicularly into the coast.<sup>2</sup> Another characteristic of the Red Sea is the coral formations that parallel both coasts and which form a hazard to navigation. Past the Bab el Mandeb, the southern entrance of the Sea, the Gulf of Aden widens out into an area of safer navigation.

Starting in the north, the first area of interest is the Suez Canal. The Canal runs from Port Sa'id on the

<sup>1</sup>"The Red Sea," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962, Vol. 19, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Great Britain, Western Arabia and the Red Sea, Geographical Handbook Series (B. R. 527), Naval Intelligence Division (London: Oxford and Cambridge Presses, 1946), p. 68. The largest and most well-formed of these are Ports Sudan and Suakin. These harbors are known as "sherms" meaning in Arabic a cleft, crack, or small bay.

Mediterranean to Suez at the head of the Gulf of Suez. Its total distance is 87-1/2 miles.<sup>3</sup> The canal is at sea level and, except when it traverses the Great Bitter Lakes, it crosses the flat desert of the Isthmus of Suez. (See Annex C for General Map of the Suez Canal.)

From the southern end of the Canal, the Gulf of Suez stretches to the south-southeast for a distance of 175 miles until it enters the main body of the Red Sea at the Strait of Jubal.<sup>4</sup> It varies in width from 10 to 25 miles and both sides are bordered by high mountain ranges, particularly in the southern Sinai. It is in effect no more than a shallow inlet of the Red Sea, its depth being in no place greater than 230 feet.

To the east of the Gulf of Suez is the Sinai Peninsula. This large triangular peninsula, lying at the head of the Red Sea, comprises three district geographic areas: (from north to south) first, the northern coastal region of desert with occasional oases; second, a rising plateau of gravel that ends abruptly in a massive V-shaped escarpment; and third, the Sinaitic Mountains which form the triangular bottom of the peninsula.<sup>5</sup> The peninsula is a defensive barrier for the Suez Canal and in addition the exits of the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba can be militarily dominated from the shores of the peninsula.

The Gulf of Aqaba, lying to the east of the Sinai, is the natural extension of the Red Sea rift. The Gulf is approximately 95 nautical miles in length and varies in

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Pilot (10th ed.; London: Published for the Hydrographic Department, Admiralty, 1955), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>5</sup>David H. Cole, Imperial Military Geography (12th ed.; London: Sifton Praed and Co., 1956), p. 139.



width from three to slightly in excess of fourteen nautical miles.<sup>6</sup> The western coast (Egypt) is rocky and generally precipitous whereas the eastern coast (Saudi Arabia) has a wider coastal plain backed by mountains.<sup>7</sup> The mandated territories of Palestine and Transjordan had water frontages of six miles each at the north end of the Gulf. At the south end of the Gulf the two islands of Tiran and Sinafir together with coral formations restrict the navigable channel, the Strait of Tiran, to 600 yards in width.

South of the Strait of Jubal, the Egyptian coast extends for a distance of 330 miles. Along this coast there is a narrow coastal plain backed by a coastal range of mountains. Apart from a few minor ports there are no permanent settlements in this desertic, ill-favored region; and there is little communication inland from the coast which isolates the region from the main part of Egypt.

Continuing south along the west coast of the Red Sea, the northern coastal area of the Sudan is much the same as in Egypt until the region of Port Sudan is reached. Here the rainfall increases slightly and the communication inland via Port Sudan and Suakin is relatively better. Because of this, these two ports, primarily the former, dominate the economic activity of a large portion of the western side of the Sea.<sup>8</sup> The aspect of the southern coast of the Sudan is again like Egypt in that there is a coastal plain of varying widths backed by a coastal range which is, however, lower than that in Egypt. Of all the political units bordering the Sea, the Sudan is the most amply endowed with harbors.

<sup>6</sup>William M. Harris, Jr., "The Aqaba Dispute" (unpublished Master's dissertation, American University of Beirut, 1963), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Theodore J. Hogan, "The Middle East in Maritime Politics" (unpublished Master's dissertation, American University of Beirut, 1962), p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>Great Britain, Western Arabia and the Red Sea, p. 107.

South of the Sudan was located Eritrea. Eritrea was an artificial political entity that geographically was part of the Ethiopian massif (in the south), part of the natural geographical Sudan (in the west), and part of the desertic Red Sea coast in the east. It had an area of 45,000 square miles and had a shore frontage of 530 miles.<sup>9</sup> In the central part is the port of Massawa which was its best port. South of Massawa is the Dankali coast which is one of the most inhospitable desert areas in the world. At the southern end of Eritrea was the port of Assab which was developed by the Italians primarily as a military installation and was, even then, of doubtful economic importance.

South of Eritrea is French Somaliland. It is a small enclave that encircles the Gulf of Tadjura. The area is an extension of the barren Dankali coast. Its main town and port, Jibuti, was important to the French as a coaling station and because it was the terminus of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa Railroad, the one good means of transportation into Ethiopia.

British Somaliland adjoined French Somaliland to the east, and was about the size of England and Wales.<sup>10</sup> Lying on the south side of the Gulf of Aden the area is characterized by a flat coastal desert that rises in steps into the interior. There were no permanent settlements except along the coasts of which the two most important were the port of Zeila and the port of Berbera, which was also the capital. There is little communication into the interior.

<sup>9</sup>Stephen H. Longrigg, A Short History of Eritrea (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), Chapter I. After World War II Eritrea was incorporated into Ethiopia.

<sup>10</sup>A. J. Herbertson and O. J. R. Howarth, The Oxford Survey of the British Empire, Vol. 3: Africa (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1914), p. 299.

West of Eritrea, French Somaliland, and British Somaliland, is located Abyssinia/Ethiopia. Basically, Ethiopia is located on a rugged massif that varies in height from 6,000 to 11,000 feet. It is a unique area in that it enjoys a pleasant climate, is potentially rich, and is dominated by a Christian minority.<sup>11</sup> This independent country had the geographic and economic potential to dominate the whole southern end of the Red Sea and particularly the three coastal enclaves that blocked its exit to the Sea.

The eastern coast of the Red Sea is also physically fairly uniform. It is generally composed of the following parallel zones: first, coral formations paralleling the shore; second, a coastal plain (Tihama) that varies in width (it is wide opposite Mecca and the Yemen and narrow opposite Asir and the Midian, the north end of the coast);<sup>12</sup> and third, a mountain range that increases in altitude from north to south except for a gap in the vicinity of Mecca. It is an inhospitable coast with few harbors. Jeddah and Hodeida (Yemen) are the main ports of the coast with the secondary "sherm" ports of Wejh, Yenbo, Luhaiya, and Mocha. Politically, during the period of consideration, excluding the brief and limited area of Asiri control, the coast was controlled by Saudi Arabia (the northern 1,100 miles) and Yemen (the southern 300 miles). Whereas Yemen controlled part of the coast, it was much like Ethiopia in

<sup>11</sup>Mary E. Townsend, European Colonial Expansion Since 1871 (New York: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1941), p. 142. Ethiopia is in many ways more like an empire than a country. An Amharic (Coptic) population residing on the main massif, comprising less than half the territory of the country, was able to dominate its surrounding Muslim and pagan provinces. The religion of the ruling segment of the population is an archaic branch of Christianity, introduced in the area early in the Christian era that is fairly closely related to the Egyptian Coptic Church.

<sup>12</sup>W. B. Fisher, The Middle East (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 452.

that it was insular and isolated in the high mountain massif at the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen itself is favored with a mild climate, above 4000 feet, and thus has the potential to economically dominate the surrounding low lying areas.

Starting at the Yemeni border and proceeding along the north shore of the Gulf of Aden lies the Aden Protectorate. One hundred miles east of the Bab el Mandeb is located Aden Colony, containing a large and excellent port which is the only good natural harbor on the southern side of the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> The geographic formation of the Protectorate is similar to the east coast of the Red Sea, a coastal plain of varying widths backed by a coastal mountain range which rises to form part of the Yemeni massif.

Located at the southern entrance of the Red Sea is the Bab el Mandeb. (See Annex B for map of this area.)<sup>14</sup> It comprises a narrow strait lying between the African and Arabian shores. Located within the passage are three islands: Perim, Dumeira, and the Brothers, which are militarily important because they can control the narrow channel that is not more than ten miles wide.

The Island of Socotra, at the extreme eastern end of our area of interest, lies at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden. It is a large island of high hills but it does not possess a protected harbor. It had the potential, however, of supporting an airfield.

Kamaran Island lying off the coast of Yemen is of interest because it contained a large quarantine station which was used for Muslim pilgrims, but like the rest of

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence P. David, "British Administration of the Aden Colony and the Western Protectorate," (unpublished Master's dissertation, American University of Beirut Library, 1960), p. 1. The port of Aden is a result of volcanic activity.

<sup>14</sup>E. Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, II (3rd ed.; London: Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1909), p. 628.

the Red Sea islands, it is not self-sufficient.

The Farasan islands located off the coast of Asir are of little value although at one point it was thought that they contained petroleum deposits.

The rest of the small rocky volcanic islands that dot the Sea, particularly in the south, are of little consequence. Most of them have no fresh water and they at best may support a few fishermen, a lighthouse, pearl divers, or as in the past, slavers.

Climatically, the area alternates between desert and sea climates; extreme dry heat in the summer and also steaming winds from the sea. The variations in the climate are quite sudden but generally it is unpleasant the entire year.<sup>15</sup> There seems to be considerable rivalry among the different areas on the Red Sea coast for the claim to the most unpleasant climate. As a consequence it is difficult for the foreigner to work efficiently in this area except during the short, temporary relief that winter may afford.<sup>16</sup>

It can be seen that there are two primarily important areas in the system, the Suez Canal and the Bab el Mandeb. They are the two doors at the ends of the hallway connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean. Of lesser importance, but still a strategic significance, are the Straits of Jubal and Tiran, controlling the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba.

It is seen from this section that practically the entire area is physically and climatically unpleasant to an extreme. These characteristics effected and tempered the development of international interest in the area.

<sup>15</sup>Cyril Crossland, Desert and Water Gardens of the Red Sea (Cambridge: The University Press, 1913), p. 118.

<sup>16</sup>Ignatius Phayre, "The Risks of the Game," Current History, Vol. 42, No. 6 (September, 1935), p. 586.

## CHAPTER II - BACKGROUND PRIOR TO 1918

### Section I - The Area Prior to the 19th Century

The keystone of the history of the area prior to the 19th century was trade, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. When it was undisturbed, the land was prosperous, and when it was cut off, the people sank to a level of mere subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

The northern end of the Sea was in early times dominated by the Nilotic culture. It is known that as early as 2470 B.C., Egyptian vessels were sailing the sea. Sometime between 1000 and 2000 B.C. the first canal, the Canal of the Pharaohs, was built connecting the great riverine cities of the Nile with the Red Sea.<sup>2</sup> This canal went through various vicissitudes being reopened by Darius in the 6th century B.C., and later by Philadelphus Ptolemy.<sup>3</sup> During this latter period, Egypt had developed into a great entrepot as Mediterranean trade increased. The Red Sea trade route at this time competed with the caravan route that ran up the east coast of the Sea.

<sup>1</sup>Thomas E. Marston, Britain's Imperial Role in the Red Sea Area 1800-1878 (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1961), p. 12. While the northern end of the Red Sea was partially influenced by the Mediterranean economy, the main body of the Sea and the Gulf of Aden, to include the Somali coast, are part of the same area economically, culturally, and historically.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh J. Schonfield, The Suez Canal in World Affairs (London: Constellation Books, 1952), p. 3. This canal is interesting because of all the great canals of Egypt, this was the only one that was primarily orientated between Egypt and the Red Sea in which Egypt was the final user of the imports and not simply a transit area.

<sup>3</sup>Due to poor sailing conditions on the Gulf of Suez, trade via the canals was supplemented by use of the Red Sea ports of Egypt, like Quseir, where goods were landed, transshipped to the Nile, and thence floated down river to the great Egyptian markets.

After a period of neglect, the Emperor Trajan reopened the Canal in 98 A.D., and it remained open until the 3rd century A.D.<sup>4</sup> Under Roman control the Red Sea flourished, trade with the East prospered, and the Red Sea was a matter of imperial concern to Rome. After the decline of Roman power and consequential decline in trade, the northern end of the Sea had one final period of prosperity when the Muslims, under Amru ibn el Aas, in 642 A.D. reopened the Canal to trade. In 776 A.D., however, the Canal was deliberately closed and Egypt ceased to be an important entrepot. It was now situated on the hostile water frontier between the Muslim and Christian worlds.<sup>5</sup> Before considering the Muslim era, the trading partners of the Egyptians at the southern end of the Red Sea will be mentioned.

In early times, several kingdoms rose and fell at the southern gates to the Sea.<sup>6</sup> The Sabaeans, the first to build a kingdom, were followed by the Minaeans and later by the Himyarites. These kingdoms were built on trade, and it is generally believed that the towns on the southern coast of Arabia and Socotra were the entrepots where the Egyptian vessels transshipped their cargo to the Arabian vessels that carried them on to India and possibly even China. In addition, these southern Arabian kingdoms were the southern terminus of the great prosperous caravan route that followed the east coast of the Sea north. The entrance of Roman shipping into the

<sup>4</sup>Arnold T. Wilson, The Suez Canal (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>George F. Hourani, Arab Seafaring (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Philip K. Hitti, The History of the Arabs (7th ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1961), Chapter V. This source has a description of these kingdoms and their economic importance.

Indian Ocean, however, sounded the knell of the south Arabian prosperity.

Meanwhile across the Bab el Mandeb there arose in the early Christian era the Kingdom of Axum which for a short period controlled southern Arabia until it was expelled by Persia. The Persian conquest of the area was motivated by trade. The traders, sailing from the southern Red Sea, had been trade rivals with the Persians in India and thus a potential threat to Persian prosperity.

With the coming of Islam, in general two things occurred to the area: first, the entire area, except Abyssinia proper, was slowly Muslimized; second, the area started a long period of slow economic decline not because of Islam itself, but because, as has been mentioned before, Egypt was a frontier on a hostile lake and no longer a focal point of trade. It must not be assumed, however, that all trade stopped. There was still an active trade with Ceylon and China but very few of these goods ever reached the European market.

The year 1498, when Vasco da Gama reached India by means of the Cape of Good Hope, marked a turning point in the pattern of East-West trade. Following this discovery there were approximately three centuries during which various European powers fought for supremacy in the Indian Ocean trade. We are only concerned with this where it effected the Red Sea area itself. Portugal and Spain initially became the dominant rivals. Several Portuguese expeditions were led into the Red Sea in the 16th and early 17th centuries, but they encountered stiff opposition from the Mamluke Government in Egypt who saw them as a threat to the trade that still existed.

Early in the 16th century the Ottomans conquered Egypt. This started the period of nearly complete isolation of the north end of the Sea which was to continue until the 19th



century. The Ottomans, as the Mamlukes before them, were extremely suspicious of Christians sailing in the vicinity of the holy cities, and as a result, barred them from this area. Consequently, the northern Red Sea became an obscure backwater of the Red Sea economy.<sup>7</sup> Trade, however, was still carried on at the southern end of the Red Sea of which the most important was the coffee trade of Mocha.

After the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the commercial Empire of Spain and Portugal was left at the mercy of the Dutch and English.<sup>8</sup> In the latter part of the 17th century the English, after a series of naval wars, were able to reduce the Dutch influence in this area, thus leaving the French as England's only rival. Later, however, as a result of European wars, the English were left as the masters of the Indian Ocean and the trade of southern Arabia.

With the advent of British supremacy in the area, it is necessary to mention a few words about English trading procedures. The English Government granted in 1600 a charter to the British East India Company entitling it to a trade monopoly in the East which included the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. As the British became militarily dominant in the Indian Ocean, the policy of the Company was to protect the routes between Europe and India and to

<sup>7</sup>Marston, op. cit., p. 19. Neither the Osmanlis nor the Mamlukes liked either Christian owned or operated ships to be in the vicinity of the cities, primarily because of an incident that took place during the time of the Crusades. The Crusader Lord of Kerak in the 12th century managed to launch galleys onto the Red Sea and for nine months, before Egypt could put a war fleet to sea, this Christian corsair burned and pillaged pilgrim ships at will. This caused a great shock in the Muslim world.

<sup>8</sup>Maybelle K. Chapman, Great Britain and the Baghdad Railroad 1888-1914 (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1948), p. 1.

protect the trade monopoly in the Indian Ocean. As a corollary to this, they gave up the idea of trying to trade via the Red Sea because of (1) the opposition of the then strong Ottoman Empire and (2) of the British Levant Company which saw it as a threat to its monopoly for trade in the Mediterranean area.<sup>9</sup> The East India Company's specific interests in the area were (1) to maintain the peace, (2) to deny the area to other European penetration, and (3) to maintain their economic interests in the southern end of the Sea.<sup>10</sup>

The beginning of the 19th century marked the end of one phase of imperial history, the period of freewheeling private trading companies. In 1802, the Foreign Office took over the responsibilities of the Levant Company in the Mediterranean and in 1813 the East India Company lost much of its trade monopoly and political power. This later caused the situation by which the successor of the Company, the India Office, had responsibility for part of the area and the Foreign Office had responsibility for the other part. This split, caused by previous spheres of trading monopoly, led ultimately to much confusion in policy and to ministerial rivalry.

<sup>9</sup>Halford L. Hoskins, British Routes to India (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1928), pp. 8-20. During the period 1775-1780, thanks to the effort of Warren Hastings in Bengal and George Baldwin in Egypt, many English ships visited the port of Suez. By this means some messages were conveyed rapidly to Britain and some trade was carried out. By 1780, however, due to the violent objection by the Porte, the trade had become more dangerous than profitable. After that date very occasional British vessels would call at Suez but the resulting trade was only very minor.

<sup>10</sup>Marston, op. cit., p. 3. Economically the Company was interested in the coffee trade of Mocha and the penetration of the Yemen both of which were facilitated by the Company factory located in Mocha. Militarily, the Company was worried about Napoleon's occupation of Egypt at the end of the 18th century. To block any advance by him out of the Red Sea, the Company placed a garrison on Perim Island. After a short time the garrison was evacuated to Aden owing to the inhospitable conditions on Perim.

## Section II - The Roots of the Rivalries 1798-1918

In general, the international rivalries in the Red Sea area evolved and had their main roots in this period. Since the development of these rivalries varied from area to area depending on outside stimuli, it is necessary to consider each unit bordering the area separately. This vertical historical approach admittedly lacks chronological continuity for the entire area as a whole; however, the final portion of the chapter will bring into overall focus the paramount interests of the Powers as they existed at the end of World War I.

Egypt - The Napoleonic expedition to Egypt was a logical outgrowth of a generation of French policy in the Levant translated into action by particularly favorable occurrences in Europe and the East.<sup>11</sup> As it poised a potential fundamental danger to the security of India, Great Britain was obliged to oppose the expedition until it was eventually defeated in 1801.

The next half century of Egyptian history was dominated by Muhammad Ali Pasha (1806-1849). His efforts to maintain good relations with the British were frustrated by suspicion and concern arising from his expansionist policy in Arabia and Syria. Nothing could convince Palmerston that British interests would be served by an alliance with Near Eastern military power. British arms could defend British interests. Palmerston risked a general

<sup>11</sup>J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East 1535-1956, I (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 16.

Hoskins, op. cit., pp. 17-32. The French were not reconciled with the loss of their Indian possessions. In 1777 they were actually considering the physical occupation of Egypt but by 1783 this plan had been dropped. They continued the efforts, generally with success, to gain diplomatic ascendancy in Cairo.

European war in 1840 to force Muhammad Ali to withdraw his forces into Egypt, after the French-encouraged invasion of Syria.

Britain's Egyptian policy until 1882 remained constant and consisted of the following points: first, no Middle East power would be allowed to control the two land routes to India; second, paramount French influence in Cairo would not be allowed; and third, Britain was dead set against occupying Egypt. "The navy could dominate it and seize it if there were war with France. A garrison could add little advantage. . ."<sup>12</sup>

Although the French had been humiliated by the British in 1840, they remained diplomatically active in Egypt capitalizing on the legacy of Napoleon and their cultural ascendancy. They, like the British, based their policy on not allowing the other to become dominant in Cairo.

During Muhammad Ali's reign the industrial revolution and the application of steam power to ocean-going ships made the use of the Red Sea as a short-cut to India and the East imminent.<sup>13</sup> Generally the French favored

<sup>12</sup>Robin Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961), p. 77.

<sup>13</sup>John Marlowe, Anglo-Egyptian Relations (London: The Cresset Press, 1954), p. 42.

Hoskins, op. cit., pp. 59-233. This source contains a detailed description of how the British interest in the Red Sea "overland or alternate" route developed. From 1798 to the coming of the steam ship, overland communication with India was deemed safer via Syria and the Persian Gulf. With the coming of the modern ships various "steam committees" were formed, primarily in the Indian Presidencies, to encourage the new type of communication. The company's attitude was a mixture of hope and fear, liking the more rapid communication, but fearing it as a possible challenge to their position. In the early 1830's steam communication with Suez from India was proved feasible but preoccupation with the Russian threat caused the British Government in the mid 1830's to concentrate their efforts on the Euphrates route. When this proved impractical, attention from London was again directed to the Red Sea. By 1839 the Red Sea route was firmly established as the main quick route to India.

building a canal and the English favored building railroads to connect the seas. Muhammad Ali turned down all requests for a canal concession because of English opposition and his own convictions. English interests later obtained a concession for a railroad from Alexandria to Cairo.

Under Muhammad Ali's successor, Abbas (1849-1854), English influence became dominant in Cairo; however, in 1854 Abbas was followed to the Khedival throne by the Francophile Sa'id. One of the new ruler's first acts was to grant a canal concession to De Lesseps.

The story of the construction of the Canal and the great difficulties that De Lesseps overcame is a familiar one. De Lesseps had the support of the French Government. The British Government opposed the Canal for several reasons: they saw it as a securing by the French of a position of paramount influence in Cairo; they were then in control of the main route to India, and they saw no reason to jeopardize this favored position; they thought that the Canal would become a second Bosphorus; they did not want an Egyptian question as separate from the overall Eastern question; and they realized that in spite of its commercial advantages, it would create new grave international issues.<sup>14</sup> The British Government's position was criticized as being reactionary but in the light of the times it was partially realistic.

<sup>14</sup>Hoskins, *op. cit.*, p. 314. Palmerston told De Lesseps: "I must tell you frankly that what we are afraid of losing is our commercial and maritime pre-eminence for this canal would put other nations on an equal footing with us. At the same time I must own that we are not quite easy on the score of the designs of France. Of course we have every confidence in the sincerity of the Emperor, but who can answer for those who will come after him."

The opening of the Canal greatly increased the importance of Egypt from the point of view of British imperial communications, commerce, and strategy.<sup>15</sup> After the inauguration of the Canal, the British continued their efforts to thwart France from obtaining paramountcy in Cairo. The first step was Disraeli's purchase of a portion of the Canal Company, followed by the de facto English-French entente in the dual financial control. The British still had no territorial ambitions in Egypt.

The period 1880-1882, however, saw the rapid break-up of traditional British policy. Gladstone, the new Prime Minister, failed to maintain the British position of influence at the Porte, which previously had constituted the first line of defense of the Canal and the Red Sea route.<sup>16</sup> This loss of influence coupled with the internal disturbances in the country and with the vacillations of French foreign policy in 1882 led to the unilateral occupation of Egypt by Britain. By occupying Egypt, Britain abandoned the policy by which she had relied fundamentally on sea power with occasional land operations held in reserve.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the occupation succeeded in poisoning Anglo-French diplomatic relations until the entente cordiale of 1904.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Marlowe, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>16</sup>J. A. R. Marriott, The Eastern Question (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 93.

<sup>17</sup>Chatham House Study Group, British Interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>The French were irritated that the British had achieved uncontested control of Egypt, which country the French had considered would eventually fall to them. During this period the 1888 Convention of Constantinople was signed, but regardless of all that was written about it, the British were in de facto control of the Canal.

When Turkey declared war on the Allies in 1914, Britain declared Egypt a Protectorate. This was merely a proclamation of a state of affairs that was already in existence.<sup>19</sup> Egypt was converted into an armed camp and served as the base for the victorious campaign through the Turkish-Arab provinces.<sup>20</sup>

In describing the British strategic interests in Egypt, mention must be made of the eastern Egyptian border. Prior to 1906, most of the Sinai Peninsula was beyond Egypt's frontiers. As this did not suit the British, they conducted negotiations with the Porte, forcing the Turkish Government to acknowledge that Egypt had sovereignty over the entire Sinai.<sup>21</sup> This movement of the boundary to the east was done to suit the strategic convenience of the British garrisons around the Canal. It is a good example of the buffer area policy that the British commonly sought to employ. They endeavored, when possible, to ring vital strategic locations with buffer states or areas that served as a cushion to guard the strategic area itself.

The Sudan - Another good example of the British buffer area policy was the case of the Sudan. The area that comprises the Sudan was originally conquered in 1820-21 by Muhammad Ali, but during the latter part of his reign and under his two immediate successors the area was a

<sup>19</sup>George Louis Beer, African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 374. From 1882 to 1914 the "temporary" British occupation of Egypt had become more and more permanent. All the real power remained in English hands.

<sup>20</sup>T. Dodson Stamps and Vincent J. Esposito, A Short Military History of World War I (United States Military Academy: General Printing Office, 1950), p. 236. See this source for a description of the military activities that were carried on in the area.

<sup>21</sup>H. F. Frischwasser-Ra'anan, The Frontiers of a Nation (London: The Batchworth Press, 1955), pp. 130-147. This source has a description of the negotiations and the various boundaries that were proposed.

backwater. The Khedive Isma'il, however, revitalized the idea of an Egyptian-African Empire. This was about the time of the opening of the Suez Canal but before the European-African land rush started. The English had no objections to Isma'il's occupation of the Red Sea coast of the Sudan as it served to forestall its occupation by a European power. Later, however, the picture was drastically changed by the collapse of the Egyptian Empire, the disposition of Isma'il, the rise of the Mahdi in the Sudan, and the English occupation of Egypt.

The initial British policy in the Sudan was torturous and much too complicated to describe in detail. In short, after much vacillation, they abandoned the Sudan to the Mahdi, while maintaining control of the Red Sea coast.<sup>22</sup> They maintained their authority in that area to protect the Red Sea route and also to use its harbors to combat the slave trade in the Red Sea which was an important political issue at home.<sup>23</sup>

During the last decade of the 19th century, the great rush for colonies started in Africa. In the councils of Europe, Britain maintained, with increasing difficulty, that Egypt, based on the conquests of Muhammad Ali and Isma'il, had claim to the entire Sudan and Nile Valley. The Suez Canal had made Egypt vital to Britain and therefore, Britain needed a buffer zone to protect Egypt.<sup>24</sup> The French, still at odds with Britain over her occupation of Egypt, attempted a pincers movement to secure a position across the Nile River in the Sudan. This threat was in essence what bestirred Great Britain to the reconquest of the Nile. Salisbury's excuse for the reconquest was that

<sup>22</sup>Mekki Shibeika, The Independent Sudan (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, Publishers, 1959), p. 133.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>24</sup>Hogan, op. cit., p. 152.



he was coming to the aid of the Italians who had just been defeated by the Ethiopians and who had requested the aid of Britain. ". . . the movement was intended to help the Italians, the ulterior motive was to restore a portion of her lost territory to Egypt."<sup>25</sup>

The British established a "hybrid" government in the Sudan by which, in theory, the British and the Egyptians were co-partners, but in fact, the British were supreme. The rule of the British in the Sudan under the absolute power of the Governor-General was ". . . a benevolent autocracy organized on military lines for civil purposes."<sup>26</sup>

The following points were the general strategic British interests in the Sudan: first, it was a possible point of retreat if they were ever forced out of Egypt; second, it was an instrument of political strategy in that "if we settle at the headwaters of the Nile, we command Egypt;" third, from the Sudan, Britain could watch her other interests in the Red Sea and East Africa; and fourth, Britain feared that an Egyptian-Sudan union might create a powerful state that would be able to dominate the Red Sea.<sup>27</sup>

Nothing occurred in the Sudan during the war, and the end of the war found the Sudan still in fact absolutely controlled by the British.

