

**REAFFIRMING OTTOMAN SOVEREIGNTY
IN YEMEN 1825 — 1840**

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This study deals with the manner in which the British proceeded to acquire a permanent foothold in southwest Arabia following their failure to make Mocha in the Tihama their base. In it we shall attempt to show how Muhammad Ali, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, became the unwitting instrument of British policy while ostensibly on a mission in behalf of his sovereign the sultan to suppress revolts and tribal defiances that invited foreign intervention.

British attempts since 1770 to establish a firm base in this strategic corner of Arabia were abetted by the endless rivalries of the indigenous tribes and the lack of firm Ottoman control over the political scene in Yemen. Exploiting such turmoil, Britain through the India Government first wrested a treaty agreement from the Imam of Sanaa permitting them a foothold in Mocha; and when unable to secure their position there, extracted a similar agreement from the sultan of Lahaj enabling them to consolidate a position on the isthmus of Aden. Both agreements were of dubious legality, at least as viewed from the Ottoman stance.

* Recourse was to Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte der osmanischen Reiches* (10 vols. Budapest, 1827-35), V, 302 and VI, 376; and so acknowledged in F. O. 881/2147, pp. 19-20.

At first the British sought to justify their presence by casting aspersion on Ottoman legal claims to sovereignty. But researchers in the archives of the Foreign Office could only come up with data supporting Ottoman de jure possession of the Yemen.¹ The sovereign rights of the Ottomans were acquired by conquest in 1539 during the saltanate of Suleiman the Magnificent, reinforced by Sinan Pasha (grand admiral of the Ottoman navy) in 1569.

Upon withdrawing from south Arabia, Sinan entrusted administration of the lowlands (Tihama) from the port of Mocha to the port of Hodeida to the Imam of Sanaa, who in turn appointed the Şerif of Abu Aris overseer. Sinan himself chose this ancient center of Islamic learning the administrative headquarters of the Tihama.

According to their own accounts, the Ottomans did not attempt to establish direct rule in Yemen on account of the great distances separating it from Istanbul, the capital. The vali of Hejaz acted as the liasion person with the Sublime Porte. Owing to such benelovent neglect, the şerifs of Abu Aris succeeded with time in exercising near independent rule over the lowlands, in full defiance of the Imam's administrative prerogatives.

Not only the Imam, but often the chieftains of neighboring Asir refused to accept the authority of the şerifs. Disputes, rivalries and bloody feuds ensued. Turmoil and confusion dominated the history of this region². When matters got critical, the Imam could only refer them to Istanbul for resolution.

The Ottomans had tolerated th establishment of trading factories in Mocha in the latter part of the eighteenth century provided the maritime powers of Europe confined their

1 See Cevdet, «Events of 1234/1818-19,» pp. 17-18.

2 *Recueil de Firmans*, No. 497. (Collection of Saban 1243/1828).

activities to the port region. But the British found it necessary to strike up close relations with neighboring chieftains and the Imam of Sanaa which only served to awaken suspicion in Ottoman circles, particularly when the British argued the need to intervene on grounds of being harassed by unfriendly local officials and chieftains.

To remove such pretexts, the Sublime Porte authorized Muhammad Ali to pacify the region. The viceroy was already engaged on a mission to suppress Wahhabi defiance of Ottoman rule in Nejd. They had a strong following among the chiefs of Asir, a land immediately neighboring on Yemen. The Asiris in turn were allied to Hammud, serif of Abu Aris. All were Wahhabis or sympathizers. Muhammad Ali had cause to move his military operations south. He also had the sultan's orders¹.

Şerif Hammud of Abu Aris had allied himself with the Wahhabis in return for their acknowledging his rule over the Tihama. With reinforcements from Egypt under the command of Mirmiran Halil Pasa, Mirmiran Arna'ut Pasa, officer in command in Jidda, moved to avenge the defeat of his underling, Jum'a Ağa (*mutasallim* at Qunağ) by Hammud and his allies. Meanwhile Hammud had died and was succeeded by his young son Ahmad, who teaming up with Hasan ibn Halid of the Saud clan, set out to recapture Dir'iya from the viceroy's toops. They were met by Halil Pasa who had set out from Mecca in Safar of 1234 (December 1818) and at Mahayil were defeated and scattered. In pursuing them the Egyptian forces marched onto Abu Aris. Ahmad surrendered and was exiled.

The Egyptian expedition set out to rebuild the fortresses of the Tihama (at Abu Aris, Giran, Hodeida, Luhayya, Zabid, and Bayt al-Faqih). All the areas previously admini-

¹ As'ad Jabir, «Yemen», 353.

stered by the serifs were restored to the Imam's jurisdiction. The Imam, in return, promised to deliver coffee supplies to the imperial kitchens, as in past practices.