Eritrea - This area is interesting for two reasons: first, its eventual acquisition by Italy marked the Italian debut in the Red Sea; and second, because Italy possessed

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<sup>25</sup>Robinson and Gallagher, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>26</sup>A. Baddour, Sudanese-Egyptian Relations (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 106.

<sup>27</sup>A. Fabunmi, The Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800-1956 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1960), p. 196.

this colony, she was able in 1935 to launch her successful attack against Ethiopia which is discussed in Chapter IV.

All of Eritrea was included in the African Empire of Isma'il except for the port of Assab which had been occupied previously by an Italian company for use as a coaling station.<sup>28</sup> With the collapse of the Egyptian Empire, Great Britain put every obstacle in the way of reestablishment of direct Turkish rule on the coast. In 1878, Britain invited her European client, Italy, to establish herself somewhere in the Red Sea. This proposal was taken up by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mancini, who uttered the prophetic words that Italy would find the keys of the Mediterranean in the Red Sea.<sup>29</sup> In 1885 Italy annexed the Massawa area, after she had been given a free hand to do so by the British. This was shortly after Britain had promised essentially the same area to the Negus (King) of Ethiopia for services performed in evacuation of some Egyptian garrisons out of the eastern Sudan.

In 1885, Italy, after consolidating her coastal position between Assab and Massawa, started to penetrate inland. Britain informed her that, while she could occupy the coastal area, she could not encroach on Sudanese territory. Britain considered the town of Kassala, which the Italians coveted, to be Sudanese even though it was then occupied by the Mahdi. She was able thus to stop the first minor threat to Sudanese territory.

Following this, the Italians turned their attention towards securing a position in Ethiopia. This will be discussed in the following section. After her defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians, the mood in Italy turned anti-colonial. She reached a series of accords with the

<sup>28</sup>Luigi Villari, The Expansion of Italy (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1930), p. 45.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

neighbors of Eritrea directed toward establishing firm boundaries and then interest in the colony waned in Rome. Before the beginning of the First World War, Italy made some small efforts towards penetrating into Yemen across the Sea. They were unsuccessful except that some Yemenites were enlisted into Italy's colonial army.<sup>30</sup>

Ethiopia - It is necessary to go into detail concerning the international rivalries and strategic interests in Ethiopia because they formed the basis for the Ethiopian crisis of the mid-1930's which rocked the power balance in the Red Sea to its foundations.

Up to the 19th century, Ethiopia/Abyssinia was a country isolated to outsiders, but during the 19th century, European interest slowly developed in this area. The first major outside intrusion in the area was when the British invaded the country in 1869 under Sir Robert Napier with Indian troops to secure the release of some European prisoners being held by the Negus Theodore.<sup>31</sup> After securing their object and releasing the prisoners, the British army withdrew from the country. The expedition resulted paradoxically enough in the defeat and death of the Negus Theodore. Previous to the expedition, Theodore had been backed by the British for the throne in anticipation of the opening of the Canal. The French had backed another candidate but had lost.<sup>32</sup> This had been the second failure of the French to penetrate the area, the first having been religious.

<sup>30</sup>Great Britain, Western Arabia and the Red Sea, p. 306.

<sup>31</sup>Alan Moorehead, The Blue Nile (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), pp. 205-274. This source contains an interesting account of the expedition. For a more factual account, see: Marston, op. cit., pp. 271-340.

<sup>32</sup>Longrigg, A Short History of Eritrea, p. 90.

The next major stage in the history of Ethiopia is the advent of Isma'il's African Empire. The indifference of Britain and the weakness of the defeated France (1870) suggested to Isma'il that he had nothing to fear in his idea of expansion. By 1874 Isma'il had occupied the entire Somali coast thus cutting Ethiopia off from the Sea. The Negus John, Theodore's successor, appealed to the Christian powers to help him against the Muhammadan (Egyptian) threat. France, irritated by the sale of the Suez Canal Company shares to the British Government, and as part of their policy of opposition to Britain, supplied the Negus with arms.<sup>33</sup> In 1875 and again in 1876, the Ethiopians defeated Egyptian expeditions sent against them. With the second Egyptian defeat, the threat collapsed.

The next threat to Ethiopia came from the Italians in Eritrea. In 1889 Italy signed the Treaty of Ucciali with Ethiopia but there was immediate disagreement about the treaty. The Italians said that the Ethiopians had agreed to put their foreign affairs under the control of Rome. The Negus Menelik, John's successor, disagreed with this interpretation. Meanwhile, Great Britain was encouraging the Italian activity in Ethiopia for two reasons: first, she was counting on Italy's help with other problems in the Mediterranean; and second, if Italy was able to master Menelik, this would dispose of the possibility of his appearing in the Nile Valley as France's ally.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, two Anglo-Italian Agreements, 1891 and 1894, were signed which by their secret annexes gave the Italians a sphere of influence over nearly all of modern Ethiopia. This was the first basis for the Italian claim for this area.

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<sup>33</sup>M. Rifaat, The Awakening of Modern Egypt (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1947), p. 149.

<sup>34</sup>Robinson and Gallagher, op. cit., p. 331.

In 1893 Menelik informed the Powers that he was not going to renew the treaty with Italy in the following year. He looked for aid to France. In September 1893 the French Minister Carnot sent him a letter, vague but unmistakably friendly, and Menelik caught the drift so well that he asked for and received rifles and ammunition. Using the ultimatum of Menelik as a pretext, the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1894 and were decisively beaten at the Battle of Aduwa. This defeat effectively halted the Italian colonial aspirations.

Following the defeat of the Italians there was an immediate struggle among the Powers to take over the forfeited position of influence in Abyssinia. The French were initially the most successful.<sup>35</sup> They, because of the material support they had given previously, were able to obtain a concession to build a railroad from Jibuti to Addis Ababa (to be discussed later). Also they agreed to "cede" to Abyssinia a large segment of territory (Sudanese) in the Nile Valley. This was part of their abortive scheme to cut the Valley before the British could reconquer the Sudan. A British mission was sent to counter the French but it failed and by 1898 French influence was supreme in Addis Ababa.<sup>36</sup> After the reconquest of the Sudan, the British policy for Abyssinia came into clear focus. They were interested in the Blue Nile and Lake Tana, desiring a decisive say in the affairs of this in order to safeguard their position in the Sudan and Egypt.

In the meanwhile construction on the French railroad that had been started in 1898 ceased for lack of capital.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 360. The first statesman to make a bid to take over the wreckage of the Italian sphere was Leopold of the Belgians but this came to nothing.

<sup>36</sup>A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, A Short History of Ethiopia (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 150-159. At the same time the influence of the Imperial German Government started to grow in the area.

In 1902, after turning down private British capital, work on the line was resumed, having been subsidized by the French Government. Menelik forced a stoppage on the road when he heard of the involvement of the French Government in the company thinking it was an infringement on his sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Work was eventually resumed in 1906.

In 1902, the Italians, worried about Menelik's health and the dominance of French influence in Addis Ababa approached the British about agreeing upon his successor.<sup>38</sup> They reached a tentative agreement but these negotiations were interrupted by the coming of the Entente Cordiale,

In 1906 an agreement was signed between Great Britain, France, and Italy which provided for the following: first, maintenance of the status quo in Ethiopia; second, non-interference in the internal affairs of the country; third, restrictions on the French railroad rights; and fourth, maintenance of the integrity of Ethiopia.<sup>39</sup> In a secret article to the treaty, the Italian sphere of influence over a large part of the country, as outlined in the 1891 and 1894 Anglo-Italian Agreements, was recognized.

The signing of this treaty was occasioned by the growth of German influence in Addis Ababa. It was felt that a clear statement of intent by the three Powers would slow the German advance. This was not the case, and German influence continued to grow as the war approached.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>E. P. MacCallum, Rivalries in Ethiopia, World Affairs Pamphlet No. 12 (New York: World Peace Foundation, 1935), p. 32.

<sup>38</sup>William L. Langer, "The Struggle for the Nile," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January, 1936), p. 268.

<sup>39</sup>Hertslet, II, op. cit., pp. 436-446.

<sup>40</sup>Jones and Monroe, op. cit., pp. 150-159.

In 1907 an Ethiopian Imperial Mission went to see the Kaiser in Berlin.<sup>41</sup>

After 1906 in Ethiopia internal dynastic problems continued until the outbreak of the war. Menelik died in 1913. His grandson and successor, Lij Yasu, became a tool of German agents during the war, proclaimed himself a Muslim, and tried to start a war against the Italians.<sup>42</sup> Before the allies could take action against him, he was disposed of by the Christian leaders of the country.<sup>43</sup>

French and British Somaliland - The first interest shown in these areas was in 1840 when, one year after the annexation of Aden, an agent of the East India Company signed treaties with most of the local sheikhs around the Gulf of Tajura and, in addition, purchased some of the islands in the Gulf. Following this, however, no action was made to take advantage of these treaties.<sup>44</sup>

In 1862 the French purchased, by means of a treaty with the local ruler, the town of Obock on the north shore of the Gulf of Tajura. This area previously had been in treaty relations with Britain but the latter raised no objection to the French action.

The coastal areas of the two territories were incorporated later into the short-lived Egyptian-African Empire.

A convention was signed in 1877 by which the British

<sup>41</sup>Ladislas Farago, Abyssinia on the Eve (London: Putnam, 1935), p. 209. It was during this period that a curious footnote to history occurred. The Tsarist Government of Russia in the period immediately prior to the war attempted to obtain a foothold in this area and win over the population to the Orthodox Church. After the Russian Revolt, this interest ceased.

<sup>42</sup>Norman Bentwich, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somaliland (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., no date), pp. 11-12.

<sup>43</sup>Robert L. Baker, "Egypt's Stake in Ethiopia," Current History, Vol. 42, No. 5 (August, 1935), pp. 553-555. During the war an unsuccessful plan was made by German agents in the country to blast the bank of the Blue Nile near Lake Tana, diverting the flow of the river, and thus jeopardizing the position of Britain in Sudan and Egypt.

<sup>44</sup>Hertslet, I, op. cit., p. 408.

recognized the Egyptian jurisdiction in these areas, but it was never ratified by the Sultan and its raison d'etre collapsed the following year with the fall of the Egyptian Empire.<sup>45</sup>

Following the collapse of the Egyptians there was a short period of calm before the area was partitioned. The British were, after 1882, too uncertain of their own position in Egypt to lay claim to all of the African provinces of Egypt. She was careful, however, to insure that no power installed herself on the coast opposite Aden.<sup>46</sup>

In 1883 during the Tonkin War in China, Britain closed Aden to French shipping. This demonstrated to France the urgent need for a French-controlled coaling station at the south end of the Red Sea.<sup>47</sup> In 1884, probably as a result of the above, France unilaterally annexed the south side of the Gulf of Tajura. Between 1884 and 1886, Britain signed treaties with ten tribes along the Somali Coast, and in 1887 she informed the Powers that she had established a Protectorate on the Somali Coast.<sup>48</sup>

It can be seen at a glance that the area that France received was very small. Its only use to France was as a coaling station and later as the terminus of the one railroad into Ethiopia. It was hemmed in between the long Italian and British controlled coasts.

<sup>45</sup>The Earl of Cromer, Modern Egypt, II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 49.

<sup>46</sup>Herbert Adams Gibbons, The New Map of Africa (New York: The Century Co., 1917), pp. 106-107.

<sup>47</sup>Townsend, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>48</sup>Hertslet, I and II, op. cit. See these sources for a complete summary of all the treaties and conventions that were involved. In 1888 France and England agreed to the boundary between their two zones.



Western and Southern Arabia - Compared to the western coast of the Red Sea, which was intimately involved in the European colonial sweepstakes, the eastern coast remained in relative obscurity during this period. It was a dark, unknown, inhospitable area that had little attraction for the European powers. Well-defined frontiers did not exist in this area until some time after the conclusion of the war. Basically what existed there during this period were four centers of fluid power, which were Hejaz, Asir, Yemen, and the Aden area. These have to be considered together as their histories are intimately interwoven.

As far as the British were concerned the area was the responsibility of the India Office until 1915. As a result, British interests in this area were based on specifically Indian rather than Empire interests. The general policy for Arabia had two characteristics: first, it was the intent to deny the area to any other Power while at the same time utilizing it as a market for Indian goods; second, it was characterized, particularly in the latter part of the period, by the creation of protectorates over local tribal areas in which the British handled the foreign affairs of the given area.<sup>49</sup>

Aside from the previously established economic interest, the first new interest shown in the area in the 19th century was when Henry Salt in 1809 recommended to the Company that Aden be occupied and that an alliance be made with the Sharif of Abu 'Arish, who then controlled the southern Tihama.<sup>50</sup> Nothing was done about this recommendation. Previously the Company had refused to sign a treaty with the Adenise sheikh in 1799.<sup>51</sup> The Red Sea itself had not

<sup>49</sup>Marston, op. cit., p. 496. This was particularly true in the south near Aden. This is yet another example of commonly seen buffer zone policies of the British.

<sup>50</sup>Henry Dodwell, The Founder of Modern Egypt (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1931), p. 56.

<sup>51</sup>David, op. cit., p. 29.

yet become an important British interest.

Shortly after 1830, however, the expansion of Muhammad Ali brought the Red Sea into the forefront of British attention. For a variety of reasons, the temporary suspension of the coffee trade at Mocha by the Egyptians, the possibility of the use of steam transportation in the Red Sea, a desire to keep Muhammad Ali away from the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the failure of Socotra to serve as an adequate coaling station, among others, led to the British seizure of Aden in 1839. At the time of its seizure, the British commander uttered the prophetic words that: "It requires only a European war to develop its true value."<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Ali protested its seizure saying that it was part of the Yemen which he was at that time occupying but the British rejected this claim.

By 1840 the Egyptian armies had withdrawn from the western shores of Arabia. There followed a short period of tribal strife until 1849 when the Turks reinvaded and occupied the Yemen and the Hejaz. The Turks never, particularly in the latter part of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, had control of Asir because of the rising power of the Idrisi Imam of Sabya. Because of the Turkish control of the Yemen the British, in order to protect Aden, whose value had been highly enhanced by the opening of the Canal, started in 1888 to make treaties with the neighboring sheikhs.<sup>53</sup> Here again, similar to the Sinai and the Sudan, the British were attempting to protect a strategically important position by means of a buffer.

After the Turkish reoccupation of the Yemen the country still remained nearly completely isolated. A few Italians

<sup>52</sup>By a Correspondent, "Why the British are in Aden," Great Britain and the East, Vol. 52, No. 1443 (January 19, 1939), p. 64.

<sup>53</sup>David, op. cit., p. 47.

before the war had some success in conducting trade in the area. Also before the war, S. Martini, the Italian Governor of Eritrea, was able to enter into relations with the Turkish authorities in Yemen.<sup>54</sup> Nothing of importance was accomplished by this, but it indicated an Italian preoccupation with Arabia in general and Yemen in particular.<sup>55</sup> Another manifestation of this latent interest in Arabian affairs occurred during the Tripolitanian War. At that time there were demonstrations in Italy, undoubtedly government organized, against the Turkish regime in Jedda, but the reaction of the other European powers to this Italian ambition was distinctly unfavorable.<sup>56</sup>

In 1908, under the guise of the Pan-Islamic movement, Sultan Abdul Hamid, supported by the dominant German imperial influence in Constantinople, was able to complete the Hejaz railroad to Medina. This was a cause of imperial concern to England. With the completion of the railroad, the Kaiser could potentially move troops entirely by rail from Berlin to Medina, thus flanking the British position on the Red Sea.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, a short spur line could easily be build from Ma'an to Aqaba which would allow the Germans to disembark troops at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba.

In 1911 war in a minor form came directly to the western coast of Arabia. During the Turko-Italian war,

<sup>54</sup>Villari, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>55</sup>Edward Hutton, "Ethiopia, the Fascist Empire," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 118 (October, 1935), p. 427. In 1916 a book was published in Italy that claimed, among other things, that the Yemen should be exclusively an Italian sphere of influence because it was so close to Eritrea and because the areas (Yemen and Eritrea) had a common heritage of 2000 years. If the Yemen was given to any other Power it would be the death of Eritrea economically.

<sup>56</sup>Albert Howe Lybyer, "Italy's Ambitions in the Near East," Current History, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May, 1927) pp. 297-299.

<sup>57</sup>Hogan, op. cit., p. 170.

the Italians bombarded the Turkish-garrisoned port of Hodeida with insignificant results. They maintained for a while an ineffectual blockade of the coast.<sup>58</sup>

With the outbreak of World War I and the entry of Turkey into the war on the side of Germany, the situation in the Red Sea initially was critical for the British. In the Yemen there were two Turkish divisions which attempted unsuccessfully to capture Aden at the beginning of the war. Throughout the rest of the war a stalemate ensued but the Yemen remained in the hands of the Turks. In 1918 the British bombarded and occupied the port of Hodeida.

In Asir, as a precautionary measure against possible trouble from Yemen, the British concluded a treaty with the Idrisi Imam who was the leader of the Asir tribal confederation.<sup>59</sup> This treaty recognized the independence of the Imam and did not compromise his sovereignty. This treaty was concluded by the Government of India, which was to have direct responsibility for this area until the end of the British raj after World War II. Italy, after her belated entrance into the war also gave support to Asir's effort to maintain her independence.<sup>60</sup>

The beginning of the World War I found the India Office still responsible for the entire Red Sea area. Because of the extreme vulnerability of the Canal and the Sea itself, the British finally had to bestir themselves to define authorities. The Foreign Office, working through the Arab Bureau in Cairo, was given

<sup>58</sup>Ameen Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 127.

<sup>59</sup>Hurewitz, II, op. cit., p. 11. This source contains the text of the treaty.

<sup>60</sup>Hans Kohn, Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 257.

responsibility for the Red Sea coast north of Jedda.<sup>61</sup> This, however, did not make the British strategic interests any clearer. They were pulled in two directions. On the one hand the Viceroy of India, worrying about the effect upon the Indian Muslims, was opposed first, to the coastal blockade of the Turkish-controlled Hejaz which was instigated at the beginning of the war, and second, to giving encouragement to the Sharif of Mecca to revolt. The Indian Government recoiled at the thought of dividing Islam, stirring up trouble for the Caliph, and exposing the pilgrimage to danger.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the representatives of the Foreign Office, having clear indications that Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca, was amenable to throwing off his allegiance to the Sultan, favored the encouragement of his revolt. This second school of thought, perhaps because it helped the short-term needs of the war, was approved.

The story of Hussein's revolt in the Hejaz is a familiar one. On 5 June 1916, the revolt started and on 6 July 1917, the great Arab war leader 'Auda Abu Tayeh captured the port of Aqaba, which was later used to supply the further campaigns to the north.<sup>63</sup> In final analysis, the Arab revolt was a political move forced on Britain as the great power whose Muslim subjects owed special allegiance to an enemy. If the holy cities could be shown as not being under enemy control and if access to them

<sup>61</sup>Joel Carmichael, "Prince of Arabs," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20, No. 4 (July, 1942), p. 725.

<sup>62</sup>Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), p. 39.

<sup>63</sup>George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (Beirut: Khayat's College Book Cooperative, 1938), p. 222.

could be guaranteed, a danger to the fabric of the empire could be removed.<sup>64</sup>

The revolt had a beneficial side result to the British. A German mission under Baron von Stotzingen, which happened to be passing through the Hejaz when the revolt started, was destroyed. The object of the mission was to establish a radio post in southern Arabia, which was to broadcast propaganda to Somaliland, Abyssinia, and the Sudan and was also to encourage the Turks in the Yemen to renew their efforts to capture Aden.<sup>65</sup>

One other point must be mentioned concerning strategic British interests in Arabia at that time and what their relationship was with Ibn Sa'ud of the Nejd. Whereas he did not become a power to be reckoned with on the Red Sea until later, he entered into a treaty arrangement with the Indian Government in 1915, whereby in consideration for a subsidy and some arms, he promised to remain neutral during the war. At that time the British failed to realize the potential strength of the **desert** leader who was the head of the Wahhabis. The Foreign Office accepted the Arab Bureau's view that Hussein was the best candidate to lead the revolt. Since Ibn Sa'ud and Hussein were enemies, it was convenient to have Ibn Sa'ud neutralized during the war.

Finally, we have to consider the results of the secret allied agreements concerning the partition of the Ottoman Empire that were made during the war. In general they do not apply directly to our area of interest except

<sup>64</sup>Ronald Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan (London: John Murray, 1955), p. 181.

Henry H. Cummings, Franco-British Rivalry in the Post War Near East (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 15. The French knew about the coming revolt but refused to take any interest in it. At the time this was considered in some French circles as a grave blunder.

<sup>65</sup>Antonius, op. cit., pp. 208-209.

for two things: first, all of the agreements that were made envisioned an independent Arabia proper presumably, though not mentioned, under the leadership of Hussein of the Hejaz; second, and of far greater ultimate consequence, the agreements that were made with Italy to induce her to enter the war on the side of the allies whetted the Italian's appetite for colonial expansion. Aside from her expansion to the Brenner in Europe, she was offered, among other things, the island of Kamaran, or Socotra, or even possibly Jibuti. Unfortunately, Italy made the mistake of not obtaining more definitive promises.<sup>66</sup>

The Islands - Basically the Red Sea islands, historically speaking, have not been important except for those located in the Bab el Mandeb. The first interest in the islands occurred in the early 1830's when the merchant community in India proposed that Socotra and Kamaran Islands be seized to be used as coaling stations.<sup>67</sup> In connection with this request, the island of Socotra was occupied in 1834, but due to its lack of harbors, it proved to be unsuitable and was abandoned in 1835. In 1886 the British made it a protectorate under the control of Aden. This was an operation to simply deny its use to others.

In 1857 the British officially (they had previously occupied it for a short period in 1799) took possession of Perim Island in the Bab el Mandeb, just 24 hours prior to the arrival of a French warship that had a similar mission.<sup>68</sup> This island is of strategic importance because

<sup>66</sup>Great Britain, Western Arabia and the Red Sea, op. cit., p. 308.

<sup>67</sup>Dionysius Lardner, Steam Communication with India by the Red Sea (London: Allen and Co., 1837), p. 25. They, by their insular nature, would have been easy to defend and immune to mainland tribal strife.

<sup>68</sup>Ladislav Farago, Arabian Antic (New York: Sheridan House, 1938), p. 254.

artillery, when placed there, can control the narrow Strait. Up to the end of World War I the British had made no effort to fortify the island. Also located in the Bab el Mandeb are the Brother Islands and Dumeira Island. (See Annex B) At the conclusion of the war, these islands were included in French Somaliland but they were unoccupied by the French.

About 200 miles north of the Bab el Mandeb, lying close to the Yemeni coast, is Kamaran Island. Prior to the war, the Turks had established there a large pilgrimage quarantine station. The English seized it from the Turks in 1915 and continued to utilize it for the same purpose. It had a good protected harbor and had the potential to be utilized as a military base.

The final group of islands of interest are the Farasan Islands which lie off the coast of Asir. In order to maintain friendly relations with the Idrisi of Asir, the British in 1917 recognized that these islands belonged to the Imam.<sup>69</sup> The only condition on this agreement was, however, that the Imam agreed not to allow these islands to be utilized by any other power.

Summary - Now that the international rivalries and diplomatic interests of the Powers have been discussed, it yet remains to summarize the situation which existed at the conclusion of the war.

In November 1918 the dominant power in the Red Sea area was Great Britain. She was physically in control of Egypt, the Sudan, British Somaliland, and Aden. In addition, she was closely allied with the rulers of the Hejaz and Asir. Her basic policy was, as it had been in the past, to maintain tranquility in the area to insure

<sup>69</sup>Hurewitz, II, op. cit., p. 11.



that the Red Sea route remained open. The war had forced her to greatly extend her commitments in the area. Her influence had had to fill the vacuum in areas where she had previously relied on the Ottoman Empire. She had constructed a system of authority and influence that preserved the strategic unity of the Sea. The Red Sea was probably still considered by the British to be an extension of the Indian Ocean. Living in the present, we are apt to underestimate the tremendous role that India played in the British scale of values. India was the center, the keystone of her Empire, "the jewel in the diadem."

In addition to trade, Britain's Red Sea policy had to concern itself with strategic and communication interests. One is liable to forget about the Indian army, the great overseas military establishment of the British Empire. In practically every military operation conducted in the Red Sea area by the British prior to 1918, the force had been predominantly drawn from that army. The Red Sea had to be kept open for its deployment to the West in case of need. Likewise, Britain was extremely sensitive about the nervous system of the Empire, her imperial communications, her all-red route. The main eastward submarine cables of the Empire (this was before the era of powerful radios) passed through Egypt, the Red Sea, and Aden.<sup>70</sup> It was essential to her interests that these remain intact.

Of the other two Powers interested directly in the Red Sea, France was in the weakest position. Her sole possession was the small enclave of French Somaliland. It appears that the French were essentially unmoved by this situation. In the first place the center of gravity of her colonial possessions was in North Africa and not

<sup>70</sup>Cole, op. cit., pp. 218-221.

to the east of Suez, and thus not vitally dependent upon the Canal. In the second place the mutual interests of the British Empire and the French Overseas Empire had, since 1904, been getting closer and closer. This was further cemented by the experiences of World War I. The French in 1918 were in the process of approaching the attitude that the British would protect their line of communication through the Red Sea to their Eastern possessions.

The final Power that was directly interested in the Red Sea at the close of the war was Italy. The Italian policy at that time in regard to the Red Sea was complicated, unclear, even in their own minds, and conditioned by several, often contradictory, attitudes. As contrasted to the English, the Italians thought of the Red Sea as an extension of the Mediterranean and thus to them it was part and parcel of Mediterranean politics. The defeat of the Italian army at Aduwa in 1896 had caused a reaction in the country to colonialism, but three factors had served to keep alive the Italian colonial spirit: first, maritime and commercial interests in the Red Sea; second, the need for penal settlements; and finally, the need for emigration from the overcrowded homeland.<sup>71</sup> Probably the main reason that Italy did not have a definite formulated policy is that: first, she was not a first-class power and could not speak with the same authority as could London and Paris; and second, she was at the time suffering from unfortunate leadership.

It should be mentioned in passing that the war witnessed the departure from the Red Sea of two minor participants. These were Germany with her Arabian and Ethiopian interests and Russia with her minor Ethiopian interests.

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<sup>71</sup>Maxwell H. H. Macartney and Paul Cremona, Italy's Foreign Policy and Colonial Policy 1914-1937 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 275.

## CHAPTER III - DEVELOPING RIVALRIES, 1918-1935

### Section I - Peace Treaties, War-Time Agreements, and their Consequences

The end of World War I did not materially change the pattern of events in the Red Sea. The war's major result was the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent increase in British influence.

The most important result of the peace treaties was the frustration of Italian colonial ambitions. Italy entered the war on the side of the allies because, among other things, she had been promised colonial compensation, in part, in the Red Sea. In these ambitions she was frustrated by the peacemakers. While the Italian delegation was temporarily away from the Paris Peace Conference, France and Great Britain divided between themselves the African colonies of Germany.<sup>1</sup> The frustrated recriminations of the Italians were ignored by the great Powers.<sup>2</sup>

The war resulted in changes in sovereignty on the Peninsula and around the Gulf of Aqaba. Generally, these changes were visualized and incorporated into the

<sup>1</sup>Barbara Ward, The International Share-Out (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1940), p. 123. Germany had no colonies as such in the Red Sea area; however, there is a possibility that if Italy had been given German East Africa that this would have forestalled her later ambitions in Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 68. After the war Italy demanded that Kassala in the Sudan, French Somaliland, and the Jibuti-Addis Ababa Railroad be ceded to her. These demands were rejected outright.

Arthur B. Keith, The Causes of the War (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1940), pp. 269-270. Later Italy requested British Somaliland as a partial compensation for her war-time services. Lord Milner took strong exception to this, foreseeing clearly the danger of Italian control of Ethiopia where she could raise large forces and menace the Sudan. Mr. Lloyd George refused to plant a possible enemy in this key position.

Sykes-Picot Agreement. By Article 10 of this accord, the Powers attempted to neutralize the Peninsula. They agreed to protect it and not to allow a third power to acquire territorial possessions, nor to establish a naval base there, or on the islands of the Red Sea.<sup>3</sup>

The use of submarines during the war had directed attention to the strategic importance of the Gulf of Aqaba. The British initially considered moving the boundary of Egypt to the east to include the whole Gulf, but this idea was later rejected as the Hejazi regime appeared to be stable.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, after the Conference of San Remo, Britain obtained the area of Palestine as a mandate, which included the strategic northern end of the Gulf. Among the other reasons that the British insisted on obtaining this mandate were their desire to safeguard their political monopoly in Arabia from the French and to have Palestine serve as a buffer area to protect the Canal.<sup>5</sup>

Another change in sovereignty resulting from the war concerned the Turkish islands in the Red Sea. By the first Turkish peace treaty (1920), and by the Treaty of

<sup>3</sup>Hurewitz, II, op. cit., p. 20. Initially France, Great Britain, and Russia were parties to this agreement. Later Italy agreed to these provisions. It is assumed that Great Britain, being dominant in the area, dictated the terms.

<sup>4</sup>Beer, op. cit., p. 391. Also, at that time, Britain had a strong influence in Hejazi affairs.

<sup>5</sup>Frischwasser-Ra'anan, op. cit., pp. 130-147. Ibn Sa'ud, when he replaced Hussein in the Hejaz, did not recognize the (British) authority in the Aqaba area.

Cummings, op. cit., p. 8. Another related reason why Britain did not want France in Palestine is that she was loath to see the French dominant in the eastern Mediterranean and thus be in a potentially threatening position.

Lausanne (1923), the sovereignty of the islands was not clarified.<sup>6</sup> Except for Kamaran and Perim Islands, which the British controlled, the remainder of the islands fell under the control of the adjacent mainland ruler.

The final change in sovereignty caused by the war was in Yemen. After Turkey's defeat, their garrison in Yemen was evacuated via Hodeida and the uplands reverted to the control of Imam Yahya of San'a.

It is seen that Great Britain, by result of treaties and war-time operations, was able to enhance her position in the Red Sea.<sup>7</sup> The war had, however, changed the attitudes of the western powers. In 1918, they were economically crippled and had a general urge to throw off responsibilities and take things easy for a while.<sup>8</sup> This attitude was manifested by a desire to simply maintain the status quo and protect vital interests.

In the following sections, the development of the great power interests between 1918 and 1935 will be examined.

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<sup>6</sup>Great Britain, Public Records Office, Treaty Series No. 11 (1920), Cmd. 964, Treaty of Peace with Turkey (Sevres)," p. 31. Article 132 of the Treaty was a general Article by which Turkey renounced her rights in any territory not specifically mentioned in the Treaty. The islands were not mentioned.

<sup>7</sup>P. Hehir, "The Near East Crisis," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 92, No. DXLIX (November, 1922), p. 832. This is meant from the point of view of territory and influence. Because, however, of the severity of the Treaty of Sevres, there was a school of thought which said that Great Britain hurt her position in the overall Muslim world. "The Mohamedan views the Treaty of Sevres as a repudiation on our part (Great Britain) of the ties of friendship that bound the British people and the Muslims . . . we were aiming a destructive blow at the faith . . . Islam must be represented by one power of standing (previously Turkey)."

<sup>8</sup>Albert Viton, Great Britain, an Empire in Transition (New York: The John Day Company, 1942), p. 173. This statement excludes Italy.

## Section II - Egypt and the Sudan

These areas are considered together as their development was closely interconnected. They were connected because they both had a direct effect on the Suez Canal, which was of vital imperial concern to Britain. The British admittedly dominated these areas, but it is necessary to sketch their internal development during this period as this influenced the overall British strategy in the area.

Egypt, at the end of the war, being influenced by the theory of self-determination, expected to receive its independence from Britain. Immediately after the Armistice, Zaghlul Pasha, the leading politician of the time, called on Wingate, the British High Commissioner, requesting immediate and complete independence for Egypt.<sup>9</sup> This was refused by the British. Following this refusal, nationalist pressure built up, and in March, 1919, systematic disturbances broke out in the country.<sup>10</sup> The British Government, alarmed by these incidents, sent a Royal Commission to the country. The Commission, after investigation in Egypt and negotiations with the Egyptian nationalist leaders in London, issued its report in December 1920. It recommended an independent Egypt in treaty alliance with the United Kingdom, which would enjoy "such rights as are necessary to safeguard her special interests."<sup>11</sup> After the

<sup>9</sup>William Spencer, Political Evolution in the Middle East (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1962), p. 369. Wingate recommended to the Foreign Office that the delegation be received in London. For this boldness, he was replaced by Field Marshall Allenby.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Issawi, Egypt: An Economic and Social Analysis (London: The Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 37-39. For an interesting but biased description of these disturbances, see this source.

<sup>11</sup>Hurewitz, II, op. cit., p. 100.

publication of this report, no understanding was reached in the subsequent Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. Finally, in February, 1922, the British unilaterally declared Egypt to be independent. This declaration was limited by four points which concerned (1) the special British interests in the Suez Canal; (2) their right to maintain troops on Egyptian soil; (3) their responsibility for the protection of foreigners in Egypt; and (4) the reaffirmation of the Condominium status for the Sudan.

In fact, the 1922 declaration was only another concession made by Britain to her protected state -- Egypt. It was a unilateral concession restricted by unilaterally imposed restrictions.<sup>12</sup> The declaration was particularly irritating to the Egyptians who could see how the more backward area of the Hejaz was being handled.

In explaining their motives in cancelling the Protectorate, the Foreign Office circulated the following note to its diplomatic representatives abroad:<sup>13</sup>

. . . The termination of the British Protectorate over Egypt involved, however, no change in the status quo as regards the position of other Powers in Egypt itself. The welfare and integrity of Egypt are essential to the peace and safety of the British Empire, which will therefore always maintain as an essential British interest the special relations between itself and Egypt long recognized by other governments . . . In pursuance of this principle, they will regard as an unfriendly act, any attempt at interference in the affairs of Egypt by another Power . . .

This note amply explains the de facto British position. By the 1922 declaration, England made the tactical mistake of, in effect, guaranteeing to underwrite any reasonable regime that emerged. This, in the long run, alienated

<sup>12</sup>Benno Avram, The Evolution of the Suez Canal Status from 1869 to 1956 (Geneve: Proz, 1958), p. 69.

<sup>13</sup>Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League, II (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), pp. 459-460.

the nationalist element and thus led to an eventual weakening of Britain's position there.

After the declaration, Sultan Fuad assumed the title of King. In 1923, a constitution was promulgated, elections were held, and Zaghlul became the first Prime Minister. Shortly afterwards, the Foreign Minister of the new British Labor Government, Mr. MacDonald, entered into negotiations with the Egyptians over the four reserved points. No common ground was found and the talks were suspended.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, acts of post-war terrorism continued in Egypt culminating in the murder of Sir Lee Stack, the Sirdar of the Egyptian army, in 1924.

The prompt and repressive British reaction was designed to undermine the Egyptian position in the Sudan. The British presented an ultimatum to the Egyptian Government which demanded that: all Egyptian army units stationed in the Sudan be withdrawn; all Egyptian civil servants in the Sudan be evacuated; the Sudan be allowed to use unlimited water from the Nile; and Egypt pay a large indemnity. This was ignored by the British. The reasons for this action by the British are varied but in part due to their frustration over Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>C. E. Black and E. C. Helmreich, Twentieth Century Europe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 411. At the end of the talks MacDonald stated with refreshing candor, "It is no less true today than in 1922 that the security of the communications of the British Empire in Egypt remains a vital British interest and that absolute certainty that the Suez Canal will remain open in time of peace as well as in time of war for the free passage of British ships is the foundation upon which rests the entire strategy of the British Empire."

<sup>15</sup>Baddour, op. cit., pp. 121-122. The British officials in the Sudan thought that it was a heaven-sent opportunity to completely eliminate the Egyptians from the Sudan but the Foreign Office, fearing opposition from the other European powers, did not agree.

The Times (London), August 17, 1922, p. 7. Also the British, perhaps as propaganda, steadily maintained (continued on following page)



Nevertheless, the ultimatum changed the basic relationship between the Sudan and Egypt.<sup>16</sup> The Egyptians habitually had considered the Sudan as simply a southern extension of their country, a market, and a place for surplus Egyptian population. Now all that was left to them there was their flag flying beside the Union Jack.

The period from 1922 to 1936 was a British experiment to demonstrate whether strategic control of a country was compatible with the country's administrative independence. Such a combination was at that time a departure from imperial policy. The fundamental cause for the Anglo-Egyptian friction was a matter of trust. The British did not trust the Egyptians to guard the Canal, protect foreigners, help administer the Sudan, and defend themselves; and, on the other hand, the Egyptians wanted to be trusted in these matters. During this period there were four abortive sets of negotiations which attempted to legalize and define Britain's position in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> (15 continued) in their periodicals that there was a strong anti-Egyptian feeling among the Sudanese.

Walter P. Hall, Empire to Commonwealth (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928), p. 416. Another possible cause of the severity of the ultimatum was the Sudan Cotton Syndicate. This organization wanted more water to extend the cotton cultivation in the country. Many of the investors in the syndicate were prominent in political circles in Britain.

The severe terms of the ultimatum were dictated by Field Marshall Lord Allenby, without the approval of London. In December, 1924, the terms were made less severe and shortly afterward Allenby was replaced by Lord Lloyd.

<sup>16</sup>Pierre Cribites, "England's Fifty Years in Egypt," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 112, No. DCLXV (July, 1932), p. 46.

<sup>17</sup>"Anon.," Great Britain and Egypt 1914-1951 (Royal Institute of International Affairs: Information Paper No. 19; London: The Broadwater Press, 1952), pp. 16-26. See this source for a description of the following negotiations:

- a. The MacDonald-Zaghul Negotiations of 1924.
- b. The Chamberlain-Sarwat Negotiations 1927-28.
- c. The Henderson-Mahmud Negotiations of 1929.
- d. The Henderson-Nahhas Negotiations of 1930.

Egyptian political life during this period was dominated by three centers of power: the King, the Wafd, and the British. The attempted political democracy failed because there was little democratic tradition and because Egyptian politics were dominated by an outside question, that of Anglo-Egyptian relations. As a result, political activity was irresponsible. The British presence in the country, however, had a restraining effect because, with her primary interests being strategic, she could never allow conditions to become anarchical. In 1928, the first constitution was promulgated by the King and a new, more autocratic one appeared in 1930.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the English were dominant, other countries had interests in Egypt at this time. Of these, perhaps the most important was Italy. The Italian interest in Egypt will be discussed later when the Italian propaganda campaign in the Red Sea area is examined. Aside from Italy, Australia, India, and New Zealand had a deep interest in Egyptian affairs. It was vital to them, because of their trade, that the Canal remain open.<sup>19</sup> Of lesser importance was the USSR who regarded Egypt as a fertile area for Communist penetration. Some efforts

<sup>18</sup>"The Coup d'etat in Egypt," The Economist, Vol. 107, No. 4431 (July 28, 1928), p. 173. The British Government was concerned when Fuad suspended the constitution. Initially, it was thought that this might lead to disturbances that would force them to intervene.

<sup>19</sup>The Times (London), October 8, 1924, p. 15, and The Times (London) 27 July, 1929, p. 12. These sources are cited as examples to show how closely the New Zealand and Australian Governments followed the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. This viewpoint was an expression of their own self-interest as well as a reassertion of British imperial policy.

were made there along this line.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the great maritime powers of the world were interested in Egypt because of the Canal. There was much written during this period about the Suez Canal Company. Most of it was unfavorable, accusing the Company of charging exorbitant rates which were particularly insufferable because of the world depression.

In regards to the Sudan itself, it is seen that after 1924 the Egyptians had no share in its operation. Britain's strategic interests in the area were the same as those mentioned in Chapter II, only now they were accentuated owing to the semi-independence of Egypt.<sup>21</sup> They succeeded in making the Sudan virtually independent of Egypt by the creation of Port Sudan. This port, which was connected by rail with the important parts of the country, handled most of the area's trade via the Red Sea.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it served as a useful base for units of the British fleet and for the Imperial Airways flying boat service.

<sup>20</sup>A. R. C. Bolton, Soviet Middle East Studies: An Analysis and Bibliography ("A Chatham House Memoranda: Egypt," Part IV; London: Distributed for the Royal Institute of International Affairs by the Oxford University Press, 1959), all. This source contains summaries of then current Russian writings on this subject.

<sup>21</sup>Mekki Abbas, The Sudan Question (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), pp. 95-100. One minor but growing additional strategic interest was aerial communications. The use of the airplane for transportation and communications was coming into its own. The Sudan (Khartoum) was developing into a terminal for flights south into Africa and to the East.

The Times (London) January 18, 1933, p. 13. In 1933 there were 112 airfields in the Sudan for military and civil purposes and a squadron of the RAF was permanently stationed there.

<sup>22</sup>Longrigg, op. cit., p. 138. Before 1935, the Italians in Eritrea resented the establishment of this port as it was Massawa's rival.

In addition to strategic considerations, Britain had moral and economic interests in the area. She seemed to have felt a moral obligation not to let the Sudan fall under the misrule of the Egyptians. In addition, the large Sudanese cotton production had become essential to the textile industry of Britain. There was also a sizeable amount of English capital invested in the country, which she was determined to protect.<sup>23</sup>

It is seen that British interests in the Sudan and Egypt during this period did not materially change. There were outward modifications, but control remained in English hands, her vital imperial interests were uneffected. She was able to do what she wanted without fear of outside interference because Germany was gone, France was fully occupied in Syria, Italy had earned for itself a bad reputation in Libya, Russia had not yet returned in strength, and America was only interested in trade.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Arthur Merton, "The Sudan," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 96, No. DLXXI (September, 1924), p. 434. The following is quoted from a speech by the British Prime Minister at the time of the abolishment of the Protectorate: "Nor can H. M. Government agree to any change in the status of that country which would in the slightest degree diminish the security for the many millions of British capital which are already invested in its development . . ."

<sup>24</sup>Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, p. 74.

### Section III - Hejaz and Asir

The year 1918 found Hashimite forces extended from the head of the Gulf of Aqaba to the vicinity of Lith. South of this point, the Idrisi forces controlled all of the Tihama except for the British-garrisoned Hodeida. The next seven years in the Hejaz were to witness the overthrow of the House of Hashim by Ibn Sa'ud. These years were characterized by two parallel chain of events which were: first, the British attempting to define an Arab policy; and second, Hussein's ineffective rule and his intermittent struggle with Ibn Sa'ud.

The British desired to maintain their position of predominant influence in the Hejaz, but they did not want to establish a protectorate. As was the case during and before the war, the British had no agency that was responsible for producing an overall Arab policy. Additionally, they were preoccupied with problems of more immediate importance in Europe and in the northern Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire. They had some vague idea of setting up or encouraging the formation of a loose Arab confederation under the nominal control of Hussein.<sup>25</sup> In 1920, however, they stopped the wartime subsidy to Hussein because he refused to sign the Versailles Treaty. His signature would have involved his recognition of the British policy in Palestine.

Late in 1920 the British Government assigned Mr. Churchill to the Colonial Office, giving him responsibility for formulating a policy for the Middle East. The Government was hampered in its efforts to establish a consistent policy owing to the grave financial condition of the country. It was exposed to severe criticism in the

<sup>25</sup>The Times (London), February 7, 1919, p. 9, and The Times (London), October 22, 1924, p. 17.

press over any Arab policy that cost money. This criticism maintained that the Arabs should be left to settle their own affairs.<sup>26</sup>

One result of Churchill's efforts was the reopening of negotiations in the summer of 1921 with Hussein for a renewal of the Anglo-Hejazi Treaty. The British draft treaty was again contingent upon Hussein's acknowledging the mandate system which no Arab leader could do. Negotiations were again reopened in 1923 and dragged on into 1924, but again to no avail. Such was the state of the British policy in the Hejaz when the catastrophe fell. Concurrent with this, in the early 1920's the British were apparently worried about the spread of militant Wahhabism and attempted to place a cordon sanitaire around Ibn Sa'ud to confine him in the desert.<sup>27</sup>

It is necessary now to consider Hussein's rule of the Hejaz and his relations with Ibn Sa'ud. Hussein was at best a very inept ruler. It is beyond the scope of this paper to list all his domestic mistakes but of them all, the worst was his inefficient management of the pilgrimages. Other Arab leaders resented his assumption of the title, King of the Arabs. Connected with this, Hussein was unrealistically haughty toward Ibn Sa'ud. In 1919 the first serious armed clash occurred between Hejazi and Nejd forces at Turaba. Hussein's

<sup>26</sup>The Times (London), August 14, 1919, p. 11; The Times (London), February 24, 1921, pp. 11-12; and The Times (London), April 5, 1921, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup>by L, "Downing Street and the Arab Potentates," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 5, No. 2 (January, 1927), p. 239. This cordon sanitaire consisted of the Sharifian states of Iraq, Transjordan, and the Hejaz.

force was completely defeated, but Ibn Sa'ud was warned by the British not to invade the Hejaz.<sup>28</sup> Hussein failed to learn his lesson from this defeat. He initiated the futile policy of alliances with Ibn Rashid (who Ibn Sa'ud destroyed in the autumn of 1921) and with the Imam of San'a. Additionally, he managed to alienate his other neighbor, the Idrisi of Asir. His final mistake was proclaiming himself Caliph in 1923. At that time he was without an ally and the British were losing interest in supporting him.

Hussein's assumption of the Caliphate and Britain's inept handling of Sa'ud at the 1923 Kuwait conference were the direct causes for the Wahhabi invasion of the Hejaz.<sup>29</sup> The military operation itself was short. Mecca was captured, Hussein abdicated in favor of his son Ali, who defended Jedda until December, 1925, when he fled. This terminated the Hashimite power in the Hejaz. Ibn Sa'ud was proclaimed King of the Hejaz on January 8, 1926 at Mecca.

Up to 1926 the British policy in the Hejaz, while it had denied the area to another power, had in itself failed. They were unprepared for the Sa'udi advance out of the desert.<sup>30</sup> The fundamental British failure

<sup>28</sup>Antonius, op. cit., pp. 328-329. At that time Ibn Sa'ud himself was still receiving a subsidy from the British Government. He was warned that the British Government would view with disfavor any further breach of the peace.

<sup>29</sup>Carmichael, op. cit., p. 728. The British at the Kuwait conference of Arab leaders presented Ibn Sa'ud with a series of demands which were too absurd for any possible acceptance. After he rejected these demands, his subsidy was withdrawn. He then felt that he had a free hand to eliminate Hussein.

<sup>30</sup>The Times (London), September 16, 1924, p. 11. The British at the time were worried about the extension of Ibn Sa'ud's power into the Hejaz. This posed a possible threat to Suez, the Sinai, and Aqaba. They were loath, however, to interfere in the internecine Arab war.

in Arabia at that time was to see that Ibn Sa'ud had brought about a qualitative change in desert affairs.

During these same seven years, equally momentous events were occurring in Asir. The year 1918 found Asir's power nearly at its maximum height. She was in treaty alliance with Great Britain. In addition, she was still led by her greatest leader, the Sayyid Muhammad. Following the Turkish Armistice, British troops landed in the Tihama to expedite the evacuation of Turkey's Yemeni garrison and subsequently the coastal towns were presented to the Idrisi -- Luhaiya in 1919, and Hodeida in 1921.<sup>31</sup>

Following Sayyid Muhammad's death on March 20, 1923, a struggle ensued among the contenders for the throne. This strife weakened Asir's defense and enabled the Imam Yahya to recapture the ports of Luhaiya and Hodeida in 1924-1925. During this period of internal strife, the successor to Sayyid Muhammad, Seyyid Ali, agreed to the establishment of an Italian consulate in Hodeida in return for arms and ammunition.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup>George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 358.

Rihani, op. cit., p. 127. A plebiscite was held in Hodeida by the British who were trying to determine to whom they should turn over the town. The inhabitants of the town wanted the Turks back, or failing that, the Egyptian Government. They did not want to be ruled by Imam Yahya or Sayyid Muhammad. Eventually Britain decided in favor of Sayyid Muhammad.

The Times (London), August 15, 1922, p. 7. They were highly criticized for this, turning the port over to the arch enemy of the Imam, and at the same time trying to negotiate a treaty with him.

<sup>32</sup>The Times (London), October 30, 1924, p. 13. Whether or not the Italians ever delivered any munitions is unknown. This interlude is believable, however, because it was in line with the continuing Italian interest in that area.



After seizing the Tihama ports, Imam Yahya attempted to annex Asir itself. This brought him into direct contact with Ibn Sa'ud. To oppose these Yemeni designs, the successor of the ineffectual Sayyid Ali, the Sayyid Hasan, signed a treaty with Ibn Sa'ud, by which he agreed to place Asir under Sa'udi protection.<sup>33</sup> This fiction was maintained until November, 1930, when Asir was absorbed into Sa'udi Arabia as a province.

The collapse of Asir was even more rapid than that of the Hejaz. There appear to be two reasons why Britain made no effort to stop its absorption in Sa'udi Arabia: first, they did not want to become involved in tribal wars; and second, they were then more interested in establishing workable relations with the Imam Yahya. This latter reason was motivated by concern for Aden's defense and also to counter the apparent growth of Italian influence in Yemen.

Returning to the Hejaz, Ibn Sa'ud's main problem was to unite his new conquest with his remaining territories. His first act was to convene an Islamic conference in Mecca. This conference outwardly appeared to convince the Muslim world that the Wahhabis were adequate guardians of the holy places.<sup>34</sup> His next act was to make Asir a Sa'udi Protectorate. Following this, he concentrated on improving the kingdom internally. During this period, he

<sup>33</sup>Khalil, II, op. cit., pp. 241-242. This source contains the text of the Mecca Agreement: Asir and Hejaz, Nejd, and its Dependencies, October 21, 1926. According to this Agreement, Sayyid Hasan continued to rule Asir itself but Ibn Sa'ud was given responsibility for the area's foreign affairs, i.e., with Yemen.

<sup>34</sup>Hans Kohn, "The Unification of Arabia," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 13, No. 1 (October, 1934), p. 96. Probably the real purpose of the conference was to appeal for financial aid for constructing railroads from Medina to Mecca and to their two respective seaports of Yenbo and Jedda. Also he wanted political assistance to help force the British to return Aqaba to the Hejaz.

was financially dependent upon the pilgrimages as his major source of income. The world depression and subsequent decrease in the size of the pilgrimage impeded greatly his program of internal development.

When Ibn Sa'ud became dominant in Asir, he came into contact with the other independent Arab ruler on the Peninsula -- the Imam Yahya of Yemen. The Imam had irredentist claims to portions of Asir. In June, 1927, he held a conference in San'a to define the Sa'udi-Yemen border and decide upon the fate of Asir.<sup>35</sup> No results were achieved by the conference. The negotiations were renewed in 1930, and after Ibn Sa'ud had waived some of his claims, a Treaty of Friendship and Bon Voisinage was signed in 1931.<sup>36</sup> The Imam did not act in good faith as Idrisi exiles, operating from Yemen, shortly thereafter incited some of the Asiri tribes to rebel against the Sa'udi garrisons. Ibn Sa'ud quickly quelled this rebellion. There followed a series of extended negotiations between the two leaders during which Ibn Sa'ud showed admirable restraint, but finally, he could no longer condone the actions of the Imam. After his ultimatum to the Imam had been ignored, Sa'ud's forces invaded the country and

<sup>35</sup>Leonard Stein, "Great Britain's Adjustments in the Arab World", Current History, Vol. 28, No. 5 (August, 1928), p. 750. As far as Ibn Sa'ud was concerned, the fate of Asir had already been decided.

<sup>36</sup>M. V. Seton-Williams, Britain and the Arab States (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1948), pp. 199-200. By the treaty, the two states were bound to hand over persons guilty of offenses, political or non-political, and not to harbor persons seeking to evade jurisdiction in the other state. Sa'udi rebels were known to be in the Yemen.

quickly overran most of the Tihama.<sup>37</sup> After a four-week war, the Imam was forced to ask for peace, and relations were restored by the Treaty of Ta'if. Ibn Sa'ud showed great restraint, not laying claim to any definitely Yemeni lands.<sup>38</sup> This campaign and the subsequent peace talks greatly enhanced the prestige of Ibn Sa'ud in the eyes of the Powers. He had once again proved himself to be a true statesman.

Throughout this period, contacts between Sa'udi Arabia and foreign countries were generally amicable. Of all the Powers, Britain maintained the closest interest in Sa'udi Arabian affairs. Sa'udi Arabia belonged to what one writer termed the "Outer Empire", or the area that was effectively under British influence.<sup>39</sup> Their near political monopoly in Arabia, characterized by close contact with Ibn Sa'ud, was considered an adequate safeguard to their imperial interests. It would be a

<sup>37</sup>Robert L. Baker, "Arab King Invades Yemen," Current History, Vol. 40, No. 3 (June, 1934), pp. 375-377. Ibn Sa'ud's invasion of Yemen caused a momentary stir in the area. Italian, British, and French warships rushed to Hodeida to protect nationals. It was not really known if Ibn Sa'ud was going to upset the status quo in the area. "The Collapse of the Imam," The Economist, Vol. 118, No. 4733 (May 12, 1934), p. 1020. Ibn Sa'ud made no real attempt to march into the high interior mountains of the Yemen. There were two probable reasons for this:

- a. The campaign would, for his desert-bred warriors, have been extremely difficult.
- b. He probably had no desire to capture the heartland of the Yemen because it would have been difficult to rule the heretical Zeidis.

<sup>38</sup>"Saoudi Arabia," Great Britain and the East, Vol. 46, No. 1298 (April 2, 1936), p. 434. After the Sa'udi Arabian-Yemeni War a commission was established to mark the border. It was successful and the border was physically delineated for over 500 kilometers.

<sup>39</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 138.

a mistake, however, to think that Ibn Sa'ud was simply an English vassal. It is best to recall him as a realist.<sup>40</sup>

In the struggle between Hussein and Ibn Sa'ud in 1924-1925, Great Britain outwardly claimed her neutrality. It was, however, during this period (June, 1925) that Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, on Emir Ali's (Hussein's successor) authority, and encouraged by the British, annexed the district of Aqaba.<sup>41</sup> This was bitterly resented by Ibn Sa'ud, who maintained that he had fallen heir to all of Hussein's possessions by right of conquest. The British, however, decided that it was essential to maintain control over this potentially valuable location.

After the conquest of the Hejaz it was apparent that the 1915 Anglo-Nejd Treaty needed revision. Accordingly, negotiations were initiated and on 20 May, 1927, the Treaty of Jeddah was signed. While this treaty did not mention the Aqaba dispute, the accompanying correspondence between Ibn Sa'ud and Sir Gilbert Clayton dealt with this matter.<sup>42</sup> Ibn Sa'ud agreed not to interfere in the area

<sup>40</sup>Margret Boveri, Mediterranean Cross-Currents (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 373.

Carmichael, op. cit., p. 724. Ibn Sa'ud's cooperation with Great Britain was a thought-out policy on his part. They (Britain) had the advantage of being powerful but on the other hand they were remote.

<sup>41</sup>Philip P. Graves (ed.), Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 217. The British maintained that the area belonged to Transjordan and Palestine because it was part of the old Ottoman Villayet of Damascus. This was a weak argument.

The Times (London), July 7, 1925, p. 15. Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for Colonies, stated in Parliament that: (Aqaba belonged to Transjordan because) ". . . the Mandate recognized this fact."