The imperial government had serious reservations concerning the efficacy of the imams of Sanaa. Their rapacity and cruel handling of tribes had alienated them from the lowlanders and accounted for much of the turmoil and lawlessness characterizing tribal relations in the two preceding centuries. The tribes specifically singled out for criticism were, in many respect, the most powerful: Dhu Muhammad, Husayn, Hasid, Bail, and Yam.² All fought for dominion over the northern regions of Yemen. Ottoman observers felt they had to be dealt with in a strict manner. Inhabitants of the coastal cities were equally interested in their being chastised. The merchants had suffered from their marauding, and the populace from their raids. All assisted in financing the rebuilding of fortifications to keep them out. Often these were the very tribes who took orders from the Imam of Sanaa.¹

British merchants, operating predominantly out of Indian ports, had urged their government to take steps necessary for securing their operations at Mocha. Attempts to do so through treaty relations with the Imam bore little fruit since it was the serif of Abu Aris they had to circumvent and he did not take kindly to such measures. In the expedition of Muhammad Ali they expected reprieve. The British had opposed an earlier one, but were not disposed to do the same in 1825 particularly when ordered by the Sublime Porte.¹

Doubtful about their efforts to secure an operation at Mocha, particularly following a sharp dispute with the Imam

1 Dispatch of Henry Salt to the Foreign Office. Alexandria June 18, 1825. F. O. 78/135.

2 See map for geographical distribution of major tribes.

of Sanaa in 1828, the British began to cast about for an alternative site. Aden proved particularly attractive for the next location of a Factory. Commanding an exploratory naval expedition in behalf of the India government, Captain Hutchinson was authorized to «enter into a Convention with the Sovereign of Aden, arranging the terms on which the British Residency should be received at that place in the event it is necessary to remove it from the dominions of the Imaum of Sennaa (sic).»¹

The British were particularly anxious to secure Aden for their Factory following rumors that Muhammad Ali planned to occupy the isthmus. Its strategic importance was discovered in 1829 when coal was transported to Aden from Mocha in order to provision the first steamer («Hugh Lindsay»), which was on its way to Suez from India.²

Muhammad Ali did not seriously entertain a military presence in Yemen until 1833 following a rebellion in Hejaz. Planned or not, the rebellion provided Muhammad Ali with the pretext to march his troops into Yemen. It began in June of 1832 when a Circassian slave by the name of Muhammad Ağa, alias Türkçe Bilmez (Knows no Turkish), hitherto considered a loyal follower of the viceroy, revolted with his Albanian followers in Mecca for not having received pay over several months. All two thousand (horse and foot) marched to Jidda, where they seized the treasury, confiscated equipment and supplies, and with warships they had commandeered set sail for the Thima in December of that year. The rebels quickly occupied the coastal cities of Mocha and Hodeida, and the land in between. They were joined of discontented Arab tribes of the bordering region.³ When querri-

1 Campbell's No. 21 of April 17, 1838 and India Board's letter of July 18, 1838, both cited in F.O. 881/2147.

2 For background see Macro, 57-58.

3 See Campbell's No. 10 of April 16, 1833 to Palmerston. F.O. 78/227.

ed by British observers, Bilmez alleged that he rebelled because he felt Muhammad Ali would soon be deposed by the sultan, and now he had an opportunity to prove his loyalty and usefulness to the Ottoman government. He anticipated for reward, governorship of the Hejaz.

Bilmez concluded an agreement with Ali ibn Muhtar, an Asiri chief, offering to share with him the revenue of the region in return for his support. The revenue was not collected owing to the absence of an official administrator. The Circassian, however, had incurred greater expenses than anticipated, so he defaulted on his agreement with Ali.

The possibility of a prior understanding between the viceroy, his subordinate Bilmez and the British concerning operations in Yemen is seen in reports from Consul General Chapbell. According to these, Muhammad Ali suggested to Campbell early in 1833 that he might send an expedition to Yemen in order to chastise Bilmez and rescue Sanaa from anarchy. If the rebellion of Bilmez were staged, then a perfect pretext for immediate involvement would be ready made. The facility with which Bilmez moved from Mecca to Jidda to Yemen can only lend credence to this notion.

Campbell's willingness to cooperate with the viceroy was further abetted by news from Yemen that in the midst of the turmoil British commerce was suffering. It was reported that «nearly all the coffee of Mocha was carried off in ships of the United States to the manifest detriment of our (English) commerce.»

But turning control over to Muhammad Ali was not without its risks; for while British commerce would be facilitated by the viceroy now controlling both sides of the Red Sea, as Moresby reported to Campbell and the latter to Palmerston, still the British might be acquiescing to a formidable territorial concentration in the hands of a powerful vali who might not always be friendly to British interests. It was

presumed that once fully in his control, Muhammad Ali would annex its administration to the Hijaz where his nephew Kuçuk Ibrahim governed as vali. Ibrahim had been invested with that office by the sultan's government as a reward for his suppressing the Wahhabis.

Palmerston yielded to Campbell's arguments that control of both sides of the Red Sea by the viceroy would only facilitate the shipping of the India Government. He responded by blessing the viceroy's expedition to Yemen.¹ To quiet the anxieties of the Sublime Porte, Campbell recommended that Palmerston's government reassure the Ottoman that the British considered Yemen an integral part of Ottoman possessions, and administratively an appenage of the vilayet of Hejaz.²

Meanwhile, reports from Captain Moresby, who commanded the India Government's surveying ship «Benares», indicated that the forces of Bilmez were concentrated in Mocha, where they meant to await the Viceroy's troops. Moresby's letter of June 26, 1833 from Jidda painted a bleak picture: the Imam had died and with him the last semblance of order; Surat ships were being detained by Bilmez at Mocha; commerce was deplorable, and its revival could be assured only with Muhammad Ali taking possession of Yemen. Even then it would not be an easy task, for the viceroy would have to contend not only with the ravages of rebels, but also with an interior of Yemen torn by civil wars precipitated by the feuding brothers of the deceased Imam, none of whom enjoyed much force, power or strong backing.