<sup>42</sup>Helen Miller Davis, Constitutions, Electoral Law, and Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1953), pp. 389-390.

until a favorable moment arose to settle the dispute.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to note that while Britain was still the dominant foreign power in the area, her relative influence had declined with the fall of Hussein. Hussein had been irrevocably committed to the British but Ibn Sa'ud was able to conduct his own foreign affairs, limited only by the realization that he could not do something of such an extreme nature that the British would construe it as an imperial threat.

After 1927, diplomatic relations between the two countries remained cordial. During the time of the Sa'udi Arabian-Yemeni War, some foreign observers saw it as struggle between Great Britain (influencing Ibn Sa'ud) and Italy (influencing the Imam). This was not true. The British did not exert that much influence in Arabia and the Italian influence in San'a, in spite of much fanfare, was practically nil.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, during this period, Ibn Sa'ud had various contacts with other powers. Of these, the USSR was the first to grant diplomatic recognition to the new regime. Moscow had two interests in the area: first, it was a convenient area for attacking British imperialism;<sup>45</sup> and second, despite her atheistic policies, she could not ignore the spiritual bonds between her millions of

<sup>43</sup>This was a serious reservation, rather than face-saving, on the part of Ibn Sa'ud. Witness to this were his efforts later in the year to obtain international Muslim support in his disagreement with the British.

<sup>44</sup>Kohn, "The Unification of Arabia," p. 101.

<sup>45</sup>The Times (London), July 9, 1929, p. 15. See this source for a detailed description of the Komintern activities in the Red Sea area during the 1920's from the British point of view.

Muslim subjects and the holy places. In spite of these interests, however, Russia never became a major factor in the area. Ibn Sa'ud was also able to improve his international position by concluding treaties with Holland, France, Italy, Turkey, and Persia.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Great Britain had been able to maintain her near political monopoly in Arabia for two reasons: first, because she commanded nearly all of Arabia's land and sea frontiers; and second, because Ibn Sa'ud, being a supreme realist, strove to maintain cordial relations with her.

#### Section IV - Yemen and Aden

In order to understand the complicated events in southwest Arabia, it is necessary to picture the Imam of San'a as having been in the central position between the interacting interests of Britain (from Aden and the Sea), Italy (from Eritrea), and Ibn Sa'ud (from Asir). Initially, in this section, the interests of the four contenders will be described. Following this, the actions taken by these contenders to uphold their interests will be outlined.

The basic policy of the Imam was the preservation of his independence. Coupled with this, he desired to expand his domains. After the evacuation of the Turkish garrisons and the quelling of a revolt, the Imam was able to consolidate his position. At that time, however, he was isolated in the Yemeni massif, cut off from the Sea by the Aden Protectorate and Asir. To both these areas he laid claim, maintaining that they formed part of the historical province of al-Yemen. As a result of this irredentism, he came in conflict with both the British and Ibn Sa'ud.

The specific British interests in this part of the Red Sea were threefold: first, the defense of the strategic air, naval, and communication center of Aden; second, the defense of the Bab el Mandeb; and third, the neutralization of the Yemen. In regard to Aden's defense, the Imam had replaced the Turks as the raison d'etre for the Protectorate. The Protectorate, originally organized as a buffer area to protect the colony from Turkish expansion, now served to protect the colony from the expansionist policy of the Imam.

The second and third specific British interests were similar. An independent Yemen, on the shore of the Bab el Mandeb, was a serious concern to British strategic thinking.<sup>46</sup> This was true because normally she had been able to control events on the Arabian coasts by her control of the surrounding sea. In the Yemen, however, it was different. She could not control it from the coast, she did not want to occupy it, so she was forced to use diplomacy. In this she was compelled to compete with the Italians.

During the period under consideration, the focus of the Italian interest changed. Italy had had a traditional interest in Yemen and southern Arabia. This interest initially was based on economic considerations. At some time after 1922 (when Mussolini came to power) and probably in the mid-1920's, Italy embarked upon a long-range policy aimed at the eventual political penetration of southwest Arabia. Their efforts became accentuated as time progressed, being corollary to their activities in Ethiopia. There is reason to believe that at one time the Italians considered physically occupying Yemen.

The fourth country that influenced events in this area was Sa'udi Arabia. How Sa'udi Arabia was able to frustrate the Yemeni irredentism in Asir has been discussed. The Sa'udi Arabian-Yemeni rivalry, however, had a direct effect on Anglo-Yemeni relations and on the Anglo-Italian rivalry in the area.

At the end of the war, Great Britain was in a dilemma. She was an ally of Asir, but she also wanted to conclude a treaty with the Imam. In 1919, she sent the first of many missions to San'a for this purpose, but the

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<sup>46</sup>Spencer, op. cit., p. 325.



mission failed before it started.<sup>47</sup> The Imam had no interest in signing an agreement with the country who was supporting his arch enemy, Asir. Faced by the Imam's intransigence, Britain continued to support her wartime ally.

The British apparently decided to enclose the Imam in his highlands where he was effectively neutralized and could pose them no major threat. In 1921, the Imam attempted to counter this policy by indicating his willingness to sign a treaty. The treaty he proposed would have resulted in the abandonment by Britain of her treaty with Asir.<sup>48</sup> This offer was refused. After this rebuff, the Imam countered by claiming to be a loyal Turkish citizen. He allowed the last Turkish Vali of Yemen, Nedim Bey, to reside in San'a and periodically professed to take orders from him. This effort, which received minor encouragement in Angora, was equally unsuccessful.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Kohn, Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East, p. 257. This mission was headed by Lt. Col. Harold F. Jacob. On its way to San'a it was captured and temporarily imprisoned by a lawless Tihama tribe. This caused a great stir in the English press. See The Times (London), September 19, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup>The Times (London), July 29, 1921, p. 9. The Imam volunteered to settle his differences with Great Britain if she would agree to do the following: recognize his independence and guarantee his domains from others; agree not to help his enemies; and supply him with arms and a subsidy. In return for this, the Imam would agree to maintain the Yemeni trade with Aden and not enter into correspondence with other Powers.

<sup>49</sup>The Times (London), August 13, 1923, p. 7. Nedim Bey in June, 1923, sent a message to Angora reporting that the electors of the Imam's domains desired to be represented in the new Grand National Assembly.

The Times (London), January 5, 1923, p. 5. The Turks knew that they had no hope of ever controlling the Yemen but claiming the Yemen may have been a useful pawn at Lausanne. Rauf Bey in the Grand National Assembly said: "Yemen is part of our country . . ."

By 1924 the situation had changed drastically. The power of Asir was rapidly waning and the Imam had seized the Tihama. The British reaction to these events was indecisive. They were torn between supporting their ally Asir, or transferring their support to the Imam.<sup>50</sup> Yahya took the initiative in seeking to safeguard his new position by making overtures to the Italians.

The Italians, who had previously supported Asir, were quick to see the advantage in transferring their support to the Imam.<sup>51</sup> After the Imam seized Hodeida, the Governor of Eritrea, Dr. Gasperini, led a delegation to confere with the Imam. Previously, a British delegation under Sir Gilbert Clayton had visited the Imam fruitlessly. The Imam was able to play the Italians desires off against the English fears. He signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Italy in September, 1926. The Italians were successful because they had no demands to make of the Imam. The British, on the other hand, failed because, in all of their dealings with the Imam, they were forced to try and reach an agreement on the Yemeni-Western Protectorate border. The Imam, who claimed that all of the Protectorate was part of Yemen, refused to come to agreement.

Italy, by the Treaty of 1926, recognized the full independence of the Yemen, the first European country to do so. In 1927, a Yemeni delegation visited Rome where an arms agreement was initiated. The treaty was not as large an Italian diplomatic victory as it appeared. It entitled little more than the acceptance by the Imam of

<sup>50</sup>The Times (London), July 23, 1925, p. 13. It appeared that the British Government distrusted the Imam. Lt. Col. H. F. Jacob strongly urged accomodation with the Imam before another power stepped in.

<sup>51</sup>Kohn, Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East, p. 257.

The Times (London), December 7, 1926, p. 11. The Italians gave the Imam munitions to use against the Idrisi.

arms deliveries in return for preferential trade relations and the use of a limited number of Italian technicians. It was Yahya who had secured the victory since he had strengthened his own position against the British by securing the support of Mussolini without even permitting him to establish normal diplomatic relations in San'a.<sup>52</sup> The treaty had not impaired the Imam's freedom of action.

In 1927, on the other hand, Mussolini had high hopes of achieving the economic domination of Yemen. Economic domination could also lead to physical domination. It was apparent that paramountcy in Yemen, even by economic means, would place Italy in a position to squeeze Britain's vital supply route passing through the Bab el Mandeb. Apparently realizing this, Britain indicated in 1927 that she wished to discuss with Italy the situation created in the Red Sea by the changes that had taken place there since the end of the war: the consolidation of the Yemen state; the rise of Ibn Sa'ud as a major factor in Arab politics; the uncertain future of Asir; and the poorly defined legal status of the islands along the Arabian coast. From the conversations, there emerged certain understandings, which in spite of their rather general nature, helped to regulate Anglo-Italian affairs in the Red Sea for some time to follow.<sup>53</sup>

In the meantime, the Anglo-Yemeni border situation had continued to deteriorate. In 1928, there existed practically a state of open war; however, the war-weary

<sup>52</sup>Majid Khadduri, "Coup and Counter-coup in the Yemen, 1948," International Affairs, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January, 1952), pp. 59-60.

<sup>53</sup>Tomaso Sillani, "The New Balance of Power in the Levant," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 2 (January, 1939), pp. 344-346. This source was the only mention found concerning these conversations. Their occurrence is questionable, coming from a pro-Italian author, but it rings of truth since it seems to follow the trend of events. What the actual agreements, if any, were is not known.

English had little enthusiasm to pursue a skirmish over such a remote buffer area. The R.A.F. was eventually used to drive most of the Yemeni forces out of the Protectorate and subsequently the tempo of the border incidents declined. At the same time another unsuccessful effort was made to come to an agreement with the Imam.

By 1933, however, the situation had again changed. The Imam was in a bad strategic situation. He suspected that the British patience with him was running out and concurrently his relations with Ibn Sa'ud were deteriorating (Section III, Chapter III). Faced with these circumstances, he was obliged to come to an agreement with the British. Accordingly, an Anglo-Yemeni treaty was signed in Ta'iz in May, 1934.<sup>54</sup> The treaty temporarily improved the conditions in the area, but as far as the Imam was concerned, it was only a tactical expedient.

During the period 1918-1935, the foreign policy of the Imam, except in regard to Ibn Sa'ud, had been successful. He had been able to keep the two most interested Powers at a distance and maintain the isolation of the country. In addition, he had negotiated treaties with the Netherlands (1933) and USSR (1928).<sup>55</sup> None of

<sup>54</sup>Hurewitz, II, op. cit., p. 196. This source contains the text of the treaty. It recognized the independence of the Yemen and was restricted to friendship and mutual trade relations. The border problem was not solved. The other unresolved problem was the Yemeni claim to Kamaran Island which was then administered by the British as part of the Aden Colony.

Tom Hickinbotham, Aden (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1958), pp. 66-70. Article 5 of the treaty was a most favored nation clause between the two countries that, in fact, was never effective.

<sup>55</sup>The Russian Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with the Yemen, similar to their treaty with Sa'udi Arabia, was designed specifically to embarrass the British.

Walter Z. Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 55. (continued on following page).

the Powers, however, had any real success in gaining economic or political concessions from the Imam.

From a qualitative point of view the British position had deteriorated since 1918. The Imam was in a possible position to cause them embarrassment by his control of one side of the Bab el Mandeb. This was a matter of concern particularly in light of the situation that was developing in Ethiopia. In essence, the situation in southwest Arabia at the beginning of 1935 was hanging in suspense.

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(55 continued) M. Axelrod, the Russian expert on Arabia said in 1930 that the USSR was the only country that could help Yemen attain its independence. The Russians then attached great importance to Imam Yahya and Ibn Sa'ud, regarding them as future rulers of a great Arabian, or even Middle East Empire.

Section V - Ethiopia, Eritrea, French Somaliland,  
and British Somaliland

During the period under consideration in these areas in Europe the stage was prepared for the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. For this reason, this section will primarily concentrate on those events that contributed towards the bringing on of the crisis of 1935.

At the end of World War I, Italy had hopes of receiving additional colonies based on the wartime promises of the allies. In these hopes she was disappointed. Additionally, Italian ambitions were further frustrated by the British. Italy desired to take advantage of the provisions of the Anglo-Italian Agreements of 1891, 1894, and 1906, all of which envisioned the bulk of Ethiopia as an Italian sphere of influence. In November, 1919, Italy submitted a proposal to Great Britain which suggested the following: that Italy would support Great Britain in obtaining a concession to build a barrage on Lake Tana and a motor road to it from the Sudan and that this area, including all of the Blue Nile, would become a British sphere of influence; that Great Britain would support Italy's attempt to obtain a concession for building a railroad from Eritrea to Italian Somaliland; and that aside from the British area, the remainder of the country would be an Italian sphere of influence.<sup>56</sup>

The British, claiming the proposal was not in accord with the 1906 Tripartite Agreement, rejected the Italian offer. The reason for this British refusal was that at that time they were conducting separate negotiations with Ethiopia for the Tana concession.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>57</sup>Langer, op. cit., pp. 269-270. It is not surprising that the British were not interested in the Italian proposal. It was reported on good authority (Italian) that Great Britain offered Ethiopia the port of Zeila in British Somaliland in return for the Lake Tana concession.

The first important diplomatic event that occurred was Ethiopia's entrance into the League of Nations. In 1923, the Ethiopian Government, fearing foreign encroachments under the guise of abolishing the slave trade, applied to join the League. At that time, the whole question of slavery in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula was a sensitive subject in Europe and particularly in Britain.<sup>58</sup> Great Britain had many reservations about the advisability of allowing Ethiopia, a state in which slavery was rampant, to join the League. Her candidacy, however, was supported by France and Italy who overcame the British reservations. The Italian and French Governments supported her entrance into the League because they thought it a clever method to frustrate what were believed to be British designs on Abyssinia.<sup>59</sup>

Concurrently, the Anglo-Ethiopian negotiations had continued for four years. Ras Tafari, the Regent, visited London in 1925 and in a conversation with the Prime Minister, made it clear that if a barrage were to be built, the Ethiopians would construct it. The British, disappointed and suspecting that Italian influence had been working against them, returned to the 1919 Italian proposals.<sup>60</sup> An exchange of notes took place in December

<sup>58</sup>The Times (London), June 4, 1924, p. 15. A combined British, French, and Italian flotilla of small warships was stationed on the Red Sea to stop this trade as it passed from Africa to Arabia.

<sup>59</sup>By a Group of Expert Student of International Affairs, "Abyssinia, the Background of the Conflict," International Conciliation, No. 312 (September, 1935), p. 448.

<sup>60</sup>MacCallum, op. cit., p. 37. In addition to overcoming the Italian influence which they suspected was working against them, the British saw other advantages in returning to the 1919 Italian proposals. It would placate the Italians, secure the British rear, reduce gun running into the Sudan, and make it easier to face whatever contingencies might arise.

1925, between Mussolini and the British Ambassador in Rome. In these notes the British Government accepted practically without exception the proposals made by the Italians in 1919, now considering them in accord with the 1906 Tripartite Agreement.<sup>61</sup> When these notes were made public, they were severely criticized in France and Abyssinia. France said they violated the 1906 Agreement. Even after the British and Italian Governments had reassured her, she continued to maintain that, while she was not adverse to recognizing the special Italian economic rights in Ethiopia, she did not consider them a monopoly.<sup>62</sup> The British and Italian Governments, in their public explanation of the correspondence, said the question was simply one of guarantee of an economic nature obtained from Italian enterprises against British enterprises.

Ras Tafari, concerned by the correspondence, protested to the League, saying that it was incompatible with the terms of the covenant since it constituted an indirect threat to the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia. Nothing was done by the League

<sup>61</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 290. An interesting historical footnote concerning Mussolini's ambitions in Ethiopia came to light ten years later but related to this period. In a confidential memorandum that was published on 2 October, 1935, and based on information that was said to have come from "unimpeachable sources", disclosed that Mussolini contemplated action against Abyssinia in 1925. From the activity that Italy had then displayed along the Red Sea coast, the British may well have become aware of Mussolini's intentions. They did not like Il Duce's idea and they are reported to have told him in effect, "instead of wasting so much money in a country that is so far from Italy and where you might easily encounter diplomatic difficulties with the two countries that have interests in Ethiopia, why don't you seek pacific penetration nearer at hand." (i.e., Albania.) The British Government would leave Mussolini a free hand to consolidate Italy's position in Albania, provided that she did not seek to change the status quo in the Red Sea area. Thus it was that Mussolini decided to postpone to a more propitious moment the solution of the Ethiopian problem. (Whether or not this episode is true is debatable.)

<sup>62</sup>The Times (London), June 19, 1926, p. 11. The (continued on following page)



about this protest. Tafari maintained his objection to giving the barrage concession to Britain because he felt that if he did, their influence would soon dominate the western part of the country. In addition, after the completion of the proposed motor road, the Tana area would be economically oriented toward the Sudan.<sup>63</sup> Regarding the Italians, he feared once they obtained a foothold in the country, they would be impossible to dislodge.<sup>64</sup>

As a result of Tafari's attitude, the Italians were again frustrated in their efforts to penetrate the country. Seeing that their bilateral efforts with Britain had failed, and chaffing at the delay in executing what they considered to be their rights, they decided to approach Tafari directly. The fruit of this new policy was the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation, and Arbitration, signed on August 2, 1928. A supplemental agreement stipulated that a motor road would be built from Assab into northern Ethiopia, the respective parties constructing the section of road that was inside their own territory. The Italians felt that they had finally made progress, but as it turned out, the treaty remained a dead letter between 1928 and 1935.

Before describing the development of the aggressive Italian intents, a few words must be said about the internal (62 continued) "official" Italian press countered by accusing the French of trying to maintain their monopoly on the Ethiopian railroad traffic.

<sup>63</sup>Oliver McKee, Jr., "Abyssinia, an African Sovereign State," Current History, Vol. 32, No. 1 (April, 1930), p. 100.

<sup>64</sup>"A Clash in Somaliland," The Economist, Vol. 119, No. 4764 (December 15, 1934), p. 1141. After the publication of the 1925 Anglo-Italian correspondence, Ras Tafari found an effective way of making the Italian nervous by flirting with Japan. Italian textiles were being undersold by the Japanese on the small Ethiopian market.

development of Ethiopia. During this period the country, in spite of its long tradition of independence, was just arriving on the threshold of the modern world. The independent races who governed the outlying provinces were still semi-feudal, and the central government had only nominal control over them.

In 1916, Ras Tafari had become the regent following the overthrow of the pro-German, self-proclaimed Muslim successor of Emperor Menelik. Between that date and 1930, when he was crowned as the Emperor Haile Selassie I, he was not in complete control of the central government.<sup>65</sup> He was an intelligent man who saw the vital need to modernize the country. He made a sincere effort to effect internal reform and to abolish slavery, but progress was slow.

His foreign policy was to maintain friendly relations with the great Powers, but as much as possible, keep them out of the country. His first apparent success was obtaining membership in the League. Following this, he personally took a successful tour of the European capitals in 1925.<sup>66</sup> Concurrently, he sent a delegation to the United States requesting that a minister be appointed in Addis Ababa. Also, he attempted to interest an American engineering company in building the Lake Tana barrage.<sup>67</sup> Finally, realizing that he needed foreign technicians to

<sup>65</sup>Jones and Monroe, op. cit., pp. 160-167. This source contains a description of his struggle before he became the Emperor.

<sup>66</sup>The Times (London), May 5, 1925, p. 13.

<sup>67</sup>McKee, op. cit., p. 96. The last American consul had left Addis Ababa in 1913. His mission to the USA was successful on both counts. A new American minister arrived in 1928 and a New York engineering firm was interested in working on the Tana project. The British in line with their fundamental post-war imperial policy of maintaining friendly relations with the USA raised no objection about this and seemed to have had a resigned attitude.

help in the development of the country, he hired those needed from the smaller countries, mainly Belgium and Sweden.<sup>68</sup> His greatest failing in foreign affairs, for which the Italians with some justification castigated him, was his lack of sincerity. He would sign a document, as for instance the 1928 Treaty with Italy, and then ignore its existence.

The date Mussolini decided to take military action against Ethiopia is not precisely known. The Italians, after their initial flush of optimism in 1928, became rapidly disillusioned. Far from being treated as the most favored partner in the development of Ethiopia, she received the treatment of the least favored. This non-fulfillment by Ethiopia of her economic engagements with Italy became one of the main grievances of the Italian Government. Additionally, the road that was to have been built into northern Ethiopia was never started by the Ethiopians.<sup>69</sup> After 1928, Tafari refused to grant any major economic concessions to the Italians knowing that, of the three European powers bordering Abyssinia, Italy

<sup>68</sup>Farago, Abyssinia on the Eve, p. 208. Of all the European countries, Sweden came to occupy the predominant position from the point of view of number of advisors. Perhaps the most outstanding of these was General Virgin, who in the early 1930's attempted to organize the Ethiopian army. He was much disliked by the Italians, who referred to him as the White Emperor.

<sup>69</sup>MacCallum, op. cit., pp. 39-40. The government placed petty but effective obstacles in the way of its construction. They objected to the road because it would facilitate invasion of Ethiopia from Eritrea.

was the only one that nurtured annexationist aims.<sup>70</sup> He correctly realized that Italian economic infiltration would assist gradual Italian political penetration. It is difficult to see why Tafari signed the 1928 Treaty at all, as it supplied the Italian dictator with a marvelous weapon to use against him.

It became apparent in the late 1920's and early 1930's that the Italians were trying to detach various tribes from their allegiance to Addis Ababa. In addition, Italian agents and Italian consulates were spread all over the country. These consuls located in the interior of the country were usually the only Italians in the whole district, though outwardly they were there to protect Italian "interests". Their real work was to spread dissatisfaction and to keep the legation in Addis Ababa informed on conditions in the various parts of the country. By means of their consular radio net, the Italian legation was better informed than the central government.<sup>71</sup> Ethiopia protested futilely in the League about this activity.<sup>72</sup>

In the early 1930's, Mussolini considered the developing Italian intentions against Ethiopia as an integral part

<sup>70</sup>Farago, Abyssinia on the Eve, p. 197. One exception to this was that the Emperor of Ethiopia gave the Italians a concession to build what was the most powerful radio station in Africa. As it neared completion, the Emperor realized that the Italians could control all of the news going out of the country. After a long dispute, the Italians gave the station up.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>72</sup>G. T. Garratt, Mussolini's Roman Empire (Harmondsworth; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1938), p. 46. The Ethiopian complaint said the following: "At places where there is not a single Italian national, a consul establishes himself in an area known as consular territory with a guard of about 90 men, for whom he claims jurisdictional immunity. This is an obvious abuse of consular privileges."

of the fabric of European politics. Italy had been a second-class power at the end of World War I. Mussolini, however, was determined to make Italy a major, if not the major Mediterranean power, and like his predecessor Mancini, in the 19th century, he saw the keys to the Mediterranean in the Red Sea. It is known, thanks to a candid disclosure of Marshall Emilio de Bono, that Mussolini's decision to invade had irrevocably been formed, at the latest, in the autumn of 1933.<sup>73</sup> From that time, or possibly earlier, Mussolini worked against time to complete the operation by 1936.<sup>74</sup> His first task, which he began prior to 1933, was to build up the colonial enthusiasm of the Italian people. He repeatedly emphasized the themes that Italy needed a place in the sun; she needed a place to settle her excess population; she needed more colonies for economic reasons; and finally, "People who are progressing have their rights against people who are declining."<sup>75</sup> Concurrent with this

<sup>73</sup>G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, A Short History of International Affairs 1920-1933 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 402.

<sup>74</sup>Based on Mussolini's estimate, he had to eliminate the Ethiopian problem by 1936 because he estimated at that future date Germany would have rearmed to the extent of being a possible threat to his Brenner frontier. Also Germany had colonial aspirations and it was absolutely essential that Italy satisfy her aspirations before the German problem assumed an acute form.

Garratt, op. cit., p. 51. In October 1933, Mussolini warned off another possible poacher (in Ethiopia) by violent protests against the proposed marriage of a nephew of Haile Selassie and a Japanese lady. The objection was primarily on the ground of policy and was sufficiently forceful to break off the match.

<sup>75</sup>George Slocombe, The Dangerous Sea (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 92. Whereas the internal politics of Italy and the other European powers during the 1930's are, in general, beyond the scope of this paper, some mention will have to be made of them to show how these continental attitudes reflected in the area.

propaganda effort, he speeded up the construction of his war machine.

In July, 1934, he sent Marshall Badoglio and a military commission to Eritrea to report upon the prospects of the expected campaign. The report of the Italian General Staff was so pessimistic that the dictator tore it up in a rage and proceeded with his plans.<sup>76</sup> It appears that Il Duce decided in the fall of 1934 that the campaign would definitely start at the end of the rainy season in 1935. In December, 1934, at the oasis of Wal Wal near the Ethiopian-Italian Somaliland border, an incident was provoked between Italian askaris and an Anglo-Ethiopian border commission.<sup>77</sup> Using this "incident" as a pretext, Mussolini delivered a humiliating ultimatum to the Ethiopian Government. The Ethiopians rejected the terms of the ultimatum and requested arbitration, based on the provisions of the 1928 Treaty. Mussolini, refusing to accept arbitration, launched a massive propaganda campaign in Europe aimed at discrediting Ethiopia.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup>By a Group of Expert Students of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 452.

<sup>77</sup>W. G. Fitzgerald (Ignatius Phayre), "The Rape of Abyssinia," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 117 (June, 1935), p. 648. By itself this "incident" was not important because it had been provoked to give Mussolini an excuse for subsequent action. At the time and later in 1935 it received much publicity. It was later proved that Wal Wal lay at least 60 miles within the frontier of Ethiopia and the Italians were entirely at fault.

<sup>78</sup>MacCallum, op. cit., pp. 46-48. Mussolini's propaganda against Abyssinia said: the country was not civilized; it should not be a member of the League (Italy sponsored their entrance); it failed to live up to international agreements (this is true but is a paradoxical statement coming from Mussolini); it was a gun runner's paradise; and most important, its war-like posture threatened the security of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

In December 1934, it was announced that during the following month there were to be conversations between the French and Italian Governments. This announcement worried the Ethiopians because they thought that France might cede French Somaliland to Italy, as colonial compensation for World War I.<sup>79</sup>

Prior to summarizing the situation that existed in the Red Sea at the beginning of 1935, it is necessary to briefly consider Eritrea, French Somaliland and British Somaliland. During this period these areas were quiet observers to the events that were occurring in Ethiopia. Eritrea was essentially a sleepy little backwater. Its major importance, other than strategic, was as a center from which Italian commercial (and political) influence radiated outward, as example toward the Yemen.<sup>80</sup> The use of the colony for agricultural settlement by Italian peasants had been dropped. One final activity occurring there, which received little notice, was the development of the port of Assab (see Annex B). Ships operating from this port could dominate the Bab el Mandeb.

The small enclave of French Somaliland was administered by the strong hand of a French Resident General. In addition to continuing to serve its intended purpose, that of being a French coaling station, it prospered as a result of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railroad. This line, completed in 1924, carried more than 80% of Ethiopia's imports and exports.<sup>81</sup> The French desired to maintain the status quo in the colony. Also, they wanted to keep

<sup>79</sup>"Italy and Abyssinia," The Economist, Vol. 119, No. 4765 (December 22, 1934), p. 1199. This would leave Ethiopia completely at Italy's mercy.

<sup>80</sup>Villari, op. cit., p. 51. In addition it was used to recruit colonial "askari" battalions that were effectively used in Libya and later in Ethiopia.