Meanwhile, Ali, the disgruntled Asiri chief, gathered up his fighting men and laid siege to Bilmez at Mocha after

1 Palmerston's No. 15 to Campbell, September 2, 1833. F.O. 78/550.

2 Campbell's No. 63 to Palmerston. Alexandria, October 27, 1833. F.O. 78/228.

seizing the entire area surrounding the port town. Muhammad Ali's navy recaptured or destroyed vessels commanded by Bilmez. Losses and defections had reduced the rebel's force to between twelve and fifteen hundred men, most of whom were stationed either at Mocha or at Aden. The viceroy was most eager to dislodge them from the fortress at Aden, lest the rebel convert the town into a piratical stronghold preying on Egyptian shipping in the Red Sea to reinforce the siege of Mocha, Muhammad Ali ordered a regiment of infantry (3200 men), a cavalry unit (400 men), and an artillery of 200 with six field pieces and two mortars dispatched from Alexandria. Campbell urged the commanding officer of the expedition to take all necessary steps to insure the safety of British subjects at Mocha.¹ The viceroy's nephew Ahmad, who also served as minister of war, left for Yemen with an additional 2400 regular and 1200 irregular cavalry (chiefly Anatolian) with 400 artillery men. Four hundred and fifty camels transported their baggage by land, while the troops left by sea, «all in good order.»²

Alerted by the alliance between Asiri Wahhabis and Bilmez, the viceroy selected one of the twelve Asiri chiefs detained in Egypt following the suppression of the Wahhabi uprising, bestowed upon him a pelisse of honor, and dispatched him along side Ahmad to Yemen. Muhammad Ali counted on the Asiri Sayh Muhammad al-Dasin, to draw support away from Bilmez. He allocated over a thousand purses in nine-piaster gold pieces (total of 60,000 Austrian dollars) to purchase the support of Asiris, promising not to punish those who allied themselves with Bilmez should they abandon his side.³

1 Campbell's No. 66 to Palmerston, Cairo, November 17, 1833. F.O. 78/228.

2 Campbell's No. 70 to Palmerston, Cairo, December 15, 1833. F.O. 78/228.

3 **Ibid.**

The inhabitants of the Tihama were jubilant at the sight of the Egyptian expedition. For nearly two years the Asiris had visited upon them a variety of suffering and privation. Merchants were plundered, and the possessions of all carried away by land and sea. No one was able to ward off the rapacity of the marauding Asiris. Rich and poor alike scrambled to get out. Foreign merchants were not spared either by Bilmez or by his deputy Abd al-Rahman who served as «muhafiz» (governor) of Bab al-Sahil (at Bab al-Mandib).

While the marauding of the Asiris had commenced when Bilmez was in charge, it only intensified after he decided to flee following negotiations with the Asiri chieftain Lahiq ibn Ahmad Zaydani whereby in exchange for two thousand riyals,¹ he agreed to hand over to him Mocha. Bilmez also arranged with one of his trusted deputies to open the gates of the town after Bilmez was safely on board a British vessel heading for Bombay, a scheme he had hatched with Anglo Indian.²

While the fate of Bilmez³ after reaching Bombay is shrouded in mystery, that of the Egyptian expedition is not. It did not fare as well as anticipated during the whole of 1834. The Bombay government reflected its concerns by dispatching Captain Haines to Socotra in October of that year to investigate the purchase of that island to serve as a possible alternate coaling station. He was also asked to scout the Hadramaut coast and map it.

Exasperated by the turmoil and his inability to control it, the Imam of Sanaa reportedly offered to deliver up his

1 Two hundred according to «Miraat ül-Yemen,» 72.

2 «Yemen», 356.

3 It was alleged that from Bombay he went to Baghdad, then back to Egypt where he was allegedly seized and executed (*Ibid.*); but very much alive in 1858, having been assigned to Bagdad. Playfair, 141 (note).

country to the Egyptians but his subjects would not support this decision.¹ Elsewhere the war went on without a clear indication of the outcome. The key centers of Luhayya and Hodeida were heavily garrisoned, according to British officers monitoring the war,² and Egyptian forces decided to await the reinforcements dispatched by Muhammad Ali.