<sup>81</sup>Fitzgerald (Phayre), op. cit., p. 653.

their transport monopoly on Ethiopian trade, not welcoming Italian competition. In addition, they had no intention of ceding the colony to Italy as compensation for the war, in spite of the persistent rumors to this effect.<sup>82</sup>

British Somaliland was probably the most unwanted colony England possessed. After 1920, when the "Mad Mullah" departed from the scene, the area entered a period of peace. Commercially it was linked to Aden. It was, however, a source of constant irritation to the economy-minded House of Commons. There was an unofficial policy that nothing would be put into a colony that it was not hoped to get back at some later date. In the Somaliland, there was no hope of ever retrieving the money spent there. The possession of the area, however, still served its intended purpose by denying its use to another Power. In addition, the area had strategic potential, being a suitable area for the establishment of an air base.<sup>83</sup>

By the beginning of 1935, the Italian dictator had set the stage for his aggression. Great Britain, the dominant Power in this part of Africa, had either not awoken to the impending threat, or she was ignoring it, hoping that by muddling through the crisis would be averted.

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<sup>82</sup>Robert C. Binkley, "Franco-Italian Discord," Current History, Vol 32, No. 3 (June, 1930), pp. 529-533.

<sup>83</sup>E. W. P. Newman, "Northeast Africa," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 124 (August, 1938), p. 148.



## Section VI - Summary

At first glance it appears as if changes in the international interest in the area had been slight. This view is not altogether correct. While there was no major change in the balance of power in the area, there were qualitative changes. These qualitative changes, the rise of semi-independent Arab kingdoms, the appearance of local movements, the irredentism of Italy, etc., when coupled with the restlessness sweeping Europe, were to shortly undermine the balance of power in the Red Sea.<sup>84</sup>

At the beginning of 1935, Great Britain was still the most important power interested in the area. She had been able to protect her specific interests by establishing military bases, by physically occupying certain areas, and by using diplomatic influence. The sum of her specific interests equaled her imperial interest of keeping the route open to her trade, communications, and military movements. In 1931, a prominent British politician said: ". . . here also the permanent basis of British policy is fixed by the existence of the Indian Empire. No British government desires to extent its liabilities in the Red Sea . . . but the safety of our communications is vital to us. Our interest lies only in the maintenance of peace and the status quo. Stable governments best serve Britain's interest."<sup>85</sup>

Whereas the defense of the Indian Empire and the maintenance of her paramount position in the Indian Ocean

<sup>84</sup>The restlessness in Europe was partially caused by the precariousness of formulating strategies on so vulnerable a consideration as the Suez Canal. The international ripples caused by the sundering of the Isthmus of Suez continued to eddy down to the time under consideration.

<sup>85</sup>Sir Austen Chamberlain, "The Permanent Bases of British Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 4 (July, 1931), p. 543.

were still basic reasons for Britain's various involvements in the Red Sea, another factor had appeared since the end of the war. The naval center of gravity of the empire had shifted to the East, due to the rise of Japan as a major naval power and because of the economic inability of Great Britain to maintain the two-power standard.<sup>86</sup> This necessitated the stationing of a large portion of the main battle fleet to the east of Suez, thus accentuating the importance of the strategic line of communication to that fleet via the Red Sea.

Outwardly it appeared that the British were in an unassailable position, but it must be remembered that the Empire had less cohesiveness at that time than it did prior to World War I. The British were to use a term that was then current -- a "satisfied power". This imperial **satisfaction**, coupled with the great depression, the lethargy in her government, and the stirrings of nationalism in the Empire, was, to a degree, undermining the raison d'etre of the Empire. In addition, the colonies were shamefully neglected and stagnant. "Efforts to check the disintegration of the 'Outer Empire' (areas like Sa'udi Arabia where Britain had influence) lacked imagination and boldness. The war seemed to have broken the moral stamina of the British leaders -- problems were neglected, to avoid decisions and action became a virtue."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Monroe, op. cit., p. 52. This shift in naval strength was a result of the war and also of certain imperial strategic assumptions. The German naval threat in the North Sea had been neutralized by the War. The maintenance of close relations with France was assumed. Finally, the fundamental factor was the imperial determination that at all costs friendly relations would be maintained with the USA. This left Japan as the only naval threat to the Empire and also incidentally caused the construction of Aden's eastern counterpart, Singapore.

<sup>87</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 230.

In contrast to the lethargy of the British Government, the Italian Government (Mussolini) had embarked on a bold, aggressive, and energetic program in the area. The goal of this program was not to make Italy a major power in the Red Sea, as such, but rather to give her an entre into the Mediterranean, Mare Nostrum. Mussolini was determined to make Italy a major, if not the major power in that Sea. Consequently, the Italians had a fundamentally different orientation than the British. To the Italians, Red Sea affairs were part and parcel of Mediterranean politics, whereas the India-oriented British considered the Red Sea in terms of the Indian Ocean.

The third Power interested in the area was France. Her policy had not changed since 1918. She continued to rely on Britain to maintain her communications with her possessions east of Suez. France was preoccupied with European affairs (Germany), and the instable government of the Third Republic desired only to maintain the status quo.<sup>88</sup> In spite, however, of her limited (as compared to the British Empire) concern about the Red Sea, she was to play, if indirectly, a major role in the events there during the subsequent four years.

<sup>88</sup>The status quo essentially consisted of protecting French Somaliland and the French interests in the Suez Canal Company.

CHAPTER IV - THE ETHIOPIAN CRISIS  
Section I - January to October 1935

The Italo-Ethiopian crisis lasted from early 1935 until economic sanctions against Italy were removed by the League of Nations in July, 1936. To be sure, the repercussions of the crisis lasted much longer. In spite of being centered on or near the shores of the Red Sea, the crisis was an integral part of the European diplomatic picture and had particular bearing on relations between Italy, France, and Great Britain. Primary emphasis has been placed therefore on the actions that were taken by these three powers. There is little point in analyzing in detail the part played by the League of Nations; however, it was involved in the crisis. The League was variously used by the Powers as an international forum, a tool to employ, a shield to hide behind. It was only as strong and effective as the Powers allowed it to be.

At the outset of the crisis, the meeting in Rome between Pierre Laval and Mussolini took place, much heralded as directed toward the regularizing of relations between France and Italy. An agreement was reached by which France made colonial concessions to Italy ostensibly to satisfy Italian claims arising from the Treaty of London (1915). In the Red Sea, France ceded to Italy about 80 square kilometers in northern French Somaliland, an interest in the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railroad, and the strategic island of Dumeira in the Bab el Mandeb.<sup>1</sup> After signing this

<sup>1</sup>W. N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy Since Versailles (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1940), p. 185. Artillery placed on this island could dominate the Bab el Mandeb (see Annex B).

Robert G. Woolbert, "Italy in Abyssinia," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 13, No. 3 (April, 1935), p. 501. The acquisition of a share in the railroad was important to Italy because it allowed her to control arms traffic into Abyssinia and also compete with the Japanese who had captured a large portion of Ethiopia's import trade.

agreement, Italy announced that all outstanding differences had been settled. In fact, the most important result of this meeting was secret. Laval gave Mussolini an assurance that France would not interfere in any Italian activity in Ethiopia. Mussolini was thus able to secure his rear prior to embarking onto the Ethiopian adventure.

The Ethiopian Government was disturbed by this agreement. Their representative called on Mussolini in Rome in January, 1935, at which time he was assured that Rome wanted peace.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the Italians increased the flow of troops and munitions into Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

Having reached this secret understanding with France, Mussolini attempted in the late winter and spring to open conversations with Britain concerning Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup> Mussolini later claimed that when he first approached the British he informed them exactly what his ultimate intentions were.<sup>4</sup> Because of the evasiveness of the British replies to his feelers, he launched, in the controlled Italian press, a strong anti-British campaign charging that Britain was the cause of the crisis because she had designs on Ethiopia but was hiding them behind the cloak of the League.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The Times (London), January 12, 1935, p. 13. The Ethiopians were equally disturbed about the appointment of General de Bono as High Commissioner of East Africa.

<sup>3</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., pp. 301-308. (January 29 and May 1, 1935)

<sup>4</sup>By a Group of Expert Students of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 453. This is quoted from an interview between Mussolini and a correspondent of the Morning Post in September, 1935.

<sup>5</sup>The Times (London), May 24, 1935, p. 17.

In June, Mr. Eden, Minister for League of Nations Affairs, went to Rome to attempt to deter Mussolini with certain proposals. Mussolini was told that the British Government would offer Ethiopia a portion of British Somaliland including an outlet to the Sea if the Emperor would agree to cede some territory to Italy and grant her economic concessions.<sup>6</sup> The Italians emphatically refused saying they would never consent to Abyssinia having an outlet on the Sea because they could then import munitions in quantities which would result in an even greater threat to the Italian colonies.

Following this British effort, the situation continued to deteriorate. The Italian military build-up in Eritrea continued in preparation for the invasion in the fall at the end of the rainy season. In this atmosphere of tension the British, and later in July the French, declared an arms embargo against both Italy and Ethiopia. This only affected the Ethiopian position adversely.

Throughout this period efforts to forestall the impending disaster were made in the League of Nations. But Italian obstructionist tactics were successful. They refused to specify their precise grievances against Ethiopia and refused to have any direct dealings with

<sup>6</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 310. Great Britain was willing to give up the port of Zeila in British Somaliland and a strip of land connecting it with Abyssinia if the Italians and Ethiopians were agreeable to the plan.

The Times (London), July 18, 1935, p. 17. In view of an interview given by the Emperor to a Times correspondent in July, 1935, it appears that he would have been agreeable to this formula.

Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 303. Mussolini told Eden that "in any settlement without war he would require to annex all those parts of Abyssinia which did not form part of Abyssinia proper . . ." Moreover, he made it clear that if he had to go to war to secure his ends, his aim would be to wipe out the name of Abyssinia from the map.

Ethiopian representatives. In July, the League agreed to postpone its meeting on this subject to allow the Powers (who were party to the 1906 treaty) attempt to reach an agreement during the following month. Consequently, a meeting between the foreign ministers of Great Britain, France, and Italy was held in Paris. It was a dismal failure. A vain attempt was made to obtain a full statement of the Italian case against Ethiopia and of Mussolini's minimum terms for an agreement.<sup>7</sup> Apparently Mussolini felt that this meeting only served the purpose of delaying possible international action against him for another month.

On August 22, the British Government announced that their policy would continue to be to support the principles of the League covenant.<sup>8</sup> Italy on the other hand continued to maintain that Great Britain was hiding imperial aims of her own in Abyssinia under the cloak of supporting the League, and was responsible for the fact that no solution had been reached in the crisis. The course that France was following under Laval is more difficult to define and will be discussed later.

In September, the problem was once again considered by the League. On September 4, the Italian representative announced that his government reserved the right to take

<sup>7</sup>"The Paris Conversations," The Economist, Vol. 121, No. 4799 (August 17, 1935), p. 319. Britain and France were particularly worried about the failure of the August meeting because of General Smut's warning. He said that an Italian invasion of Ethiopia would be likely to raise Black against White from one end of Africa to the other. In addition, at this meeting they refused to lift the arms embargo that was manifestly unfair to Ethiopia.

<sup>8</sup>The Times (London), August 23, 1935, p. 11.

any action necessary for the protection of the security of their colonies.<sup>9</sup> A week later Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Minister, announced in Geneva that Britain strongly supported the system of collective security. M. Laval later supported these views. En route to Geneva, however, Hoare had met Laval, and they had agreed that in the event of war, there would be no military sanctions and that the Canal would not be closed to Italian shipping (the one sure way to stop the invasion).<sup>10</sup> Hoare also emphasized in his speech that Britain was not willing to carry the burden alone.

Sir Samuel's speech and a concurrent reinforcement of the Mediterranean fleet at Alexandria were aimed at stopping Mussolini. The policy was a miserable failure. Mussolini recognized it as bluff and on October 3, he ordered his armies into Abyssinia. France and Great Britain had ample warning of Il Duce's intentions. Never before had an aggression received such advance publicity. To understand why the Powers vacillated, it is necessary to consider their situations at that time. K

It must be remembered that the Italian conquest followed years of Fascist threats, that it came in the midst of world-wide depression, and also that the League had recently failed to achieve agreement in disarmament or to halt the Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Italy was not the only dictatorship to be so encouraged. Indeed, Germany's introduction of the draft and

<sup>9</sup>In addition to this, Italy finally presented a memorandum to the League that documented the Italian complaints against Ethiopia. See: League of Nations, Memorandum by the Italian Government on the Situation in Ethiopia (Geneva: September 11, 1935), Series of League of Nations Publications, No. VII (Political, 1935).

<sup>10</sup>Black and Helmreich, op. cit., p. 495. After World War II, it was established that Mussolini was informed of the agreement by Laval almost immediately.



reconstitution of the Luftwaffe only months before demonstrated the inability of France and Great Britain to concert their policies in the face of a threat much less remote than the Ethiopian crisis.

While the western democracies were thus embattled, Italy's dictator had a definite goal and a plan to achieve it. Mussolini's basic aim was to make Italy a first-class power, to expand so that she could talk on terms of equality with France and Great Britain. The reasons advanced for the policy of expansion were not so baldly stated. Mussolini maintained that demographic pressure in the country made it necessary to have land where Italians could be settled;<sup>11</sup> Italy needed colonies as markets for Italian goods and as sources of raw materials; he claimed that Ethiopia posed a grave threat to Eritrea; he appealed to the Italians on the necessity for wiping out the stain of the defeat suffered at Aduwa in 1894;<sup>12</sup> and finally, he reminded the Italians of the glory of Imperial Rome. Such propaganda was designed primarily for home consumption and in the end it was successful.

Mussolini knew that in order to successfully achieve his aims in Ethiopia, he first had to protect himself

<sup>11</sup>Ward, op. cit., p. 120. Prior to World War I about 300,000 Italians migrated yearly, mostly to North America, South America, and France. With the end of the war, many countries (like the USA) imposed rigid immigration quotas that favored the Anglo-Saxon north of Europe. This national humiliation was deeply felt and resented in Italy, and Mussolini was able to successfully appeal to this feeling.

Gaetano Salvemini, "Can Italy Live at Home?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January, 1936); pp. 243-258. The source refutes the Italian contention that Ethiopia was a suitable place for white Italian settlers.

<sup>12</sup>Fitzgerald (Phayre), op. cit., p. 652. ". . . vengeance for the disaster (Aduwa) is a live motive in Italy's present ferment. One saw Aduwa chalked on the troop trains at Messina and Naples during the recent mobilization."

against French or English reaction to this scheme. Of the two countries, he was initially most concerned about France. It was essential to prevent the formation of an Anglo-French front. For this reason he first chose to woo France and as it has been seen his efforts were successful, primarily because the French were preoccupied with European affairs.

As seen through Fascist eyes, in 1935 Great Britain was in a state of diplomatic and military paralysis. Therefore, it was absolutely essential for Italy to conclude her projected enterprise against Ethiopia before Great Britain had become sufficiently strong to prevent it.<sup>13</sup> Mussolini also resented the strategic advantages (Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Alexandria, Haifa, and Aden) held by the British in the Mediterranean, which Mussolini wanted to convert into an Italian lake, Mare Nostrum. In a famous speech in the summer of 1935, he said that the Mediterranean is for the British Empire merely a via, a convenient short cut, one of many routes, but for Italy it was vita, life itself.<sup>14</sup>

It appears that as the crisis developed during 1935, Mussolini felt his way and was not oblivious to the growing world-wide disapproval of his intentions. His plan in Ethiopia initially was a maneuvered defense to be followed by a counter-offensive, trying all the time to provoke the Ethiopians into attacking him. Since the Ethiopians would not attack, this plan failed, but at the same time he grew bolder, seeing more and more clearly

<sup>13</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 297. He assumed that Britain would soon have to rearm against the German threat. In 1935 the size of the British army was one third what it had been in 1914.

<sup>14</sup>Edward Hutton, "The Mediterranean Question," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 125, (February, 1939), p. 153.

that the Powers were not going to interfere. By mid-summer he was convinced that he had a free hand.<sup>15</sup>

Mussolini had several factors that were working in his favor. First, the emergence of Hitler in a rearming Germany made both France and Great Britain reluctant to completely alienate a possible future ally. Second, he had two ideal bridgeheads in which to prepare for his attack on Ethiopia. Third, there were large pacifist groups in both France and Great Britain that were loath to go to war again under any circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Finally, he seemed to have the tacit consent of the Vatican for this imperialistic venture.<sup>17</sup> Mussolini also had the unestimable advantage of being able to keep enough "dust" in the air to prevent the vacillating Western democracies from focusing clearly on basic problems in time for concerted action.

During this period, Italy launched a pioneer international propaganda effort aimed at the Red Sea area and the Muslim world in general. By means of a powerful radio in Bari, free printed "news" material, and with the help of Italian minorities (primarily in Egypt) Italy attempted to portray herself as the friend and protector of the

<sup>15</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 303. In a speech on June 8, 1935, he said, ". . . we shall take no account of what is being said beyond our frontiers because we ourselves, we alone, are the judges of our own interests. We shall imitate to a letter those who are lecturing us. They have shown that when it is a question of creating an Empire or of defending it, they never took any account at all of the opinion of the world."

<sup>16</sup>Garratt, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>17</sup>Black and Helmreich, op. cit., p. 429. Various statements made by Achille Ratti, Pius XI, show that the Vatican favored the Italian venture in Ethiopia. It was a whole new field for church expansion.

world's Muslims.<sup>18</sup> These efforts were designed to undermine the position of the French and more particularly the British in the Arab world. The Arab news programs concentrated on British ineptitude in Palestine, a highly sensitive subject. Marshal Graziani's brutal methods in Libya were not sufficiently publicized in Arab Asia to offset these propaganda efforts, as accounts of demonstrations in Palestine, in which Italy was praised, would seem to indicate. Before long Hajj Amin al-Husseini, ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, would be broadcasting over Radio Bari. In the Red Sea area, the primary propaganda effort was made in Egypt. It appears as if somewhere in the inner recesses of Mussolini's mind he had marked Egypt down as an eventual Italian conquest.<sup>19</sup>

The vacillation of the British Government as the crisis developed during 1935 is hardest to explain. Britain had the most to lose by the establishment of Italian power on a most sensitive part of her imperial communications. Initial firmness was followed by an attempt to buy the Italian dictator off (the Eden mission to Rome in June) and this in turn was followed by foredoomed efforts to bluff.

British policy-making was hampered by conflicting interests.<sup>20</sup> An Italian conquest of Abyssinia, while

<sup>18</sup>The Times (London), December 22, 1933, p. 9. The Italians opened an extensive Middle East Institute in Bari in 1933. In addition to the operation of the radio station, much money was spent giving Arab students free education in Italy and exposing them to Italian fascism.

<sup>19</sup>Schonfield, op. cit., p. 81. Egypt was marked down to fall under Italian domination if not actual occupation. Britain was to be completely ousted. (This is further confirmed by the immediate pre-war Axis agreement for the division of Africa that allotted Egypt to Italy.)

<sup>20</sup>The Times (London), February 22, 1933, p. 13. The King and Queen of Italy paid a state visit to Egypt in 1933, returning the visit of Fuad in 1927.

<sup>20</sup>P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1954), pp. 111-113.

presenting no great immediate problems, nevertheless carried a latent threat to Britain's normal power position in the area.<sup>21</sup> But, British public opinion and the Labor Party were against rearmament and were for supporting collective security and the League. French cooperation was not in prospect and the United States was an unknown quantity. While there was considerable unorganized sympathy for the Ethiopians, it was by no means unqualified. Winston Churchill's position, for example, was one of support for Italian aspirations.

There were also several other factors that tended to complicate the situation and thus make a firm decision difficult to reach. The first of these was the British Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who came to office in June, 1935. As a member of the previous cabinet, he opposed collective security and the League in general. When the results of the Peace Poll, which he had denounced, came out strongly in favor of the League and collective security, he rapidly changed his tune and was soon heard hailing the League as the sheet anchor of British policy.<sup>22</sup> This political vacillation on his part coupled with his rather colorless and unenergetic leadership, did not help to define a clear British policy.

<sup>21</sup>Monroe, op. cit., p. 145. In January, 1935, an interdepartmental committee was formed under Sir John Maffey. The report of the committee, the Maffey Report, concluded that, "there are no important British interests in Abyssinia with the exception of Lake Tana, the waters of the Blue Nile, and certain tribal grazing rights." Pathetically narrow though this view may look in the light of subsequent events, it seems to have been general at the time. The report added that imperial defense interests would be affected only in the remote improbable context of war with Italy.

<sup>22</sup>The Peace Ballot or Poll, privately sponsored, asked the British public its opinion about the League and collective security. Over 11,000,000 British voters went to the polls and overwhelmingly indicated a preference for the government to work to support the League.

In spite of the Peace Poll, there were two distinct opinions in British political circles concerning the League. One group, represented by the Labor Party and some of the Tories, relied on the League. The second group regarded the League ". . . as at worst a refuge for international cranks and a potential menace to the Empire, at best a modified revival of the pre-war concert of Europe, a body for diplomatic deals between the great Powers and their clients but which did not involve any duty to stop aggression."<sup>23</sup> The second group included the British conservative leaders who were forced against their inclinations by public opinion to oppose Italy's action and support the League. The conservative party was further split concerning what should be done about Italy. The younger Tories believed that Italy should be stopped, then crushed and removed from the ranks of first-class powers. This view was opposed by the older faction that maintained if this was done, the country would become Communist and besides it would be playing directly into the hands of the Japanese.<sup>24</sup> This diversity of opinion in the House of Commons greatly hindered the formulation of a clear-cut policy.

Another factor complicating a firm policy decision was the historic Anglo-Italian friendship. Italy had been Britain's client, and there was a genuine sympathy for the Italians' desire to expand. England had been aware, probably since 1925, that Italy aspired to occupy Ethiopia. Initially, the prospect of such an Italian

<sup>23</sup>By a Group of Expert Students of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 470.

<sup>24</sup>Frank H. Simonds, "The Year's Tangled Diplomacy," Current History, Vol. 43, No. 4 (January, 1936), p. 350. The threat of international Communism was a real factor. Also, if Great Britain became involved in a war it would offer the Japanese a golden opportunity to further their encroachments upon the British sphere of influence in China.

expansion did not appear too daunting. The phrase "peaceful change" was in coinage, and Ethiopia's lack of control over her borders was a nuisance to Kenya, Somaliland and the Sudan.<sup>25</sup> As the crisis developed, however, Britain increasingly opposed a military solution.

Britain also had to consider that Ethiopia was a member of the League. If Britain and the other large Powers condoned the conquest of Ethiopia, the other small nations in the League would see the worth of collective security. The League as an instrument for maintaining peace would consequently be dead.<sup>26</sup>

Another factor that had to be weighed was the attitude of France. The influence of France was then decreasing on the continent due to the continual political strife and incompetency of the Third Republic.<sup>27</sup> Since the World War, however, it was axiomatic that France would be an ally. France was reluctant to oppose Italy, fearing to lose a possible ally against a rearming Germany. As Great Britain needed France's friendship in Europe, the effect of this French reluctance ultimately influenced English Red Sea policy.

<sup>25</sup>Monroe, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>26</sup>The Times (London), July 15, 1935, p. 15. On July 14, Hoare discussed this in Parliament. While expressing sympathy for the Italians and admitting that the Ethiopians were not ideal neighbors, he said that it had to be remembered that Ethiopia was a member of the League.

<sup>27</sup>Simonds, op. cit., p. 349. Laval's vacillations completed the destruction of France's reputation in Europe. Great Britain moved into a position of European leadership. Britain apparently felt that she had to cater to France's views because France, in May, signed an alliance with Russia. This was viewed with concern in Britain.

By September the British position was established. She supported collective security, but as a qualification, announced that she would not carry the burden alone.<sup>28</sup> Whereas she was not militarily able to oppose Mussolini, she began to realize that her policy of conciliation had been a capitulation to Mussolini's will to aggression.

In comparison, the French were less concerned about the forthcoming Italian aggression against Ethiopia. Their interests in French Somaliland, the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railroad, the Suez Canal Company, and the Red Sea, while important, were trifles compared to her European security. Nevertheless, the European-oriented policies that she pursued had a strong secondary influence on the outcome of the events in the Red Sea. Her main preoccupation was the maintenance of allies. When Laval gave Mussolini a free hand in Ethiopia, it was a small price to pay in order to make him an ally.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the year Laval aided Mussolini's diplomatic stalling and was a party to the procrastination of the League. As late as August 23, 1935, he refused to

<sup>28</sup>If the British Government did not have its heart in this project, the people did. As a sample of what was then being written, see: "British Interests," The Economist, Vol. 121, No. 4801 (August 31, 1935), p. 405. ". . . The fundamental British interest . . . is the preservation, confirmation, and extension of the reign of international law that the world has been trying to establish since 1918."

<sup>29</sup>Medlicott, op. cit., p. 189. The British maintained that Laval must bear the primary responsibility for the failure of collective security because of his concession to Mussolini.

Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 149. Laval always denied that he granted a concession to Mussolini. This source contains a detailed argument to support this thesis.



announce whether or not France would support sanctions. He desired to localize the conflict to Africa, if it broke out, and professed genuine surprise at the vehement British support of the League.<sup>30</sup>

The hesitant French foreign policy of this period can be partially attributed to the British. If the British had made their position clear at the beginning of the crisis, it is likely that France would have supported her. Of her two potential allies, France could least afford to lose Great Britain.<sup>31</sup> When Britain finally made a firm statement of policy, the French followed, if somewhat reluctantly.

In the meantime, Ethiopia had repeatedly attempted to bring the whole problem of her relationship with Italy before the League. In all cases she failed; Italy claimed it was not a matter of League interest. Failing there, Haile Selassie vainly appealed to Roosevelt to effect a settlement. The Congress enacted a neutrality act requiring the President to embargo arms to belligerents in any conflict, and Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, intervened to secure the cancellation of an American oil concession in Ethiopia just prior to the September

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<sup>30</sup>The Times (London), August 23, 1935, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup>Black and Helreich, op. cit., p. 494. The British gave the French ample opportunity to wonder what London was doing. In June, 1935, London signed a Naval Pact with Germany in direct violation of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, that caused consternation in Paris.

Andre Geraud, "British Vacillations," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 4 (July, 1936), pp. 579-584. The French looked upon England with suspicion because Great Britain's public opinion seemed to be able to control British policy. This was considered dangerous. They thought a policy should be set, and then the English public should be slowly made aware of it.

session of the League.<sup>32</sup>

Section II - October 1935 to July 1936

On October 3, the forces of Marshall de Bono crossed the border into Ethiopia. The long expected and debated invasion had started. The choice of the date for the invasion had been dictated by military considerations. The ground had dried sufficiently to allow the Italian war machine to move. When the news reached Europe, there was a feeling of relief to know that the long anticipated event had started.

Action was taken in the League to condemn Italy as the aggressor. This came as no surprise, but it irritated the Italian Government who pointed out, with some justification, that under similar circumstances the Japanese had not been condemned.

After the condemnation of Italy, public sentiment in Britain desired the Canal to be closed to the Italians. This would have effectively stopped the invasion by cutting the Italian line of supply. The legal niceties of whether or not Britain had the right to do this were discussed, but this was irrelevant. Britain could have closed the Canal but was not prepared to go to war with Italy to keep it closed.

In Britain, the Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, called for a general election in November, ostensibly to obtain

<sup>32</sup>"The Abyssinian Oil Concession," The Economist, Vol. 121, No. 4802 (September 7, 1935), p. 462. Cordell Hull, when he found that the private interest behind the concession was Socony-Vacuum, convinced the company to abandon the concession so that "it would not prejudice the labors of the peacemakers." Previously the Italians maintained that the concession was a front for British interests and just another example of her imperial designs on Ethiopia.

The only other country that attempted to have a say in Ethiopian affairs was Japan. See, "Pot and Kettle," The Economist, Vol. 121, No. 4796 (July 27, 1935), p. 172. It was announced in Japan that Japan did not regard herself as "disinterested" in the question of Abyssinia. After this announcement the presses of the two countries proceeded to attack each other in strong terms.

a public mandate to support economic sanctions against Italy. This was an absurd reason, for the British public had already shown that it was solidly behind collective security. The election had the effect of paralyzing national unity at a very critical time. The Commons adjourned to campaign for reelection and the formation of a firmer policy against Mussolini was again delayed.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, in Geneva the imposition of economic sanctions had been approved, effective on November 18, 1935. The list of materials proscribed for export to Italy was limited and had little detrimental effect on the Italian war effort. Prior to the war, Mussolini had stockpiled large amounts of essential commodities in anticipation of the action taken by the League.

In Ethiopia the war, after large initial advances, had come to a practical standstill. The British maintained their fleet in Alexandria. The latter irritated Il Duce; however, Laval had notified the Italians that any unprovoked attack on the British fleet would be considered as an act of hostility against France.<sup>34</sup>

During the fall, Anglo-French efforts were made in vain to reach a compromise solution between Italy and Ethiopia. Of these, the most well known and notorious

<sup>33</sup>Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), pp. 174-177. Churchill commenting on the actions of the Prime Minister at this time said: "It was not until several months after the election that I began to understand the principles upon which sanctions are formed. The Prime Minister had declared that sanctions meant war; secondly, he was resolved that there must be no war; and thirdly, he decided upon sanctions. The Government did not contemplate the use of the fleet. The fact that the nerve of the British Government was not equal to the occasion can be excused only by their sincere love of peace. Mussolini's bluff succeeded."

<sup>34</sup>The Times, (New York), November 30, 1935, p. 1

was the Hoare-Laval plan of December, 1935. By the Hoare-Laval plan the Emperor of Ethiopia was to cede outright to Italy a large portion of northern Abyssinia. In addition, the Italians would have had jurisdiction, but not sovereignty, over an even larger area of the country adjacent to Italian Somaliland. The Emperor in the part of the country that remained would accept Italian "cooperation". In return, the Italians would cede to Ethiopia a corridor to the Sea adjacent to French Somaliland. When the plan was drawn up, there seemed to be no immediate prospect of Italian victory, and although the plan may have been justified on the ground that it would save Abyssinia from losing all its territory, it was undoubtedly drafted in a desire to avoid all of the disastrous international complications which Laval in particular anticipated. Nevertheless, the publication of the plan was a political blunder because it ignored the public sentiment to save Abyssinia.<sup>35</sup> The plan, which neatly partitioned Ethiopia with 19th century aplomb, caused a storm in the British press. The government was forced to repudiate it and the Foreign Minister, Sir Samuel Hoare, "resigned".

The public rejection of the plan generated reactions that had significance in the final evolution of the crisis. First, it caused a certain amount of Anglo-French ill-feeling which made further concerting of efforts more difficult. Second, it indicated clearly the timidity of the British and French governments. Instead of supporting an oil sanction that would in all likelihood have been effective, they advocated the partition of Ethiopia. This caused a loss of face and dealt a near fatal blow to

<sup>35</sup>Medlicott, op. cit., p. 190.

to collective security. The smaller nations lost whatever faith they still may have had in the League.<sup>36</sup> Finally, it is believed that Mussolini would have accepted the Hoare-Laval plan, at least as a basis for negotiations, had it not met such an end. With the collapse of the plan, Mussolini was convinced that it would be impossible to satisfactorily settle the conflict without the complete defeat of Abyssinia.<sup>37</sup>

Concurrent with the Ethiopian operation, Mussolini was securing his position at the southern entrance to the Red Sea by fortifying the island of Dumeira and the Brothers Islands, ceded to Italy by France in January, 1935.<sup>38</sup> In addition, he increased his interest in the

<sup>36</sup>"Back to the League," The Economist, Vol. 121, No. 4817 (December 21, 1935), p. 1248.

The possibility of imposing an oil sanction against Italy, which eventually would have effectively stopped the war, was brought up often. Mussolini had announced that he would consider the imposing of this type of sanction as an act of war. This bluff together with the uncertain position of the USA in the long run effectively killed oil sanctions. Prior to the beginning of the war imports of American oil totaled only about 6.6% of the Italian total. It appears that Roosevelt in the fall was able to reach an agreement with the American oil companies that in the event an oil sanction was imposed, that they would not substantially increase oil exports to Italy. The cold 19th century cynicism of the Hoare-Laval plan destroyed whatever position for moral persuasion that Roosevelt might have had. Particularly in 1936, some of the French and British press accused the USA of indirectly being at fault for the fall of Ethiopia because of the oil question. They said that if an oil sanction had been imposed, American oil would have flowed in. This is a false accusation.

<sup>37</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 304. From one point of view it can be seen that the public pressure generated for the support of the League had the final result of letting Italy seize the entire country.

<sup>38</sup>Farago, Arabian Antic, pp. 255-256. The Italians closed the channel between these islands and the African shore to native shipping. They sank one dhow that tried to run this passage. This had the effect of paralyzing the native shipping in the western channel of the strait.

other islands in the southern part of the Sea. As an example, in 1935, a British lighthouse on Jebel Zuqur Island was destroyed by a storm and subsequently abandoned. Shortly afterward, the Italians arrived, rebuilt the lighthouse, and stationed soldiers there to "protect" it.<sup>39</sup>

Even during the war, Mussolini's final plan for the domination of the southern Red Sea apparently still included penetration of Yemen, as the following incident will attest. In the winter of 1935-36, an Italian troopship anchored off the Yemen town of Sheikh es Said (near the coastal border of Aden) and landed several hundred Italian blackshirts. They came with complete equipment and appeared to plan to stay. A rapid protest came from the Imam and the soldiers were withdrawn. Marshall Badoglio sent a personal envoy to San'a to restore the shaken relations. He claimed that the soldiers were convalescents from the war. The Imam knew, however, that the operation was an attempt to test his reaction.<sup>40</sup> It was believed by neutral observers that when Mussolini found the time ripe for an invasion of Yemen, he would stage an incident similar to Wal Wal.

Following collapse of the Hoare-Laval plan, there was a lull in diplomatic activity. An attitude developed that all that could be done to save Ethiopia has been done. Proposals were circulated between London, Paris, and Geneva concerning the feasibility of an oil sanction. These, however, were not considered with enthusiasm and eventually lapsed.<sup>41</sup> (See Footnote 36.)

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 116-118. Laval was the most active in blocking the imposition of oil sanctions.

In early 1936, the French became increasingly reluctant to support any anti-Italian measures. They wanted the Italian army to return to Europe.<sup>42</sup> This attitude was reinforced in March, 1936, when Hitler occupied the Rhineland. They were prepared to dismiss the East African War as an unimportant passing episode in order to give themselves an excuse for taking off the sanctions, setting Italy on her financial feet, and insuring that the Italian army would fight on her side in any future European war.

The sudden collapse of Ethiopian resistance pleased the French. The Italian forces shattered the army of the Emperor at the Battle of Lake Ashangi (with the judicious use of mustard gas) and entered Addis Ababa on May 5, 1936.<sup>43</sup> In June, Mussolini proclaimed the formation of the Italian East African Empire, comprising Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland. In doing this, he presented the League and the world with a fait accompli.

The question arose as to what should be done about the sanctions. It was obvious that they had failed but

<sup>42</sup>With the failure of the Hoare-Laval plan, the French became increasingly independent of Britain in their foreign policy. They tended to look forward to the eventual victory of the Italians. As an example of this, in January, 1936, they stopped allowing Ethiopian cargo to use the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railroad in exchange for an Italian promise not to bomb the line. See: Hugh R. Wilson, For Want of a Nail (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), p. 22.

<sup>43</sup>Walter W. Crotch, "Whither Mussolini," Current History, Vol. 45 (February, 1937), p. 44. Mussolini had hoped that the Emperor would have remained in Addis Ababa to head a puppet government. It would have solved many problems. It would have helped to keep the country in order. As it was, 250,000 troops were required to fight the guerillas. Also a vassal government could make concessions to Great Britain on Lake Tana which out of prestige considerations, Mussolini could not do.

should they be lifted simply because Mussolini had succeeded? Concerning this, there were two schools of thought. The first, which was well represented by the British Prime Minister, contended that the Italian victory was a fait accompli, nothing could be done to retrieve the situation, and thus it would be a "mid-summer's madness to continue the sanctions." The second school maintained that the sanctions should be maintained and strengthened for an indefinite period.<sup>44</sup> The situation in Europe, however, was of overriding importance in the scale of values of the Anglo-French leaders. Therefore, on July 15, 1936, the sanctions were officially abolished.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>"The End of a Chapter," The Economist, Vol. 123, No. 4837 (May 9, 1936), p. 293. Among the nations that advocated the retention of sanctions, perhaps the most vocal, was the Union of South Africa because of her particular African interests.

<sup>45</sup>Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy Under Mussolini (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1956), p. 161. The following is the "injured" Italian view of this event: "thus ended one of the most deplorable episodes in politico-diplomatic history, the unsuccessful effort to starve 40,000,000 people into surrender." The Editors, "National Lifeline," Current History, Vol. 45 (February, 1937), p. 26. In September, 1935, the British Oil Petrol Company, financially controlled by the Italian Government, secured control of the Mosul oil fields. This, when it was discovered, was a bomb-shell. In June, 1936, coincident with the lifting of the sanctions, it was announced that I.P.C. had bought out the Italian Government. Italy in control of this field would have been far more dangerous to Great Britain than Italy in Ethiopia. There is room to speculate that the sale to I.P.C. of the Italian Government's controlled company was an important factor in persuading Great Britain to lift sanctions.



## CHAPTER V - THE FINAL YEARS, 1936-1939

### Section I - General Summary of Events

The period 1936-39 marked the collapse of the system of collective security. The Italian conquest precipitated a series of diplomatic and military events which eventually culminated in World War II. Throughout this period the individual governments were so engrossed with day to day events, fascinated by the approaching catastrophe, that none could pause to review the whole situation. Initially, in this chapter the main events of the period will be summarized, following which, the various policies, attitudes, and interests of the Powers will be discussed. It has been necessary to make reference to events which occurred in the Mediterranean because during this period, the happenings in the two seas were intimately connected.

Following their Ethiopian victory, the Italians indulged in an orgy of self-congratulations. They represented their conquest as a victory over the great British Empire. Much to Italy's dislike, the first apparent result of their victory was the conclusion of an Anglo-Egyptian treaty. The Italian conquest had expedited the conclusion of this long awaited treaty. The Egyptians recognizing the Italian threat to their south and west, felt impelled to regularize their relations with Britain.

Concurrent with the signing of this treaty, Britain began to rearm. Also, as an indication of their intent to maintain their position in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, they started to strengthen their bases in these areas. These actions brought a momentary breath of

realism to Rome. In the late fall, Mussolini's efforts to improve relations with Britain were successful. They resulted in the temporary suspension of anti-British Italian propaganda and the signing of the Anglo-Italian Gentlemen's Agreement of January, 1937. By this document the two powers agreed to maintain the status quo in the region.

During this same period, the Spanish Civil War reached its full intensity. The war in Spain strained the situation in the entire Mediterranean which in turn tended to irritate the situation in the Red Sea. The Italian interest in Spain was similar to her interest in Ethiopia, mainly a desire to achieve control over one of the exits to the great trade short-cut.

During 1937, the Italians continued their efforts to improve their position at the southern end of the Red Sea. This involved the reorganization of their new Empire, improving their military capability near the Bab el Mandeb, and continuing their efforts to penetrate Yemen. The previous year they had renewed their treaty with Yemen and in 1937, a new treaty, valid for 25 years, was concluded. At this point Italian influence there, minute as it was, reached its apex.

Within six months of the signing of the Gentlemen's Agreement, Mussolini again became dissatisfied. He concluded that in spite of the Agreement, the British hegemony in the Mediterranean and Red Sea had not been broken. As a result, Italy reassumed her martial tones in the hope of gaining advantage by looking dangerous. She returned to the policy of damning Britain. Also, late in the year she left the League and formed with Germany what was to be called, the Axis.

In spite of his reversal of policy, Mussolini was still enough of a realist to be concerned about Britain. He did not want to completely close the door to a rapprochement. The resignation of Eden in February, 1938, provided him with an excuse for still another volte-face. He desired to enter into conversations with the British to distract the Italian public from the German Anschluss in Austria. Previously, he had preached to them that this would be a disaster to Italian security, but when it actually happened, he appeared to be indifferent. The resultant Anglo-Italian talks produced a comprehensive agreement defining the spheres of influence of the signatories in the Red Sea as well as the Mediterranean. At the same time, the Italians agreed to suspend their propaganda broadcasts to the Middle East. The British stipulated that the pact would not become effective until the Italians ceased their aid to Franco. Eventually, after lengthy British procrastination, it was ratified by Britain in November, 1938. This entailed a de jure recognition of the Italian-African Empire. Previously, in the summer of 1938 and as a condition to the agreement, the British recommended to the League that the members recognize the Italian conquest. The French were delighted with the results of the Anglo-Italian talks. They recognized the Italian Empire in November, 1938.

Mussolini had become, by this time, influenced by his alliance with Hitler. He again became truculent after seeing with what ease the German dictator was able to defy the Western democracies. Initially, his main target was France. He raised a series of impossible demands about the Suez Canal, Jibuti, and Tunisia. By this time he had become irrevocably committed to a course that was bound to lead to war.

In April, 1939, the 1938 Anglo-Italian Agreement was nullified by Mussolini's invasion of Albania. By this time the democracies were fully alive to the impending danger. Prior to the outbreak of the war, the British attempted to increase their military strength in the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. During the last few months of peace, the lines had been drawn.

## Section II - British Actions and Policies, 1936-1939

British policy during this period was based on and reacted to many stimuli -- Mussolini, the Imam, imperial defense, Palestine, Anglo-Italian relations, Egypt, oil, the Canal, Ibn Sa'ud, etc. Essentially, they attempted to accommodate these outside stimuli to their traditional pattern of imperial interests. During this period, British policy was on the defensive in the sense that it was forced to react to external changes affecting the status quo which they had attempted to maintain since the end of the First World War. They did not have the initiative. In this section the more important stimuli that affected British policy will be examined.

General British Foreign Policy - During this period Britain moved from a position of supporting the League and collective security, to that of appeasing the dictators in order to maintain European peace, to that of realizing the futility of appeasement.

In the middle of 1936 she was in a paradoxical situation. She depended upon collective security, be it by the League of Nations or by alliances, because she had allowed her armed forces to shrink to such a low level. She had, however, made the absolutely fundamental mistake of showing that she was afraid to collide with another power. At the same time, the crisis revealed what their statesmen had been ignoring -- that the importance of the area had increased tremendously since the end of the war.<sup>1</sup>

The government gradually began to withdraw from the idea of collective security, relying more on traditional

<sup>1</sup>William L. Langer, "Tribulations of Empire: The Mediterranean Problem," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 15, No. 4 (July, 1937), p. 655.

methods of diplomacy, including appeasement.<sup>2</sup> Appeasement has since become synonymous with surrender, but at that time the British leaders had a sincere desire to maintain the peace and were willing to make sacrifices to achieve this end. This policy effected the Red Sea only indirectly. There the British desired to maintain the status quo.<sup>3</sup> By 1938, however, they were willing to grant de jure recognition to the Italian conquest, something they had previously refused to do, as the price to pay to maintain European peace. It is necessary to remember that Britain was highly preoccupied with happenings in Europe and the affairs of the Red Sea were only of secondary interest.

Anglo-Italian Relations - Of all the conflicting factors influencing the Red Sea that the British had to contend with during this period, their relations with Italy were the most important. It became increasingly obvious that the Italian presence in Ethiopia poised a latent imperial threat. Until just a few months prior to the outbreak of the war, however, there was still hope that Italy would not become an enemy. In addition, there was strong British sentiment for maintaining the traditional

<sup>2</sup>Neville Chamberlain, The Struggle for Peace (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1940), p. 100. In 1938 the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, was quoted as saying: ". . . I do not believe . . . that the League as it is constituted today is able to provide collective security for anyone, . . . we must not try and delude ourselves . . ."

<sup>3</sup>The Times (London), July 20, 1937, p. 17. Mr. Eden Told the House of Commons on the 19th that Britain is: first, for the maintenance of the status quo in the Red Sea; second, not following a policy of revenge; third, willing to defend its interests in the Red Sea if necessary; and fourth, determined that no great power be allowed to establish itself on the eastern shore of the Sea.

good relations with Italy.<sup>4</sup> "War with Italy, our old friend, is inconceivable. She poses us no threat by her position in Abyssinia."

After the fait accompli in Ethiopia three things became apparent to the British Government: first, Great Britain and Italy had a common vital interest in the Red Sea (and Mediterranean); second, each country could hinder the other in certain areas; and third, that a war for both of them would present incalculable dangers.<sup>5</sup> For these reasons, when Mussolini made overtures to improve relations, the British were quick to respond. On January 2, 1937, the Gentlemen's Agreement was signed, by which both countries agreed to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean (and the Red Sea).<sup>6</sup>

This document briefly stabilized the relations between the two countries, but two factors appeared to nullify it: first, the main rock upon which the agreement foundered was the civil war in Spain, because Britain opposed the Italian involvement; second, Italy's pride was inflamed by Britain's refusal to recognize their Ethiopian conquest. This British failure together with the Italian fear of the British hegemony in the Red Sea (and Mediterranean),

<sup>4</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, "Imperial Defense," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 117 (February, 1935), p. 136. Additionally, it was speculated that an arrangement with Italy was essential because it could flank, ignore, or contain the Franco-German problem. France was felt to be sterilized by her fear of Germany.

<sup>5</sup>Sillani, op. cit., p. 341.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Monroe, The Mediterranean in Politics (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 185-186. "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Italian Government recognize that freedom of entry into, and exit from and the transit through the Mediterranean is a vital interest both to the different parts of the British Empire and to Italy, and that these interests are in no way inconsistent with each other."

convinced Mussolini that the vaguely worded Gentlemen's Agreement was of no value. Consequently, he resumed his propaganda attack upon Britain. The British, because of the general European situation and their policy of appeasement, were forced to endure it.

This situation continued until February, 1938, at which time the Italian ambassador in London approached Chamberlain and Eden about initiating Anglo-Italian conversations aimed at improving their steadily worsening relations. Eden, feeling that the time was not ripe for such talks, resigned because the Prime Minister, supported by a majority of the cabinet, endorsed the idea.<sup>7</sup> The talks were accordingly held and on April 16, 1938, an agreement was signed that covered all of the points of friction (see Annex D for the portion of the treaty applicable to the Red Sea). The treaty essentially recognized the de facto positions of the two parties in the Red Sea as they then existed. It did not involve any concessions except that Italy theoretically became the equal of Britain, in guaranteeing the status quo on the Arabian Peninsula. Italy agreed to discontinue her Arab propaganda and was forced to accept a vague

<sup>7</sup>Sillani, op. cit., p. 343. According to the Italian propaganda, Mr. Eden had been a mortal enemy of Italy since his meeting with Mussolini in June, 1935. His resignation cleared the air and allowed for the completion of the accord.

Chamberlain, The Struggle for Peace, pp. 37-90. Chamberlain in supporting his position in the House of Commons stated: ". . .if we are to make progress in the task of improving our relations with other countries, we must at least understand what their point of view is . . . we are not prepared to make peace at any price."

Churchill, op. cit., p. 242. "Mr. Chamberlain was imbued with a sense of special and personal mission to come to friendly terms with the dictators . . . To Mussolini he wished to accord recognition of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia as a prelude to a general settlement of differences."



declaration that both powers would agree to support the provisions of the Constantinople Agreement of 1888, guaranteeing the freedom of use of the Suez Canal at all times to all powers.

Chamberlain faced difficulties in Parliament with the treaty. He justified it by saying that: "The clouds of mistrust have been cleared away."<sup>8</sup> He maintained that the agreement contributed towards improving the European situation. He was supported by the French and by Roosevelt who yielded to Chamberlain's request and bestowed a public blessing on the agreement.<sup>9</sup> Britain during 1938 had a growing desire to recognize the Italian position in the Red Sea. This was not based on strategic considerations but rather the rapidly deteriorating European situation. Chamberlain hoped to break the Rome-Berlin Axis by appeasing Mussolini in the Red Sea (and Mediterranean).<sup>10</sup> Mr. Churchill and many among the permanent staff of the Foreign Office felt that the clauses of the treaty relating to the Red Sea were padding to cover Mussolini's triumph in the Mediterranean.<sup>11</sup>

In the summer, Lord Halifax, the new Foreign Minister, informed the League that Britain favored recognition by

<sup>8</sup>Chamberlain, The Struggle For Peace, pp. 181-194. This source contains the defense of the treaty by Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons.

<sup>9</sup>Donald F. Drummond, The Passing of American Neutrality 1937-1941 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1955), p. 75. Roosevelt had gradually come to find merit in Chamberlain's belief that appropriate concessions might loosen Italy's ties with the Axis.

<sup>10</sup>Gathorne-Hardy, op.cit., pp. 459-461. In addition, it was felt (in British Governmental circles) that the 1938 Treaty served the purpose of allaying any possible suspicion on the part of Italy that England had unfriendly or vindictive intentions.

<sup>11</sup>Churchill, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

the members of the Italian conquest.<sup>12</sup> In the face of growing Italian irritation, Britain finally on November 17, 1938, gave de jure recognition of the Italian conquest. Following Chamberlain's trip to Munich, he and Lord Halifax visited Rome in January, 1939. Their meeting with Mussolini was fruitless. By this time the Italian dictator was completely committed to the Axis.

Axis Propaganda - The Axis propaganda directed at the Muslim world was another stimulus to which the British had to react. The Italian programs from Bari, which Italian agents supplemented by subversive activities, traded on prevailing anti-British and anti-French feeling in the Arab states. By early 1938, Britain had become especially restive over the prominence that Radio Bari accorded to the inflamed Palestine situation and also by the accelerated movement of Italian agents in the Yemen and vicinity. The British amenability to entering into the Agreement of 1938 was in part caused by their desire to stop this source of unrest. In addition, in an attempt to lessen the effects of Radio Bari, the British started to broadcast the news in Arabic over BBC. This was the first occasion in which they employed a foreign language.<sup>13</sup>

The Italians, according to their promise of April, 1938, ceased their propaganda efforts. The Germans quickly and effectively filled the gap left by the Italians as will be discussed later. The Axis propaganda, considering the entire Middle East, was effective, but in the specific Red Sea area, it achieved little.

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<sup>12</sup>The Times (London), May 13, 1938, p. 13. Britain was, herself, withholding recognition until Italy ceased supporting Franco.

<sup>13</sup>The Times (London), October 30, 1937, p. 15.

Commerce - Trade had been perhaps the major reason for the maintenance of her imperial communications. It is necessary to understand the actual dependence that the Empire had on the Red Sea for the passage of its imports and exports. This will give an idea of why Britain was so sensitive about protecting the route.

Prior to the war, Britain obtained from five to fourteen percent of her total imports via the Suez Canal and Red Sea. These imports were not vital and could have been replaced from other sources.<sup>14</sup> She received about two-thirds of her oil needs from North America and one-third from the Mediterranean, eighteen percent from east of Suez.<sup>15</sup> If the Mediterranean were closed by war, oil requirements could be easily made up from North America. On the other hand, the United Kingdom was itself only one part of the Empire, and during this period cannot be considered as a separate entity. The other parts of the Empire were more dependent upon the route. As example, seventy percent of India's trade and fifty percent of the Australian-New Zealand trade transited the Canal. It must be remembered though that London was the financial hub for the commerce of the entire Empire. From this can be seen why she was so sensitive about maintaining the route open for use by all the individual parts of the Empire.

Egypt and the Sudan - The events occurring in these areas affected and reacted to developing British interests during this period.

Sidki Pasha, who had ruled Egypt as a virtual dictator under the authoritarian constitution of 1930, died in

<sup>14</sup>Hutton, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>15</sup>Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, p. 95.

December, 1934. Under mounting pressure, the King suspended the constitution of 1930, and in December, 1935, reinstalled the more liberal 1923 constitution. This coincided with the formation of the so-called National Front, the result of a temporary reconciliation between the King and the Wafd. An all Wafdist cabinet was formed and negotiations were resumed with the British on the four still unresolved reservations of the 1922 Proclamation of Independence. The solidarity exhibited among the factious Egyptian politicians resulted from the Italian threat.<sup>16</sup> Talks commenced in March, 1936 and on August 26, the long awaited Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was signed. The treaty provided for the following: first, a perpetual treaty of alliance, guaranteeing reciprocal aid against any common enemy; second, the gradual withdrawal of British troops into the Canal Zone with probable complete evacuation by 1956; third, that the Egyptian Government would assume the responsibility for the protection of foreigners in Egypt; and fourth, Great Britain would sponsor Egypt's entry into the League. The question of the ultimate status of the Sudan was not resolved. This agreement was supplemented the following year by the Montreux Convention, abolishing the capitulations.<sup>17</sup> Also in 1937 Egypt became a member of the League.

Britain, in effect, asked Egypt in the treaty for room in which to fight. Britain needed a secure base from which she could attack Libya and Italian East Africa.

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<sup>16</sup>William L. Langer, "The Struggle for the Nile," p. 261. The concern was based on being partially surrounded by the Italians (in Libya and Ethiopia) and on their control of the Blue Nile. There was a current legend in Egypt that the Emperor of Ethiopia could cut off the waters of the Nile as one would shut off a faucet.

<sup>17</sup>Issawi, op. cit., p. 172.

Also she had to assure her uncontested domination over the Canal in the coming war. It was apparent to the British that the rise of Egyptian nationalism precluded her being used as she had been in 1914-1918.<sup>18</sup> It would be essential to have a friendly or at least neutral population in Egypt and the Sudan. The Italian adventure in East Africa coupled with the growing intimacy between Rome and Berlin had brought Egypt into the front line of British imperial strategy. From 1935 onwards, British control of Egypt was the principal obstacle to the establishment of Mussolini's Roman Empire and one of the principal guarantees for the continued existence of the British Empire. In 1936 the British found themselves in the awkward situation of having had their own weapon turned against them. The Italians, controlling the headwaters of the Blue Nile, poised a latent threat to the British in Egypt as previously the British had been able to threaten the Egyptians.<sup>19</sup>

After the signing of the 1936 Treaty, however, several factors continued to make Britain's presence in the country unpopular. First, the revolt in Palestine and its inept handling by the British had an adverse effect on the Egyptian public. Second, the Wafd party, that had entered office in 1936 with a great majority, fell from power in 1938. Subsequently, the party periodicals contained many anti-British articles which, together with the anti-British campaign of Hasan al Banna, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, gave encouragement to the Axis.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Marlowe, op. cit., p. 306.

<sup>19</sup>Boveri, op. cit., pp. 321-323.

<sup>20</sup>Royal Institute of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 54. This movement by the Muslim Brotherhood gave the Axis propagandists needed material.

Third, there was a revival of resentment to the British occupation caused by the military preparations made to meet the Italian threat and to protect Egypt itself. As a result of these reasons, when the war started, the population in Egypt was not enthusiastic about the British presence in the country.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, little occurred in the Sudan other than intensified efforts to prepare the area for the expected Italian attack. Port Sudan was strengthened and was the base for some ships of the Royal Navy. The terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement relating to the Sudan stated that the Condominium was to be run for the benefit of the Sudanese. This was the first time that this had been mentioned. It was possibly the British intent by this to further weaken the remaining ties between Egypt and the Sudan. The treaty also allowed Egyptians to re-enter the Sudanese administration, but basically there were no vacancies. The British had filled all of the positions vacated by the forced departure of the Egyptians in 1922.

Generally, during this short period, the British were striving to prepare for the eventuality of war. They had been forced to take into consideration, more than ever before, the feeling of the local population. This was another of the many new stimuli that Britain had to accommodate to maintain her essential interests.

Sa'udi Arabia - The Italian conquest of Ethiopia affected Sa'udi Arabia and the British position there

<sup>21</sup>Pierre Crabites, "Britain's Debt to King Farouk," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 19, No. 4 (July, 1941), pp. 859-860. The British signed an agreement (essentially military) with King Farouk on August 26, 1939, that broadened the British military rights in the country that had previously been limited by the 1936 Treaty. This was a temporary expedient brought about by the impending war.

only slightly. This was mainly because Ibn Sa'ud understood the danger posed by the Italians. It caused him to draw closer to the British. During the war, he remained neutral and informed the League that he would not participate in the sanctions.