It was not the Yemenis that posed a military problem to the Egyptian, as both high and lowlanders were willing to accept reasonable terms; rather it was the Asiris and their allies among Yemenis who put up the fiercest resistance. In a letter from a French medical officer accompanying Ahmad Pasa to Clot Bey of November 10, 1834 we learn that the expedition suffered severe attrition in terms of provisions, camels, horses owing to insufficient provisioning. Local supplies proved both expensive and hard to acquire. Morale fell drastically, particularly when the fierce Asiris outwitted the Egyptians several times in key battles. They captured the capital of Asir, but the surrounding country remained in the hands of defiant Sayh A'id ibn Muy'i the recognized chief of the land. Three lowland provinces were captured, but not the key cities of Abu Aris, Saba, Bisr or Benicher. Reports reaching the viceroy clearly indicated that more men, material and money would be needed.³

The viceroy was too deeply committed to abandon the expedition and leave Yemen to the Asiris and their Wahhabi supporters. With Abd al-Rahman, his **muhafiz**, killed by the Asiris, the last official connection to Cairo was broken. The viceroy resolved nevertheless to continue the fight. Mirmi-

1 Testimony in a letter from Rose of September 29 to Campbell.

2 Captain Rose who commanded the sloop of war «Coote» off Mocha.

3 Dispatch of November 10, 1834 from a Frenchman accompanying Ahmad Pasa to Clot Bey, head of the medical establishment in Egypt. These and other letters mentioned above were cited in Campbell's reports to London. See his No. 2 to Palmerston. Cairo, January 6, 1835. F. O. 78/257.

ran Amin Beg headed land reinforcements, and Qapudan Hafiz more sea units as they were dispatched south to relieve exhausted units. He placed his nephew Kuçuk Ibrahim in charge of the entire expedition, which was now expanded by another 2400 men arriving via Suez and Jidda and financed by an extra forty thousand Austrian dollars. The money sent along earlier to buy the loyalty of Asiris appeared to have little impact; indeed, the Asiris sent along, al-Dasin, was suspected of secretly working with the rebels.¹

Operations in the Tihama brought some results. Mahmud Beg and a detachment of troops assisted by a bedouin force led by Husayn ibn Haydar captured the fort commanding the water supply to Hodeida on January 15, 1835 thus cutting off the city from its water. Four days later the governor, Mahmud ibn Mufassa, surrendered to the Egyptians at the urging of the local merchants in order to prevent the city from being subjected to looting. Mocha itself was placed under the command of Husayn as a reward for his cooperation with the Egyptians; but with the approach of Mahmud Beg, and uncertain of his status vis-a-vis the Egyptian commander, he decided to flee the city on January 24. Left unattended, Mocha was temporarily held by the captain of an Egyptian vessel and a handful of men who quickly secured the customs house's gate and battery and hoisted the Egyptian flag.²

But while Egyptian troops met with success in the Tihama, they did not fare so well in the highlands. Indeed, they suffered a number of serious reverses. The Asiris led by what was termed in Cairo «Rijal Alma» (men of [the tribe] by that name), held once as hostages by the viceroy, known

1 **Ibid.**

2 For additional details see a letter from Commander Denton of the India Government's Brig of War «Euphrates» to Col. Campbell from Mocha, January 30, 1835. Incl. No. 2 in Campbell's dispatch to the Duke of Wellington from Cairo, February 16, 1835. F.O. 78/257.

for unflinching fierceness in battle, lured Kuçuk Ibrahim into their mountain fastness on pretexts of fleeing his advance and inflicted heavy losses on the Egyptians.

Once again Muhammad Ali sent reinforcements, another 2400 (a regiment) commanded by a former minister of war, Khurshid Pasa. He was convinced that his nephew had shown little skill or acumen in handling the Asiris. The campaign proved costly both in men and materiél. The Rijal Alma and their fighters had inflicted heavy losses on the Egyptians. Both Kuçuk Ibrahim and the serif of Mecca who had accompanied him on the expedition were among those who fled for their lives. Many Egyptian fugitives wandered about aimlessly in the desert and perished. A strong column of Asiris marched on to the fort at al-Husa, built by the Egyptians at a small port for receiving provisions, and captured it with its depot. Unaware of its capture, Egyptian vessels sailed unsuspectingly into the port and were captured, their crews and passengers massacred.¹

The campaign was fast becoming a drain on the vice-roy's treasury.² Another 100,000 dollars were sent in the company of an escort of fifty cavalry to Suez. The cotton he sold for it at Alexandria was with the understanding he would be paid in either Spanish Daubloons or Austrian dollars, the currency in use in Yemen.³

Fresh troops under more competent command finally turned the tide of war against Asiris and their Yemeni allies in the course of 1837. Not only were the port cities of Moccha, Luhayya, and Hodeida all recaptured, but the interior

1 See extract of a letter from an agent in Jiddah to Campbell of 21 Safar 1251/18 June 1835. Incl. in No. 24, Campbell to Palmerston, from Alexandria, July 24, 1835. F. O. 78/228.

2 See Campbell's No. 24.

3 Campbell's No. 9 to the Duke of Wellington. Cairo, April 18, 1835. F. O. 78/228.

centers like Taiz and Hajziya as well. Stability returned momentarily to both the Tihama and highlands, for which the inhabitants were both relieved and grateful to Muhammad Ali.¹

However, no sooner did the sultan's government breathe a sigh of relief over the pacification of Yemen at last than it learned that the British were about to capitalize on the situation to implant themselves at Aden in keeping with plans in the offing for some time. The news did not sit well with Muhammad Ali who had hoped to offset his huge campaign expenditures by tapping the customs resources of Yemen port cities, including Aden's. Moreover, he viewed Aden's location as important for the defense of south Arabia and for securing his hold on it. The Hejaz was already a financial burden to the sultan's, and his government as well. Its revenues never provided even for its basic administrative expenses.

The India Government had resolved on making Aden its outpost to replace Mocha, which port already had proven itself both unstable and untenable. Besides, Aden appeared far more suitable as a commercial and supply point.

Aden was ruled at this time by the sultan of neighboring Lahaj, who had managed to maintain a posture of independence vis-a-vis the Imam of Sanaa. Captain Haines of the India Marines already had detailed in his exploratory reports the advantages of Aden over other cities. James McKenzie of the Bengal Lancers had reported to the Foreign Office in London that Muhammad Ali was planning to occupy Aden after he suppressed the Asiris. He urged the British authorize the occupation of the isthmus before the viceroy could. He regarded Aden a necessary port for establishing a British commercial presence in this corner of Arabia. While the In-

1 «Yemen», 358.

dia Government opposed a lasting Egyptian presence in the Tihama, it was prepared to take steps to deprive him of Aden's control. Besides, it did not want the viceroy that close to Bombay. The strategic location of Aden, halfway between Suez and Bombay, was not lost on the India Government, nor was the excellent port facility it could provide British shipping. With the advent of steam transportation, it was an ideal coaling station as well.¹

To justify the acquisition of Aden, London through the India Government labored to reduce the legitimate claims of the Imam of Sanaa and by extension, of the Ottoman government. They had recourse to books on geography, and Palmerston instructed Campbell to tell the viceroy that rumors reaching London allude to his design on Aden, not to mention those «upon Muscat and Bagdad.» His dispatch of troops towards Aden «would seem to indicate intentions on his part to extend his authority towards the Persian Gulf and the pashalick of Bagdad.»² Concern was intensified by Muhammad Ali's successful campaigns in Nejd and Yemen where, in spite of heavy cost in men, money and material he succeeded in suppressing the Wahhabis and Asiris.³

In preparing the grounds for the take over of Aden before the Egyptians could occupy it, Rear Admiral Sir C. Malcolm Kirk, Superintendent of the Indian Navy, alleged to the Government of Bombay that «both the Arabian and Abyssinian coasts of the Gulf of Aden were becoming very unsafe, from the depredations committed on trading vessels.» Furthermore, he reported that the «Sultan of Aden had shown himself to be little better than a common marauder, per-

5 Campbell's No. 15 to Palmerston. Alexandria, March 27, 1838. F.O. 78/342.

2 See his No. 5 to Campbell of August 4, also No. 25 of December 8, 1837; cited in F.O. 881/2147, p. 3.

3 Campbell's No. 38 to Palmerston of July 12, 1837. F.O. 78/320.

mitting the plunder of ships driven on the coast, and, in some cases, sharing in the profits of these outrages.»¹

A more specific pretext was provided by an incident involving the «Doria Dowlut», a Madras vessel belonging to an Indian family that was wrecked in a storm in January of 1837 off Aden. It was alleged that the sultan had not prevented it from being looted. The Bombay government asked the India Government's approval to use this incident to demand satisfaction from the sultan of Aden. It was followed with a proposal to the Court of Directors in London that they be granted permission to take possession of the port of Aden in compensation for «the insults offered by its Ruler to the British flag.»²

Captain Haines was directed to proceed to Aden for the purpose of accomplishing this objective³. After obtaining satisfaction in the form of compensation for the loss sustained by the wrecked «Doria Dowlut», he next proceeded to «negotiate» the transfer of Aden from the sultan's to the India Government's control. He demanded both the port of Aden and the adjacent promontory, offering in exchange a meager annual payment of 8,700 Austrian dollars.

Subsequent developments affirm the suspicions of scholars that the negotiations were conducted under the guns of his naval force and that the sultan, hardly able to understand the instrument presented to him for signing was clearly intimidated. For no sooner had he signed the instrument of transfer than his own infuriated sons plotted to seize Haines before he could carry the instrument back to Bombay. According to reports reaching Admiral Kirk, Haines appa-

1 Cited in F.O. 881/2147, p. 4.

2 Bombay Government to the Court of Directors, September 26, 1837. Cited in F.O. 881/2147, p. 4.

3 Bombay Government to the Superintendent of the Indian Navy, November 25, 1837. F.O. 881/2147.

rently wanted to keep the negotiations secret, just between himself and the sultan, but «he like a silly man trusted the whole to six merchants who soon dispensed it throughout the town.»¹

Word reached Kuçuk Ibrahim that the British were surreptitiously maneuvering to acquire Aden by whatever means. He inquired only to get word back from Haines that he himself now controlled Aden by virtue of an instrument of transfer from the sultan. Haines also sent word to Ibrahim not to interfere.²

Disturbed by this development, Muhammad Ali demanded clarification from Campbell and was told that the Bombay government considered Aden an independent power and could treat with its sultan if it wished. Exasperated by the whole Yemen affair, the viceroy was ready to withdraw, and he so informed Campbell. He made it clear that he would not allow Aden to lapse into foreign hands unless it can be shown that the Imam Sanaa did not exercise rightful jurisdiction over it. Contrary to what was reported by the agents of the Bombay government, Muhammad Ali did not acquiesce in the transfer of Aden.³ He would permit the British to have a coaling station there, but not ruling rights; and this only after he had subjugated the rest of the country surrounding Aden.