The war had certain repercussions in the country. The most important of these was expediting the renewal of the Treaty of Jeddah which had expired in 1934. In the summer of 1935, the Sa'udi Arabia Crown Prince, Sa'ud ibn Abdul Aziz, visited England, apparently to encourage the renewal of the treaty. At this time the Aqaba dispute still remained unresolved. Sa'udi Arabia actively claimed this area, but Britain maintained that it was a part of Transjordan. Eventually, in October, 1936, the treaty was renewed.<sup>22</sup>

By this instrument Britain reinforced her friendship with the King. At that time, two new factors, oil and air routes, had been added to the traditional British interests in Arabia.<sup>23</sup> In 1936, oil represented only a distinct possibility but one of strategic importance. The use of Sa'udi Arabia by the Imperial Airways, however, was a distinct possibility. Disturbances in Persia had made it impossible for her to fly across that country

<sup>22</sup>Khalil, II, op. cit., pp. 674-65. This source contains the text of the correspondence. There were only minor changes to the original treaty. The Sa'udi Arabian Government maintained its reservations about the Aqaba area.

<sup>23</sup>Stephen H. Longrigg, Oil in the Middle East (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 114-115. On July 1, 1936, I.P.C. signed an oil exploration contract with Ibn Sa'ud covering the entire west coast of Arabia from Transjordan to Yemen and inland from the sea for 100 miles. This irritated the Italians.

en route to India.<sup>24</sup>

The Italian conquest had the beneficial result for the British of strengthening the relations between Egypt and Sa'udi Arabia which had been highly strained for some time. Both countries, seeing the Italian danger, were anxious to strengthen their relations. In April, 1936, they signed a Treaty of Friendship.

By the renewal of her treaty with Sa'udi Arabia, Britain continued her traditional policy of maintaining predominant influence in the area (see Footnote 3). Initially it appeared that she was willing to share that position with Italy. The British Government by the Anglo-Italian Treaty of 1938 agreed that both countries were co-responsible for maintaining the status quo in the area. Though this may have pleased the Italians, it did not effect the position that Britain enjoyed. In 1938, Anglo-Sa'udi Arabian relations were further strengthened by the visit to Jedda and Riyadh of a member of the British royal family.<sup>25</sup>

In April, 1939, Sa'udi Arabia informed Italy and Great Britain that she was in no way bound by the Anglo-

<sup>24</sup>H. St. John B. Philby, "Britain and Arabia," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 117 (May, 1935), p. 580. During this period Philby was waging a campaign in the British press attempting to make the government appreciate the importance of Sa'udi Arabia for use by the Imperial Airways. He was sure that a concession could be obtained from the King. (Eventually, the main air route to India was diverted from Persia to go via the Persian Gulf.)

<sup>25</sup>Reader Bullard, Britain and the Middle East (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), p. 116. The party included HRH Princess Alice and the Earl of Athlone.



Italian Treaty of 1938 as she had not been a party to it.<sup>26</sup> At that time the treaty had ceased to be valid in any case. As the war approached, Britain had confidence in the continuing loyalty of Ibn Sa'ud. Their traditional policy on the Peninsula had been successful.

Yemen - As contrasted to Sa'udi Arabia, where they had maintained the initiative, in the Yemen Britain was forced to react to actions by Italy and the Imam. The Italians were continuing in their efforts to gain influence with the Imam. Their fruits of their labor were represented by the Italo-Yemeni Treaties of 1936 and 1937. The British were concerned about these treaties, but actually they had given the Italians little advantage. The Imam still was able to maintain his freedom of action because his remoteness discouraged aggression. British influence in the Yemen reached its nadir during this short period.<sup>27</sup> This situation had little strategic danger, however, because the Imam controlled the Tihama and the Italians were thus denied its use for any aggressive action against the British at Aden or on the Sea.

Aden - Aden was taking on increasing strategic importance to the British Government. Its value was accentuated by the presence of the Italian military base at Assab, 150 miles away. In 1937, Aden was made into

<sup>26</sup>"Notes of the Week," Great Britain and the East, Vol. 52, No. 1458 (May 4, 1939), p. 490.

<sup>27</sup>Farago, Arabian Antic, p. 281. "The government of Aden dispatched to Yemen in 1937 one of its best political officers, Captain Seager, with orders to obtain permission for the erection of emergency landing places on Yemeni territory. This was a secret mission. But the Italians, with eyes everywhere, were informed of Seager's arrival when he first set foot into Yemen. The Italian machinery was promptly set into motion and Seager's mission was paralyzed. The London Government, to avoid embarrassment with Italy, ordered Seager to leave."

a Crown Colony, directly under Foreign Office control.<sup>28</sup> Though there were particularly local and also Indian reasons for this transfer, it was in part a strategic reaction to the Italian presence.

The Crown Colony controlled the Island of Perim in the Bab el Mandeb. During the period, however, no efforts were made by the British to fortify it. It was guarded by a single soldier.

Imperial Reconstruction - The challenge of the Italians in Ethiopia and the general truculence of the European dictators had the effect of revitalizing the entire British Empire. This had an indirect, but nonetheless real stimulus on the British attitude about the importance of the Red Sea.

To understand this, it is necessary to understand the fabric of the Empire as it then existed. It was not completely monolithic. The executive committee on imperial defense and periodic conferences of Dominion Prime Ministers, did not have the strength that would normally be assumed for such a large Empire. As a result of this, the freedom of action of the government in Great Britain was definitely limited. They had to use persuasion to concert the particular Dominion viewpoints in order to arrive at imperial policy. This was made doubly difficult because Britain, itself, was intimately effected by European politics, with which the Dominions were not directly concerned.

The Fascist threat, however, severed as a catalyst which, far from weakening the Empire, did more to mold it together than anything Britain could have done.<sup>29</sup> The

<sup>28</sup>Hickinbotham, op. cit., pp. 20-25.

<sup>29</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 205.

imposition of sanctions in November, 1935, helped draw together the Commonwealth. Every member supported the League action.<sup>30</sup>

Britain, on the other hand, appeared to do everything possible to destroy this revitalizing influence. The Hoare-Laval plan, conducted without the customary Dominion consultations, caused a profound shock. Also the half-hearted application of sanctions and the return of Sir Samuel Hoare to another cabinet post acted as disruptive influences.

From an overall sense, however, this feeling of drawing together did have an effect. The individual Dominions started to rearm, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, following the British example. By 1939, the Empire was a different organism than the one Mussolini had defied in 1935.<sup>31</sup> This drawing together had the intangible but nonetheless real effect of emphasizing the importance of imperial communications. Thus, the revitalization of the Empire forcibly served to remind Britain of the tremendous importance of the Red Sea route.

Imperial Defense - Intimately connected with imperial reconstruction was the matter of imperial defense and all its ramifications. This had a more direct, tangible, and real bearing on the British interests in the Red Sea.

<sup>30</sup>Eric A. Walker, The British Empire (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 214. The Abyssinian crisis proved the truth of Smut's warning. An Italian invasion would threaten British, Indian, Australian, and New Zealand interests in the Suez Canal route and disturb the tranquility of the British and South African communities in all Black Africa. For this reason the British action in the League won approval from overseas.

<sup>31</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 229.

It must be remembered that the Red Sea was only one of many areas with which imperial defensive planners were concerned. It was vital, however, because of its very nature being the corridor between the East and the West. The Italian occupation of Ethiopia, in addition to threatening the corridor itself, poised a threat to the following: Kenya and the rest of East Africa; the Sudan and the sources of the Nile and consequently to the very basis of the British position in Egypt; the Bab el Mandeb; the Indian Ocean and Red Sea by means of submarines; and finally, the strategic base of Aden. In short, their position in the Red Sea poised a latent fundamental threat to both specific areas and to the most sensitive part of the imperial communications.

After the capture of Ethiopia, a debate developed in England as to the advisability of abandoning the Mediterranean in case of war with Italy. While this debate was directly concerned with the Mediterranean, it must be discussed as the Red Sea was but a natural extension of the other Sea. If the Mediterranean were closed, the effect would be the same on the Red Sea. One school of thought, the Cape School, believed it foolish to waste money on strengthening the existing fortresses in the Mediterranean, because in the event of war with Italy, they would probably fall. The money saved would be better spent increasing naval facilities in the Union of South Africa to accommodate the increased naval traffic that a closure of the Mediterranean would entail. They also emphasized the vulnerability of the Canal, being inherently easy to sabotage.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Slocombe, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-277. "It would be a simple expedient to sink a ship loaded with concrete at the narrowest point. This would or could be the first act for an oriental navy (i. e. Japan) to block the Canal to slow the arrival of reinforcements to the Far East."

The other school, while recognizing that war would probably cause a temporary closure of the Mediterranean, said it would be fatal to withdraw from the existing fortresses. The only way to victory was active attack and not passive withdrawal. The government supported this view.<sup>33</sup>

Their objection to an evacuation of the Mediterranean was politically and not economically inspired. The fundamental imperial interests in regard to this area were threefold -- political, strategic, and commercial, and they applied to the Red Sea in much the same way as they applied to the Mediterranean. Politically, by maintaining a fleet in the Sea, she could influence the councils of the countries which surrounded the Sea.<sup>34</sup> Strategically, by keeping the route open, she could enhance her strategic mobility, the ability to rapidly and economically move her forces to meet threats in any part of the Empire. Finally, she wanted to insure the continued usage of the route for obvious commercial reasons. Close commercial contacts between the sections of the Empire gave unity to the whole.

Her worldwide naval strategy was altered during this period. From the end of World War I until early 1936, the center of gravity of the British naval force was in the Pacific to meet the Japanese challenge. Subsequent to the invasion of Ethiopia and the Anglo-German Naval

<sup>33</sup>Boveri, op. cit., pp. 427-428. As a result of the Mediterranean tour made by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Hoare, an airbase was constructed at Malta and a naval station installed in Cyprus. Hoare said: ". . . to withdraw a large part of the Mediterranean fleet, and to let it be known that our strategy in the event of war would be to avoid a major naval engagement in the Mediterranean, would be greatly to increase the chances for just such a war."

<sup>34</sup>Monroe, The Mediterranean in Politics, p. 67.

Treaty, the center shifted back to the North Sea and the Mediterranean. This shift in power was, in all likelihood based on the following assumptions: first, squadron operating in the Mediterranean in cooperation with the French could overwhelm the Italian navy; second, the Indian Ocean would remain a British lake; third, the Italian units in the Red Sea, after the closure of the Canal, would pose only a minor threat.<sup>35</sup> These assumptions tend to be confirmed by the fact that the French in 1939 threatened not to cooperate with the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean if units from that fleet were transferred as planned to Singapore.<sup>36</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, it is seen that this strategic thinking was based on the doubtful assumption that naval power was still the decisive arm for influencing events on the shore. What was not clearly recognized was that the influence of sea power had passed its zenith and was declining -- the age of the airplance had arrived.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Hector C. Bywater, "Britain on the Seas," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 16, No. 2 (January, 1938), pp. 210-221. These assumptions pre-supposed that: first, the Italians would mass their fleet in the Mediterranean for decisive action at the outset of the war; second, no major fleet action would occur in the Red Sea; and third, the nuisance value of the Italian submarines operating out of the Red Sea would be marginal since the main merchant flow would be around the Cape of Good Hope.

<sup>36</sup>Drummond, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>37</sup>Admiral Sir Herbert W. Richmond, "The Strategy of the Mediterranean," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January, 1936), pp. 274-282. This apparently highly-qualified source concluded in effect that the ability of airplanes to hurt a fleet was highly overrated and that a fleet could still survive under a hostile air force.

The term naval power is used in the military sense of being in essence the ship gun. It is not meant in the sense of gun boat diplomacy. The fact that an airplane happens to be launched from an aircraft carrier in the  
(continued)

During this period, in addition to contingency planning, specific projects were undertaken to improve their military posture. In Aqaba preparations were made to use the port if need arose. Aqaba was important as an alternate base to use if they were driven out of Egypt.<sup>38</sup> In Aden and Port Sudan projects were initiated to improve their military capabilities.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the major effort was made in the Canal Zone to improve existing facilities there.

In 1939, the tempo of military events in the Red Sea increased markedly. Early in the year the Chief of the Imperial General Staff inspected the area. Britain began to concentrate troops in Palestine where they would be in a position to influence events in the Red Sea as well as the rest of the Middle East. The British had concluded that the only chance the Italian-Ethiopian army had to influence events was to attack rapidly to secure the Sudan and Egypt. Failing this, the Empire would eventually be able to build up sufficient force to destroy this stranded army.

In spite of the pre-war efforts that were made in this area, it was basically given a low military priority in comparison to other parts of the Empire. This is so

(37 continued) military sense does not make it a constituent part of naval power. Additionally, with only minor exceptions World War II "naval" engagements were not ship to ship but rather ship to airplane.

<sup>38</sup>"Aqaba," Current History, Vol. 42, No. 3 (June, 1935), p. 331. Early in April, 1935, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Palestine and Transjordan civil and military authorities signed an agreement by which British forces would be responsible for the defense of Aqaba.

<sup>39</sup>G. H. Reade, "New Military Era for the Sudan," Great Britain and the East, Vol. XLIX, No. 1373 (September 16, 1937), p. 387.

because it was assumed that initially it would be a backwater. It would necessarily be a backwater until the Italian threat in East Africa was eliminated and until the entire Mediterranean route was open to through traffic.



### Section III - Italian Actions and Policies, 1936-39

The Italians were plainly the major rival of Britain in the area. This rivalry, initiated when Salisbury allowed the Italians to occupy Eritrea, was long in development. It reached a head under the combination of dynamic Italian leadership and a relative decline in British resolve.

To understand the Italian activities during this period, the fundamental difference between Italy and the British Empire must be taken into consideration. Italy was a dictatorship, was moved by the will of one man. On the other hand, Mussolini did not have absolute freedom of action. He was governed by the physical limitations of Italy. Also he, like Britain, was primarily interested in European and Mediterranean events. The Red Sea was a means to an end, a means to allow him to make Italy the dominant power in the Mediterranean. In this section the various Italian policies will be explained.

General Foreign Policy - Italian foreign policy was dictated by her physical location. Mussolini on many occasions reminded his audiences that Italy was an island. This was to a certain extent true. During the period she received 86% of her imports via the sea, 17% through the Suez Canal. Thus, she was absolutely dependent upon the sea. She saw that Britain was in a position to close the sea by her command over the entrances, the Suez Canal and Gibraltar, and thus starve Italy into surrender. Mussolini said with truth that the sea was life itself

to Italy.<sup>40</sup> This dependence on the Mediterranean was the fundamental reason behind the Italian actions in the Red Sea. By controlling the Bab el Mandeb, she hoped to eventually loosen the British hold on the Suez Canal and thus open one of the entrances to the Mediterranean. It was essential to her new status as a major power that she not be at the mercy of another power.<sup>41</sup>

In the summer of 1936, she was in a position to control the southern entrance to the Red Sea. On the other hand, the British were still firmly implanted on the banks of the Suez Canal. This fact forced Mussolini to make overtures to improve his diplomatic relations with Britain. The resulting Gentlemen's Agreement might have served a useful purpose if it had not come so soon and not been fused with false values.<sup>42</sup> The British were willing to admit, being in the position to do so, that both Italy and the Empire had important interests in the route which were complementary. From the Italian point of view, however, the Gentlemen's Agreement, while a nice

<sup>40</sup>Luigi Federzoni, "Hegemony in the Mediterranean," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 3 (April, 1936), p. 397. The following is an Italian viewpoint: "The problem of the Mediterranean and the related problem of East Africa involve nothing less than the question of our national independence. For a state, certainly a great state, cannot attain the conditions necessary for its independence without control of the maritime routes leading to it."

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 395. The following is an Italian viewpoint concerning the British policy in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. "England's policy has always been to wish to preserve a moderate but irreducible amount of discord, without endangering the peace, which would foster her own predominance."

<sup>42</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., p. 12. The British refused to recognize the Italian position in Ethiopia, they invited an Ethiopian representative to the coronation, and they opposed the Italian action in Spain.

expression of sentiment, was meaningless. The British flag still floated over a chain of strategic fortresses in the Mediterranean and Red Sea.

Coupled with their fear of British hegemony in Mare Nostrum, was their anger about the imposition of sanctions even after they had been lifted. As a result, she drifted further and further away from the perfidious League. Finally, on December 11, 1937, she severed her last connection with the organization.<sup>43</sup> Mussolini was proud to have delivered the death blow to the League. He represented it as a moral victory over Great Britain whom the Italians still regarded as the champion of the sanctions.

Early in 1938, Mussolini needed to improve Anglo-Italian relations for several reasons: first, as mentioned, he needed a diplomatic victory to offset the bad impression created by the Anchluss in Austria; second, he was disturbed by the British military activity in Aqaba, the Canal Zone, and Aden and also about Ibn Sa'ud's oil concession to I.P.C., which he regarded as a British trick; third, he appeared to be frustrated by the entire situation in the southern Red Sea. Not only had his efforts in Yemen been thwarted, but Ethiopia was proving to be a difficult area to pacify and govern. Also, with the deteriorating European situation he needed to withdraw some of his army from Ethiopia. These factors, assisted by Chamberlain's appeasement, resulted in the 1938 Treaty, which Mussolini was able to represent as a great victory.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Villari, Italian Foreign Policy Under Mussolini, p. 184.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 191. The following is the Italian (propaganda) view of the 1938 Treaty: "Until then Great Britain had regarded Italy as some sort of Portugal and the Mediterranean as a British lake. Now the two powers reached an understanding on the footing of equality."

In the remainder of 1938, after the signing of the treaty, attention was turned away from the Red Sea. Apparently it was realized by Mussolini that only war could alter the balance of power in that area. Also, he had become increasingly preoccupied with the events that were occurring in Europe. Sometime during this period he became irrevocably committed to the Axis. He may have been influenced in this by the British tardiness in according de jure recognition to his African Empire. The periods following the Gentlemen's Agreement and the 1938 Anglo-Italian Treaty are similar in that in both cases the British succeeded in irritating the Italian susceptibilities by their delay.

After his final commitment to the Axis, Mussolini was influenced by the success of Hitler and also perhaps by his own propaganda. From this point onward, it was simply a matter of time until war started. The Allies, in the Red Sea, as elsewhere, had ceased to appease the dictators.

Rome-Islam Axis - One of the main Fascist interests at this time was what might be termed the Rome-Islam Axis. It served a threefold purpose of wooing Islam, praising Italy, and hurting Great Britain.<sup>45</sup> The Italian propagandists attempted to depict Italy as the natural friend of the Arabs. One of their propaganda documents said: "We state without fear of contradiction that no power has a more strongly sympathetic policy toward the Islamic states and their legitimate aspirations (to throw off the yoke of French and British imperialism) than has Italy."<sup>46</sup> In 1937, when Mussolini toured Libya, he had

<sup>45</sup>Macartney and Cremona, op. cit., pp. 33-334. Except for French Somaliland all of the frontiers of the Italian African Empire were contiguous with British territory. To ease this potential stranglehold in advance, Italy was attempting to ferment an anti-British feeling.

<sup>46</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 213.

himself invested with the sword of Islam and addressed as the protector of Islam. He said that Muslims could rest assured that Italy would always be the friend and protector of Islam throughout the world.<sup>47</sup>

Supplementing this program, the Italians employed agents to stir up dissension against the British rulers. One of their primary targets was the Aden Colony and Protectorate. Mainly in 1937 and 1938, her agents there attempted to foster unrest in addition to their secondary role of gathering intelligence information. The local inhabitants were amused by this and amazed that the British authorities tolerated it.<sup>48</sup>

Egypt and the Suez Canal - Another major target of Italian propaganda was Egypt. This was specifically motivated by the existence of the Canal.

Between 1936 and 1939, the major Italian worry in the Red Sea and eastern Mediterranean was the Suez Canal. The Canal had become for them the jugular vein of their Empire and Britain literally had a stranglehold on it.<sup>49</sup> The Italians considered the Canal more important to their Empire than to the British because in the Italian case, it could not be by-passed.

The Italians, because of this, resented the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. They objected to Britain continuing to station troops in the Canal Zone. They resurrected all the old arguments that Britain's position there was a violation of the 1888 Constantinople Convention. At the height of the Ethiopian crisis, the Italians announced that it was ridiculous to think that the Canal

<sup>47</sup>Royal Institute of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>48</sup>Farago, Arabian Antic, p. 90.

<sup>49</sup>Schonfield, op. cit., p. 89.

would be closed to their ships; however, the bare raising of such a proposal caused profound preoccupation in Rome.

Mussolini, desiring to safeguard the Italian use of the Canal, advocated the installation of a genuine international regime with mixed management on the model of Tangier. This was rejected by the British and the French.<sup>50</sup> In the 1938 Anglo-Italian Treaty (see Annex D) they were forced to accept a weak face-saving statement. The British agreed to abide by the terms of the 1888 Agreement. This Italian defeat, however, did not quiet their demands for internationalization.<sup>51</sup>

Supplementing their diplomatic efforts in this matter, they initiated an intensive anti-British propaganda campaign in Egypt. In this, they utilized their normal channels, radio broadcasts, free "news" material, and paid agents. In addition, to castigating the British, they depicted themselves as the brothers of the Egyptians, two peoples linked by the same sea. The propagandists at Bari and the Italian agents in Egypt also attempted to use the large Italian minority in their efforts. In May, 1939, Marshall Balbo paid an official visit of friendship on King Farouk. This failed because of the recent Italian rape of Albania (a largely Muslim country) and because of the Egyptian memories of Libya (including the presence of the Sanussi Emir and his court in Cairo) and Ethiopia. In total, the Italian propaganda efforts made little impression

<sup>50</sup>Monroe, The Mediterranean in Politics, pp. 176-177. If internationalization of the Canal was Italy's sole aim, she may have gotten her way for arrangements could have been made (this is a British opinion) without loss of face to England or Egypt.

<sup>51</sup>Sillani, op. cit., pp. 344-346. The following is the Italian rationalization of this defeat: "By registering each power's promise to respect the terms of the 1888 Convention, the April 1938 Declaration should prove to be a definite settlement of the problem."

in Egypt. They contended that the suspicion which the Egyptians felt for Italy was entirely of Egyptian origin.<sup>52</sup>

Yemen - During 1936 and 1937, the Italians intensified their efforts to penetrate the country. This was a natural continuation of their policy aimed at controlling both sides of the Bab el Mandeb. In 1936, the Italo-Yemeni Treaty of Friendship and Economic Collaboration of 1926 was renewed for one year. The following year, an Italian delegation, under Cavaliere Jacopo Gasparoni, visited San'a and concluded a new treaty, valid for 25 years. This treaty was greeted with much fanfare in Rome. Mussolini, however, had gained little from this accord. The Imam had continued to maintain his independence by playing the British off against the Italians. He encouraged the Italians because they had no demands to make from him and because they were then physically located far away. Soon Mussolini must have realized that he had failed in his dealings with the Imam. It is speculated that at various times he contemplated the invasion of Yemen. If this is true, he was never able, for various reasons, to implement these plans.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 347. "The relations between Italy and Egypt have at several moments given rise to diffidence. This diffidence has always been of Egyptian origin. . . Egypt's suspicion arose at the time of the Ethiopian war because of the purely defensive troop movements by Italy in Libya." This article goes on to say how innocent Italy is of any aggressive intentions in Egypt.

<sup>53</sup>Some sources say that his invasion of Ethiopia was caused in part by the frustration over his failure to penetrate Yemen prior to 1935, and because of the poor prospects for such a move. Others maintain that he contemplated this action after the completion of his efforts in Ethiopia but that he became so committed there that it was beyond his military capability to launch an attack on Yemen. This latter point of view is more reasonable. (Continued on next page.)

The major result achieved by Mussolini was to alarm the British about their own vulnerability and thus encourage them to improve their defenses.

Ethiopia - Ethiopia had a major effect on Italian capabilities in the Red Sea during this period. In short, it can be generalized that Italy had captured Ethiopia militarily but Ethiopia had captured Italy economically.

Initially, from a military point of view, the country was never completely conquered. At the outbreak of World War II, Italy had approximately a quarter of a million troops in Ethiopia trying to maintain order. The Ethiopians, particularly in Ethiopia proper, waged guerilla warfare against the Italians. Because of the difficult terrain, it was practically impossible for the Italians to surpress this.

The economic situation, however, presented Italy with even greater problems. They were obliged to expend large sums in order to install the most rudimentary public services. In addition to this expense, Rome had to support, at great cost, the non-economically productive overseas military establishment. This was a time when she could ill-afford it. The sanctions had practically destroyed her international monetary position. Also, she had to

(53 continued) Farago, Arabian Antic, pp. 284-285. "In her long-range policy, Italy was joined by a willing sleeping partner - Japan. Nippon is mainly interested in keeping the British fleet busy in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and away from the Pacific. It is not altogether without interest to note that the self same Imam Yahya who in the past objected to his subjects travelling abroad, now sanctioned a 'good will visit' that his son made to Japan. Both the Italians and the Yemenis insist that there is no political significance to this trip but the prince was accompanied by Italian advisors. It would surprise no one to see the Japs appear in the Red Sea." (Previously, the Japanese had been in the Red Sea during World War I as an ally of Great Britain.)



pay high Canal and railroad freight dues on the bulk of the items required to maintain and develop Ethiopia. The overall result was that this financial drain precluded further major aggression.<sup>54</sup>

Military Strategy - The Italian military strategy in this area was orientated against Egypt and the Sudan. It envisioned a gigantic pincers movement by which the Italian armies in Libya and Ethiopia could at the beginning of the war attack and seize these two areas. Complementing this, it was envisioned that the fortifications in the Bab el Mandeb, the Italian surface fleet stationed at Assab, and the Italian submarines operating in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean could seal the southern end of the Sea to the arrival of reinforcements.<sup>55</sup> The plan was predicated on the assumption that Italy could expel the British from the Mediterranean. This scheme, which was

<sup>54</sup>In spite of all the glowing propaganda about what was being accomplished there in actual fact, Italy by the beginning of the war had achieved none of her stated goals. Little mineral wealth had been discovered and only a few Italians had physically been settled there. For an example of the Italian propaganda see: Corrado Zoli, "The Organization of Italy's East African Empire," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 16, No. 1 (October, 1937), pp. 80-90.

<sup>55</sup>F. S. Joelson, "Germany's Colonial Claims," The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 125 (March, 1939), p. 307. In September, 1938, more than 30 Italian submarines were known to be operating off the Somali coast and in the Red Sea.

Farago, Arabian Antic, pp. 286-287. "The port of Assab is officially closed to foreign shipping. What the Italians are trying to conceal is open to view to any passing ship. They have a large quantity of sea mines stored on the beach in the port. The existence of these mines worries the British Admiralty more than the presence of the Italian submarines in the Red Sea. The garrison of the port is kept at war strength even though the war ended two years ago."

technically feasible, would be the last of many steps leading to the formation of the new "Roman Empire".

The Final Months - In the final months before the war, Mussolini's attitude became increasingly truculent.<sup>56</sup> He demanded that France give him a free port at Jibuti, a share in the management of the railroad, and reduce the railroad freight rates. These demands were rejected by the French, which led to a further worsening of Italo-French relations.<sup>57</sup> He also became insistent that his demands about the Suez Canal be met. These included an immediate lowering of the Canal tolls, Italian seats on the board of directors, and the substitution for the company administration by some sort of international administration in which Italy would have a voice. These demands were also rejected by France and Great Britain.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, it began to appear that Italian irredentism in East Africa had not been satisfied. Mussolini's newspaper, Il Popolo d'Italia, late in 1938, stated: "Nor has the African Empire assumed its final shape. On the contrary, Abyssinia is to be a mere beginning, valuable not for itself, but a base from which to advance to the more fertile lowlands."<sup>59</sup> In December, 1938, Mussolini denounced the Mussolini-Laval Agreement

<sup>56</sup>"1939, Peace or War?" Great Britain and the East, Vol. 52, No. 1448 (February 23, 1939), p. 202. A possible reason for this is that it was maintained in certain quarters that Hitler's influence in the Italian armed forces and industry had become large (if not dominant) and therefore Mussolini no longer was able to act alone, he could only act with German approval.