1 Political No. 1. Report on the transfer of Aden to Rear Admiral Sir C. Malcolm Kirk, dated January 20, 1838. Incl. in Secret dispatch from the India Board to the Governor General of India in Council and to the Governor/Council at Bombay, dated May 30, 1838. F.O. 78/349; see other incls. on Haines' negotiations with the sultan and terms of the alleged transfer.

2 See letter of February 3, 1838 and another of the 6th to Ibrahim. Copies inclosed in **Secret**, from the India Board to the Governor General of India in Council, dated May 30, 1838. F.O. 78/349.

3 Artin Beg to Bogus Beg of 25 Z 1253/22 March 1838. Incl. in No. 15, Campbell to Palmerston of March 27, 1838. F.O. 78/342.

After having encouraged Muhammad Ali to undertake the expedition to Yemen, Campbell on instruction from his government was now urging to withdraw¹. The viceroy had fulfilled the role envisioned for him: pacify the country in order to facilitate the establishment of a secure station. Arguments used centered on the inadvisability of further antagonizing the tribes on grounds this could only lead to the ultimate defeat of Egyptian arms. Moreover, it was already too costly an undertaking and could only bring poverty to Egypt in the long run. Campbell even had the audacity to urge the viceroy to induce the people of Yemen's interior to bring freely their goods to the ports of Yemen and to sell their produce to and purchase merchandise from European merchants as they might require, and on no account to conscript them or levy tax on them. To him stability around the Red Sea courtesy of Egyptian arms would increase commercial traffic for British India with south Arabia.²

Ibrahim had already anticipated British strategy towards Aden and warned his uncle, the viceroy, that through the India government Britain planned to control Aden for commercial as well as strategic reasons. This control, he argued, would divert trade activity away from Mocha, hitherto the principal port to the interior. It also meant a loss of important customs revenue, which Muhammad Ali had counted on in order to offset the perennial negative balance of revenue of the Hejaz.³ The viceroy was equally upset by the British addressing the *faqih* of Aden by the title «sultan», when in reality the authority signified by the title was vested legally by the Ottomans in the Imam of Sanaa⁴.

Proceeding according to plans, the British government

1 Campbell to Palmerston, No. 13 of March 20, 1838. F.O. 78/342.

2 *Ibid.*

3 See Annex A.

4 Artin to Bogus of March 22, 1838. Incl. in Campbell's No. 15. F.O. 78/342.

endorsed the proposed appointment by the Court of Directors of the East India Co. of packet agents to the ports of Suez, Jiddah, Cosseir, and Mocha in anticipation of expanded trade. Campbell instructed these agents to provide provisional consular assistance to any British subject or vessel visiting these ports.¹

Captain Haines returned to Aden, this time to serve as the first political agent there. He was issued clear instructions to assert his presence, by force if the «sultan» should not ratify the agreement. He was also informed to avoid discussing commerce at this time with the neighboring Arab tribes so as not to excite the jealous feelings of the viceroy of Egypt, or possibly lead to embarrassing connections and obligations with them.²

Angered by these developments, Muhammad Ali put it bluntly to Campbell that by virtue of a firman in his possession for ten years, the sultan's government had authorized him to take possession of Aden and the rest of Yemen. The French consul general in Egypt had fanned the anxieties of the viceroy by alleging that the British intended to take Aden for the purpose of capturing the coffee trade of Yemen and opening up Arabia for British manufacture. With British capture of Aden, the French argued, they would eventually capture Egypt as well.

The British, on the other hand, were no less suspicious of Egyptian motives in Yemen. They in turn believed that by conquering the country Muhammad Ali intended to monopolize that same coffee trade and use Yemen as an outlet for Egyptian manufacture. The Political Department of the Foreign Office was not convinced that Ibrahim would

¹ See instructions to Haines from the India Board of December 12, 1838. Cited in F.O. 881/2147.

² Campbell's No. 21 to Palmerston of April 8, 1838. F.O. 78/373.

succeed in subjugating «Sheikh Sherzebe (Sar'ab) territory, a rich coffee country called Houshereea (Hujariya), an area conveniently situated for trade with the port (Aden).»¹ They were convinced that the sayh in reference desired to enter into a treaty for trade and commerce with the British. The major tribes of the area, Dhu Muhammad and Dhu Husayn were strong numerically and controlled critical passes to Aden. British agents had been cultivating both.

These factors had contributed to British intentions to shift their center from Mocha to Aden. Moreover, Aden was closer to Sanaa by two days' journey. Even if the Egyptians captured Sanaa, London still maintained that the British could have better relations with the inhabitants of the interior, because «the British name stands very high for good faith and justice.»

The British, however, were not relying on their good name alone to halt Egyptian advances in Yemen. Strategy called for continued friendly negotiations to halt the advance of Egyptians and open up the area to friendly and free intercourse. The aim was to prevent Muhammad Ali from capturing Taiz, which would give him control over the whole country, whereby «the entire commerce will be monopolized by Egypt and our India trade will be ruined.» Haines had stated to his superiors that he was able to enter into treaties of friendship and peace with «nearly all the neighbouring states, and the roads from Aden into the interior are now open for supplies and commerce.»²

It was all the more imperative now to apply pressure on Muhammad Ali to withdraw from Yemen. As Palmerston put it earlier in a dispatch to Campbell, «Her Majesty's Go-

1 Political Department to Campbell. Incl. in **Ibid.**

2 Dispatch from S. B. Haines, Political Agent at Aden of February 28, 1839. Incl. in Campbell's No. 21 to Palmerston. F.O. 78/373.

vernment were not aware that the occupation of that country by his (Muhammad Ali's) troops, promoted any interest of Great Britain.»¹ From Aden Hanies sent a letter to Ibrahim informing him officially that Aden is to be treated as of January 19, 1839 a British dependency and requesting that he stay away² The India government was anxious for this to happen in order to insure what it termed «a fair competition with Mocha in commercial intercourse with the interior of Yemen.» Otherwise, «the cession of Aden would be of little value to the British in a commercial point of view.»³

With Muhammad Ali taking the position that his expedition to Yemen was with the Ottoman sultan's blessing, London instructed Ambassador Ponsonby at Istanbul to inquire from the Sublime Porte whether «the conquests which Mehemet Ali had made in Arabia and on the shores of the Persian Gulf had been made in accordance with the wishes of the Sultan, and in pursuance of any authority or instructions given by the Sultan to Mehemet Ali.»⁴ Suspecting the viceroy's aims in the Gulf, Palmerston informed Campbell to tell Muhammad Ali that in view of the rumors concerning his designs on Baghdad, «the British Government could not permit him to establish his naval and military power on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and that, if he should persevere in such project, he must expect that a British force would dispossess him from any naval stations, at which he might attempt to place himself, on the Persian Gulf.»⁵

Without waiting for confirmation from Istanbul, Palmerston instructed Campbell in September of 1839 to inform Muhammad Ali that the British Government officially re-

1 No. 15 of May 12, 1838 to Col. Campbell. Cited in F.O. 881/2147.

2 See copy dated February 25. Incl. in No. 21.

3 India Board of September 4, 1839. Cited in F.O. 881/2147, p. 11.

4 No. 64 to Lord Ponsoby of May 11, 1839. Cited in *Ibid.*

5 No. 10 of May 11, 1839. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

quests that he withdraw his troops from Yemen. In a protocol concluded between Great Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia (to form the Quadruple Alliance), the Ottoman government was supported in their request that Muhammad Ali withdraw from Syria. Quite clearly the viceroy of Egypt, having fulfilled his unwitting role on behalf of Great Britain, now had to be confined to Egypt.

To underscore his determination to keep Muhammad Ali away from the area surrounding Aden in the first instance and induce him to leave Yemen in the second, Palmerston notified the India Board not to be restrained in their dealing with the tribal chiefs in the interior of Yemen if they saw fit. In his stated view, quite emphatically put, the viceroy «has no right whatever over the countries governed by those rulers.»¹

This rather blunt declaration reflected a hardening position in London. The British government had cause for alarm. In the course of 1838 the viceroy's armies finally succeeded in subduing rebellion against Ottoman authority everywhere, from the Hawran in southern Syria to Asir and the Tihamma in south Arabia. His forces had reached the Gulf early in 1839 with Khurshid and Ahmad now in control of al-Hasa and Qatif. Kuçuk Ibrahim had pacified and was in control of Asir and Yemen. The Wahhabis of Nejd were totally neutralized for the moment. Muhammad Ali, moreover, enjoyed strong sympathy in Baghdad, and it was feared that he might next move onto that territory and reduce the port city of Basra at the head of the Gulf as well.² And to top his triumphs, the viceroy's brilliant commander and son Ibrahim Pasa succeeded on June 24, 1839 in totally destroying the Ottoman forces sent against him in a battle near the little town of Nizip.

1 Letter of September 13. F.O. 78/388.

2 Admiral Maitland to the Admiralty, April 7, 1839. Admiralty 1/219.

Seen from the point of view of Britain, which country genuinely suspected France's motives in urging the viceroy on, all these moves, particularly towards south Arabia and the Gulf were deemed untimely and unwise since they appeared to impact negatively their own interests and influence in this part of the world. They came at a time when the Russians were drawing closer to the Persian court and the shah's representative was in Cairo work out closer relations between Persia and Egypt. The British were attempting to prevent the shah from capturing Herat, a strategic gateway to the Indian subcontinent, while they themselves were occupying the island of Karak in the Gulf. At the same time Admiral Maitland was ordered to prevent the occupation of Bahrein by the Egyptian forces. Through Campbell the India government wanted instructions sent by the viceroy to Khurshid to stay away from Bâhrein.¹

In view of the mounting confrontational policy of Palmerston vis-a-vis Muhammad Ali, Campbell's dream of an Anglo-Egyptian alliance to stabilize this significant part of the Ottoman empire and keep away Britain's rivals was now rapidly being shattered. Palmerston feared and mistrusted Muhammad Ali and preferred to have the weak ineffectual sultan as a substitute working ally. In the name of reasserting Ottoman authority in Syria and Arabia, Palmerston was determined to confine the viceroy's armies to Egypt proper. He would permit him to undertake administrative improvements in the name of the sultan's government, but no more. The remarkable aspect of Palmerston's audacity is that it worked in the long run to the manifest remorsefulness of the Sublime Porte, many of whose ministers saw salvation only in Muhammad Ali being in control where they could not exercise effective authority.