<sup>57</sup>The Times (London), December 17, 1938, p. 15.

<sup>58</sup>Schonfield, op. cit., p. 96. The first and second of these demands were considered to be justified but in the context of the time and because they were delivered practically as ultimatums, they were refused.

<sup>59</sup>Viton, op. cit., p. 213.

of January, 1935, saying that it had never been ratified and that the imposition of sanctions had nullified it. This increasing militancy in Rome marked the beginning of the final slide into World War II.

#### Section IV - Other Foreign Interests 1936-1939

The main rivals in the Red Sea during this period were Britain and Italy. In addition to these two powers, there were other countries interested in the Red Sea for the various reasons outlined below. The interests of these minor contenders were also conditioned by the developing European situation.

Germany - German influence was felt in the Red Sea in the late 1930's for the first time since World War I. Their primary aim was to embarrass the British. This goal was accomplished by propaganda and a revival of her colonial claims.

By the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to cede all her colonial possessions to the victorious allies. The German Empire had not possessed colonies on the littorals of the Red Sea itself, but it did include German East Africa (Tanganyika). This territory, under British mandate, was sufficiently close to the mouth of the Red Sea to have a potential military influence there. If it had been returned to Germany prior to the war, it would have effected the military situation at the southern end of the Sea.

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia gave Germany a pretext for wanting the return of her colonies.<sup>60</sup> Whereas prior to 1936 the subject had never been officially mentioned, after that date it was constantly discussed. It is doubtful if Hitler's government actually wanted the colonies. More than likely, the subject was raised to use as a bargaining weapon in Europe itself.<sup>61</sup> It caused

<sup>60</sup>Locombe, op. cit., p. 237. In spite of all that was written about this subject, the German Government never formally requested their return.

<sup>61</sup>Ward, op. cit., p. 142.

a major controversy in Britain. Partisans, on one side, preferred war to giving up a square foot of the Empire. The other school of thought maintained that Germany needed and was entitled to the colonies for economic reasons. The main objection raised against returning Tanganyika was strategic. German airplanes, operating from this territory could dominate the Bab el Mandeb and threaten the Canal. In addition, no one wanted to introduce a German submarine base on the shores of the Indian Ocean where it could threaten the imperial communications.

Of more immediate concern to London was the German propaganda campaign aimed at the subject people, particularly Muslim, of the Empire. The Nazis realized that the Near East was a good location in which to harass the British Empire. They began in 1936 (the major effort started in 1938) to devote attention to this area. Numerous agents visited the Arab countries and much was spent to subsidize anti-British movements. The official Berlin broadcasting station began sending out daily propaganda in Arabic. Also, numerous pamphlets designed to appeal to every shade of opinion were circulated. The Germans were in a better position than they had been during World War I (where they had to apologize for the Turks) to win Muslim support. This time it was they, and not the British, who promised to free the fellahin and bedu from oppression.<sup>62</sup> Their appeal was more effective than the Italians, not having to live down the reputation of Libya, Ethiopia, and later Albania. Their propaganda elaborated every British mistake. They portrayed themselves as the saviors of the Muslims. Hitler, who was a "descendant" of the Prophet, was an enemy of the

<sup>62</sup>C. L. Sulzberger, "German Preparations in the Middle East," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20, No. 4 (July, 1942), pp. 663-678.

British and certainly of the Jews as could be seen from his policies in Germany.

Just prior to the war, Germany became particularly interested in the Suez Canal and maintaining cordial relations with the Egyptians.<sup>63</sup> The Canal had taken on greater importance as their own military dreams enlarged. They became personally interested in seizing the Canal from the British. It was important more for its propaganda effect than for material reasons.<sup>64</sup>

The Germans in the short time that they were active in this area caused the British deep concern, greater than the similar Italian efforts.

France - Throughout this period French influence declined steadily. Being increasingly frightened by the impending disaster in Europe, she had little time to devote to Red Sea affairs and continued to rely on Britain to safeguard her interests east of the Suez. She received only 5% of her total imports and 2% of her oil from beyond Suez. From this it can be seen that her European defense would not have been vitally effected by a closure of the Red Sea. She was determined, however, not to give up her large financial interest in the Suez Canal Company.

Jibuti was of strategic importance to her as Aden was to Britain. Also, the railroad made this colony a financial asset particularly since 1935. In spite of these factors, French Somaliland was not a matter of important consideration in Paris. Its fate was of little concern when compared to the overall European situation.

<sup>63</sup>Royal Institute of International Affairs, op. cit., p. 53. Among other things the president of the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce was entertained and decorated in Berlin by Hitler.

<sup>64</sup>Crabites, "Britain's Debt to King Farouk," p. 852.

Until nearly the end of this period, France tried to appease the Italians. Subsequent to the signing of the Anglo-Italian Treaty of 1938, the French entered into conversations with the Italians. They failed to reach a solution primarily because of specifically Mediterranean consideration. In October, 1938, the French, making one last effort to appease Mussolini, appointed a new ambassador to Rome. By this she granted de jure recognition of the Italian African Empire.<sup>65</sup> This gesture was too little and too late to satisfy Mussolini. France's support of the Suez Canal Company and her refusal to grant the Italians special privileges in Jibuti (together with other factors in the Mediterranean) caused Italo-French relations to continue to deteriorate.

The overall French interest in the Red Sea during this period was a continuation of a trend that started at the end of World War I. As the defense interests of the British Empire and the French Overseas Empire were similar, France relied on Britain to protect her interests east of Suez.

Miscellaneous Minor Interests - Three other countries which had minor interests in this area, in each case for a different reason, were the United States, Japan, and the USSR. The interest of the United States was international commerce, characterized by the Open Door policy. American thinking clung firmly to conventional attitudes acquired at second hand (from the British) using stereotyped phrases like "the lifeline of Empire," etc.<sup>66</sup>

Japan was interested in the Red Sea primarily from a global strategic sense and secondarily for commercial

<sup>65</sup>The Times (London), October 13, 1938, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup>William Reitzel, The Mediterranean, Its Role in American Foreign Policy. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1949), pp. 8-11.

reasons. Japan, after allying herself with Germany and Italy, did not want the route to remain open in time of war as it would facilitate transfer of British power to the Far East. In addition, Japan had economic interests in the littoral areas of the sea which she desired to maintain as long as possible.

Finally, the USSR must be mentioned in closing. In 1938, they closed their legations both in Yemen and in Sa'udi Arabia.<sup>67</sup> No explanation for this was given but it was, in all likelihood, in anticipation of the war. The small efforts made by the Comintern in these two countries between the wars had been unsuccessful.

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<sup>67</sup>Bullard, op. cit., p. 88.



## CHAPTER VI - SUMMARY

### Section I - The Major Powers

In this paper the policies of the Powers involved in the Red Sea have been summarized at the conclusion of each period. It is the intent of this section to simply emphasize the change in balance of power, British and Italian, that the period 1918-1939 witnessed.

During the inter-war period Great Britain continued to be the dominant factor in the Red Sea. Her policy remained remarkably consistent. It was an outgrowth of her fundamental preoccupation with defending her Indian and Commonwealth interests. By 1918 she had arrived at an optimum position which during the subsequent years she strove to maintain. As a result, her policy in the Red Sea was defensive and not dynamic. Being on the defensive she was obliged to improvise a succession of tactical gambits to maintain her optimum position in the face of the new challenges that arose in the inter-war period. The success of this policy, as has been seen, was highly compromised by European events and her apparent weakening of resolve. By 1939 she was no longer absolute master of the situation in the Red Sea even though she was the potentially strongest of the two main powers there. In general, therefore, it can be said that the period saw a small qualitative decline in British power and prestige in the Red Sea.

The inter-war years witnessed the natural growth of a sixty year old Italian goal. Throughout the three decades, with interruptions, efforts had been made to expand from a position of power in the Red Sea to a position of power in the Mediterranean. The dynamic Italian expansionism had the advantage of opposing the dominant power at a time when the resolve of that power was in

relative eclipse. All the results achieved by Italy worked to lessen the prestige and authority of Britain. By 1939, the Italians felt they were in a position to challenge the British hegemony in the Mediterranean and Red Sea. In their efforts to reach this position, they were hindered by two things: first, they were starting their historic mission just as the area was turning anti-missionary. They were trying to execute an accepted 19th century act in the 20th century. Second, Italy became fatally involved in Europe. The invasion and conquest of Ethiopia was but one of a series of integrated aggressive acts that was a geo-political prelude to the hostilities that began in Europe on September 1, 1939. Italy made a long stride forward in this period but, infatuated by her success, she was to lose all.

## Section II - The Red Sea States

In this section the conditions existing in the littoral states at the beginning of the war are summarized. This is meant primarily to show the degree of independence enjoyed by these areas.

Egypt - In 1939, Egypt was theoretically an independent state. In actual fact Britain still retained ultimate authority in the country because of her garrisons. Because of her world-wide commitments, however, she had to be circumspect in Egypt. Not being popular in the country, she realized that a naked use of power against the ruling institutions would likely precipitate a revolt. This had to be avoided, particularly at the outset of the war. Consequently, the King and the oligarchy ruled, limited only by the knowledge that their power would last only so long as they did nothing to threaten the strategic position of Britain in Egypt.

The Sudan - At the outset of the war, Britain absolutely dominated the Sudan. The British Governor General and the Sudanese Civil Service retained all essential power in their hands. Some Sudanese and Egyptians were in governmental positions, but this did not impair the British control. In this area the English had not yet had to contend with a strong national sentiment.

Italian East Africa - Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland had been combined by the Italians into one "colony" of five provinces. Power was centralized in the hands of the Governor General in Addis Ababa. The Italians made no pretense of the fact that the Empire was for the benefit of Italy and not the local inhabitants. The Governor General was "advised" by a council that included within its membership

Ethiopian collaborators. Certain of the Rases who had assisted the Italians advance into Ethiopia were awarded ceremonial positions in the provinces. When the war started, Italy had completed only a few of the preliminary steps in their grandiose plan for transforming the colony into a prosperous Italian populated area.

Sa'udi Arabia - Of all the areas around the Sea, this kingdom enjoyed the greatest freedom. Ibn Sa'ud had complete internal autonomy. He had settled the Ikhwan and eliminated all important opposition to his rule. In his foreign relations he allied himself with Great Britain and was to a certain extent under their influence. He had concluded this alliance because Great Britain dominated nearly all of the borders of his country and because he felt that that country entertained no aggressive designs on Arabia. In addition, he saw the Italian threat in its true light.

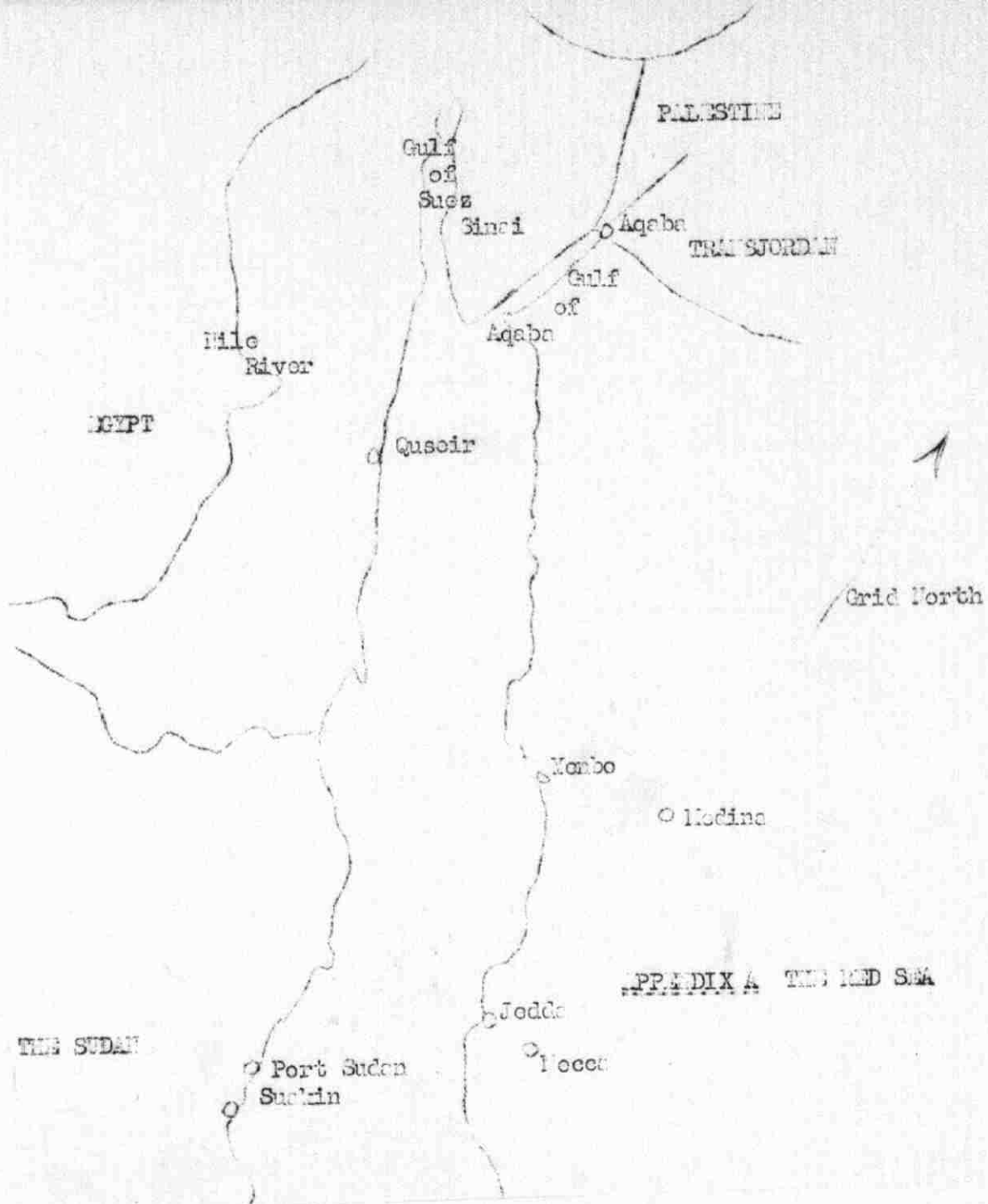
Yemen - The situation in Yemen was similar to that in Sa'udi Arabia. Imam Yahya was internally free from outside interference but his own hold on the country was not as secure as Ibn Sa'ud's in Arabia. He had all the normal problems historically endured by a Zeidi Imam. He had to keep the loyalty of the large tribes and at the same time keep the Shafi'i element in the country suppressed. As has been seen, his foreign policy was successful. No Power could lay claim to any great influence in San'a.

Aden, the Western Protectorate, and British Somaliland - The Crown Colony, being directly under Foreign Office administration, was completely run by the British for the benefit of the Empire. In the Protectorate, most of the local sheikhs had signed defensive treaties with the British but retained local autonomy. Britain

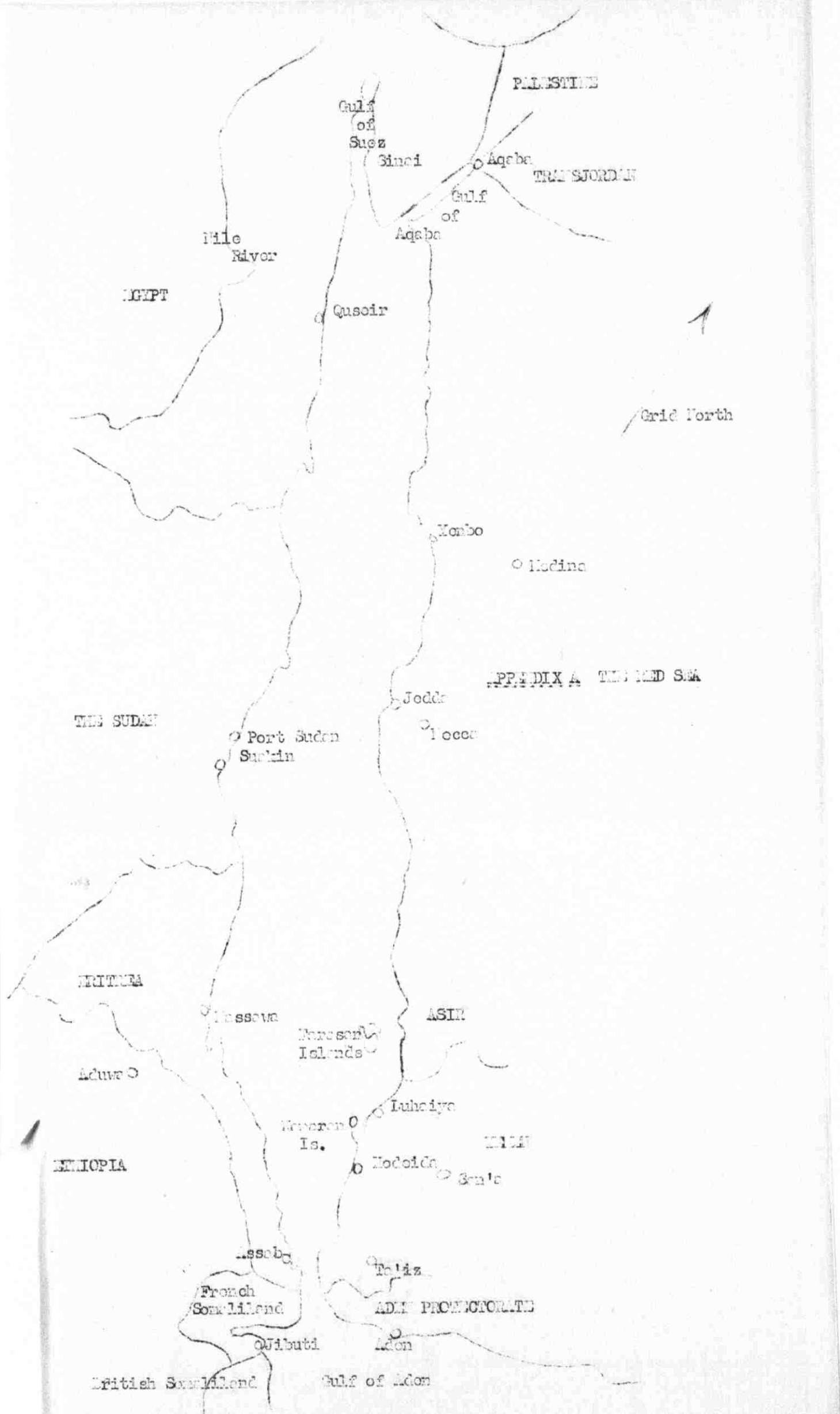
desired to limit the inter-tribal feuding in the Protectorate so that the area would serve as a reasonably secure buffer area for the defense of the Crown Colony itself.

At the outset of the war, British Somaliland was probably the most neglected colony in the Empire. The coastal towns were ruled directly by a governor. He had only nominal control over the hinterland. Being surrounded by Italian territory, it was assumed that this area would be captured at the beginning of the war. It was not worth the money necessary to defend it.

French Somaliland - In 1939, this small colony was ruled under the absolute authority of a French Governor General. Prior to the war, France made no effort to prepare the area for war or to defend the native population. It was assumed that at the outset of the war, Italy with minor effort would occupy the colony.



APPENDIX A THE RED SEA



PALESTINE

Gulf of Suez

Sinai

Aqaba

TRANSJORDAN

Gulf of Aqaba

Aqaba

Nile River

EGYPT

Qasair

Grid North

Yenbo

Medina

APPENDIX A THE RED SEA

Jedda

THE SUDAN

Yokka

Port Sudan  
Sudain

ERITREA

Assawa

ASIA

Marsa Islands

Adwa

Luhaiya

Marsa Is.

YEMEN

ETHIOPIA

Hodeida

Sana'a

Assaba

Taliz

French Somaliland

ADEN PROTECTORATE

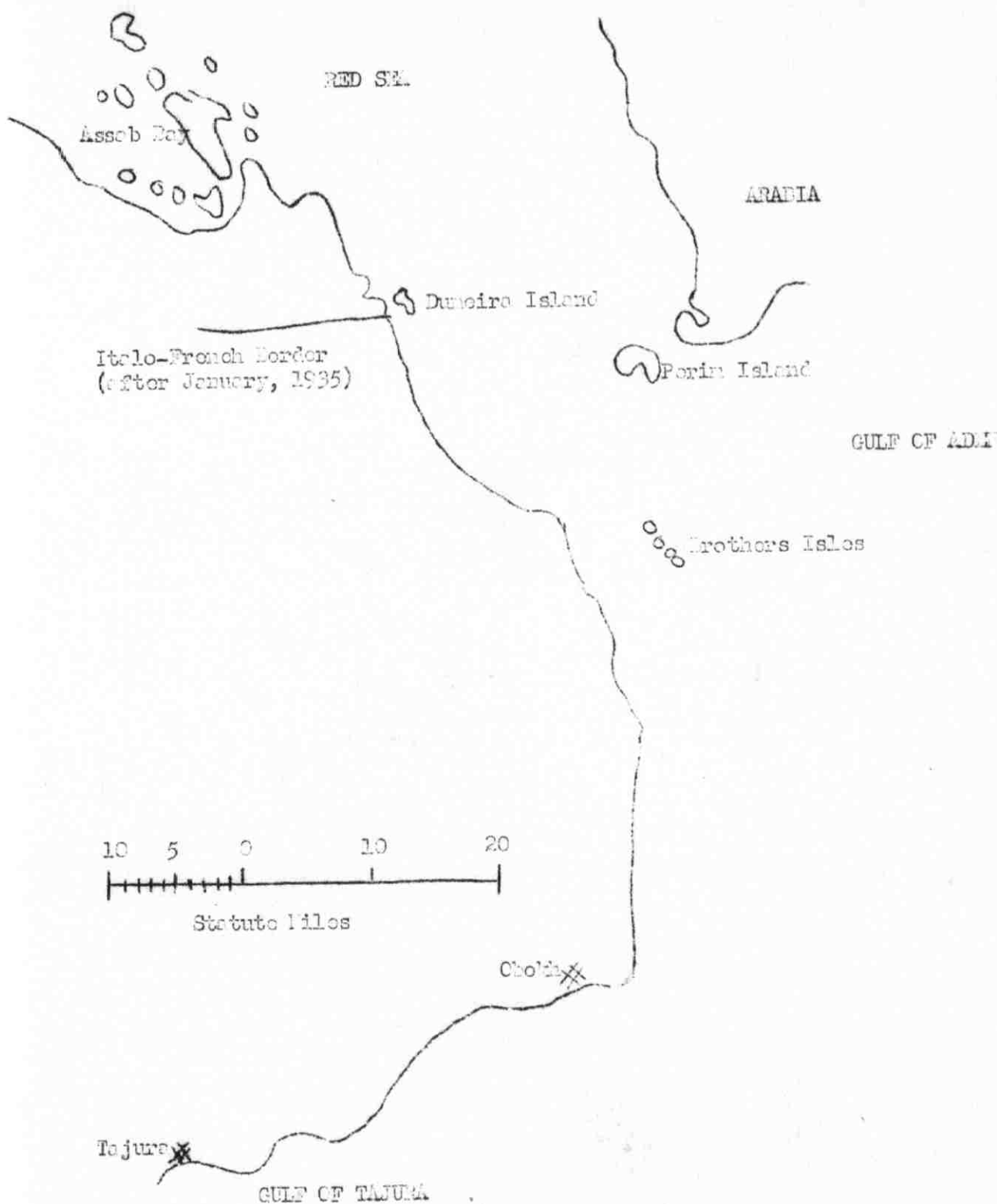
Qibuti

Aden

British Somaliland

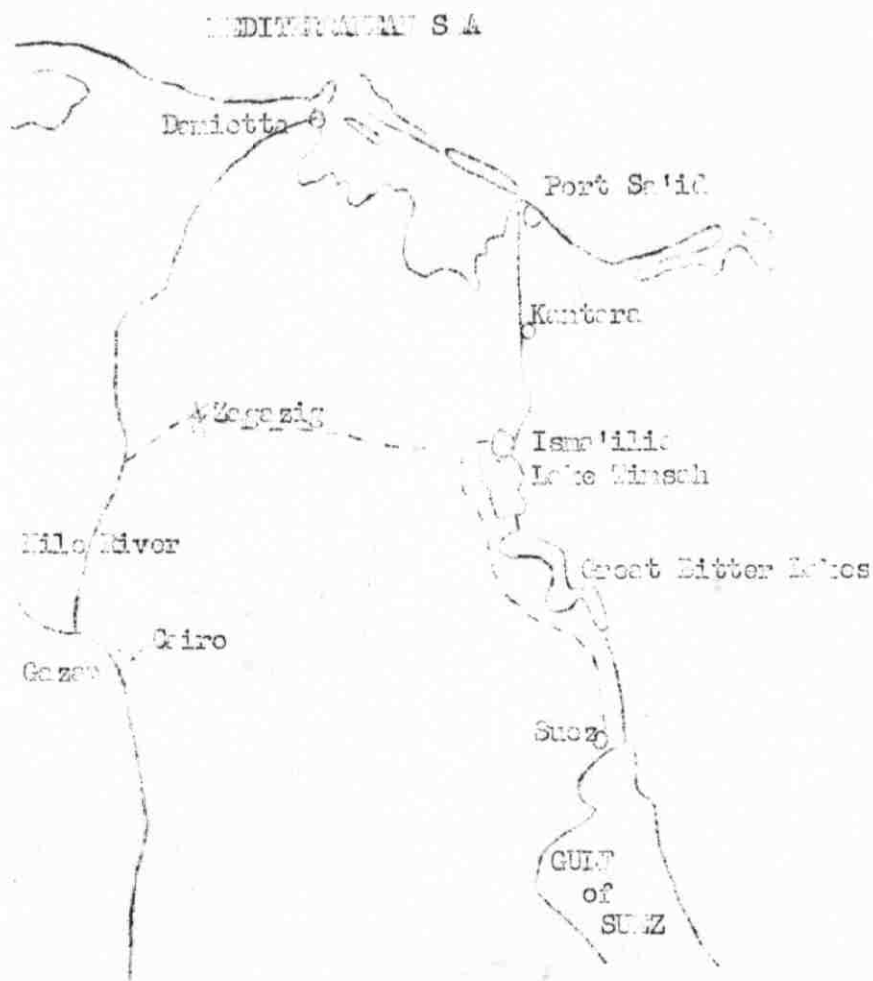
Gulf of Aden

APPENDIX B - THE DAB ISLANDS





APPENDIX C - THE SUEZ CANAL



--- Fresh Water Canals

## APPENDIX D

The following is the substance of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April 16, 1938, as it applied to the Red Sea area.<sup>1</sup>

### Annex 3:

Article 1. No action will be taken to impair the independence or integrity of Saudi Arabia or Yemen by either party.

Article 2. Neither party will attempt to obtain a privileged position in Saudi Arabia or Yemen.

Article 3. Both parties agree to oppose the entry of a third party into Saudi Arabia, Yemen or the Isles of the Red Sea.

Article 4. This was a general article concerning the islands in the Sea that were not under Saudi Arabian or Yemeni sovereignty. Both sides agreed that they would not be fortified.

Article 5. Both parties agreed that they would not interfere or allow a third party to interfere in any dispute that broke out between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Article 6. The Italian Government agreed not to seek to secure influence in the Western Protectorate.

Article 8. The treaty was good for 10 years but either party could request renegotiation of any provision if it felt that circumstances had changed sufficiently to warrant it.

### Annex 4: Declaration on Propaganda

The signatories agreed not to use propaganda against each other or the other territories as it would be inconsistent with the spirit of the agreement.

### Annex 8: Declaration on the Suez Canal

The signatories agreed to abide by the provisions of the 1888 Constantinople agreement which guaranteed at all times and for all powers the free use of the Suez Canal.

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<sup>1</sup>J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, II (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 216-218. The treaty did not go into effect until Italy had fulfilled certain other conditions in regard to the civil war in Spain.

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