France was in sympathy with the viceroy's plight but the

¹ Foreign Office to Campbell, June 15, 1839. F.O. 78/342.

king was not prepared to go to war against the Quadruple Alliance on his behalf. Palmerston did not trust the French either, and he much preferred that Britain take the leadership in imposing restraints on the viceroy of Egypt.

Although Campbell had communicated Palmerston's wishes to Muhammad Ali, he himself was very unhappy over the rapidly deteriorating relations between London and Cairo. He had labored hard and long to promote ties in the hope of reducing France's ties with Egypt and counter that country's influence in Egyptian dominated Syria.¹ But within months Campbell was replaced by Col. Hodges (in February of 1840) as Consul General in Egypt. Unlike his predecessor, Hodges shared Palmerston's hostilities towards the viceroy.

Without proof or reliable information to support his contentions, Hodges reported to Palmerston that Muhammad Ali had sent a secret mission to the Imam of Sanaa urging him to drive the British out of Aden. He allegedly promised in return restoring Taiz and the whole of Yemen's interior to the Imam's administrative control. Should he not be prepared to respond, then the viceroy was prepared to administer the land in return for an annual subsidy from the Imam. His forces would then take up the task of dislodging the British from Aden. When confronted with such «intelligence», the viceroy contemptuously dismissed it as slanderous and untrue. He had no plans to dislodge the British from Aden, but rather to deliver Yemen from the incompetent rule of the Imam whose machinations and manifest weaknesses only served to encourage foreign elements to realize their ambitions at the expense of Yemen².

1 For Palmerston's instructions see *supra*; for Campbell's action thereon, see his No. 79 to Palmerston, October 6, 1839 and the Incl. F.O. 78/375.

2 See Col. Hodges' No. 26 of February 22, 1840, and India Board's of April 30; cited in F.O. 881/2147, p. 12.

But the loss of Aden was not to be overlooked by the sons of the sultan of Lahaj who had signed the instrument of transfer nor by other tribes neighboring Aden. They did not need the urgings of Muhammad Ali to carry on an armed struggle against the British in Aden. Repeated attempts were made in November of 1839, May of 1840, and July of 1841 under the leadership of the Abdali sultan. All to no avail. The British would not be dislodged.

Meanwhile Muhammad Ali decided to quit Yemen altogether. He was preparing for a major military and naval confrontation with the forces of the sultan and those of the Quadruple Alliance after the decision was taken to force him out of Syria as well. His nephew, Kuçuk Ibrahim, returned with the Egyptian expedition from the Tihama after turning over the administration of the lowlands and the port cities of Mocha and Hodeida to Husayn ibn Ali Haydar, the şerif of Abu Aris. the şerif's brother, Abu Talib, took charge of the fighting forces of the şerif and responsibilities of defence. Thus ended Muhammad Ali's adventures in south Arabia. He came to restore the land to the rightful authority of the Ottoman sultan only to find himself being compelled to withdraw under the pressures of a carefully orchestrated policy of Palmerston, in league with the very same sultan who wanted Muhammad Ali's own authority diminished.

In conclusion one has to take note of the fact that while Muhammad Ali succeeded in the mission which the Ottoman sultan ordered him to undertake by imperial decree in 1828, the end result of his twelve-year adventure is of dubious value. To be sure the country was momentarily pacified, but the pacification abetted British not Ottoman aims in this corner of Arabia. The question of Ottoman sovereignty was conveniently kept alive by the British for another decade, until their hold on Aden was cemented. In the end (as we shall see in another study) the reaffirmation of imperial Ottoman sovereignty was to be achieved only with the conversion of Yemen into an Ottoman vilayet.

ANNEX A

CUSTOMS REVENUE FROM CITIES OF YEMEN*

10 J 1253 to 20 J 1254 21 J 1254 - 2 N 1255 3 RI 1255 - I S 1256
 (Sept. 11, 1873 - Sept. 13, 1838) (Sept. 14, 1838 - Nov. 9, 1839) (Apr. 3, 1840 - Nov. 10, 1840)

City	Para	Pias.	Purse	Para	Pias.	Purse	Para	Pias.	Purse
Taiz	07	466	2521	34	286	3227	35	061	2709
Aden	30	223	0123	00	040	0097	20	411	0045
Mocha	15	005	1964	18	025	0472	00	000	0000
Zabid	35	228	0862	10	362	1062	20	055	0483
Faqih*	25	168	0332	25	226	0291	35	203	0189
Hodeida	12	171	2716	30	034	2660	18	380	1475
Luhayya	20	312	1040	38	114	1194	38	284	0564
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total:	24	076	9561	35	090	9005	06	398	5476

* Above tables taken from Başbakanlık Arşivi (Istanbul), **Mesail-i Mühimme - Yemen**, 1803, Lef 3.

** Bayt al-Faqih.

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