Libya is conspicuous by its absence from the European annals of Arab nationalism in the era between the World Wars. The English reader, for example, finds but one reference to a Libyan response to European imperialism in Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1938* and none at all in George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening*. This lacuna has led many observers to the conclusion that Libya was passed by, ignorant of and ignored by the currents of nationalism which washed other Mediterranean shores during the height of European imperialism.

The usual interpretation of the Libyan reaction to the three decades of Italian rule which began in 1911 is summarized in Hourani's single comment:

*In...North Africa...the religious element was important in the formation of nationalistic movements. In Libya, the resistance to Italian rule was organized by the Sanusiyya, a reforming order which had obtained great influence in Cyrenaica before the Italians came, and was the only force solid enough to stand against them.*

In fact, although the Sanusiyyah played a very important role, it was not alone in organizing resistance to the Italians. The struggle was also undertaken by the Ottoman Imperial government, Ottoman army officers acting on their own, volunteers from elsewhere in the Arab world, as well as by Libyan notables of a variety of religious persuasions and regional attachments. Many of these forces combined in the creation in Libya in 1918 of the first formally republican government in the Arab

THE TRIPOLI REPUBLIC, 1918-1922

Lisa S. Anderson
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world, the *jumhuriyyah al-tarabulusiyah*, or Tripoli Republic.

The life of the Tripoli Republic was short. Unlike the Sanusiyyah, whose leader was championed by the British as an appropriately pliable spokesman for the Cyrenaicans on Egypt's Western Border, the Republic had no international sponsor to intervene with the Italians on its behalf. The hostility of the Italians themselves to the Republic destined it to a checkered career of internal feuds over policy and resources and by the time the Fascists came to power in Rome in 1922 its days were numbered. The resistance to the Italians ultimately failed - although not before the Libyans lost nearly half their number in a colonial war unmatched for its ferocity by anything experienced elsewhere in the Arab world - and with it died the Republic.

The failure of Europe to recognize the Tripoli Republic in its day hastened its disappearance in fact and obscured its existence in history. While the Sanusiyyah was rewarded for its cooperation with the British in Egypt with both leadership in independent Libya after World War II and elegant hagiography in Evans-Pritchard's *The Sanadet of Cyrenaica*, the Tripoli Republic found neither political power nor apology in the Western literature. Its life is, however, instructive both in what it says about European imperialism and the historical tradition it spawned, as well as in what it suggests about the roots of Arab nationalism in Libya today.

A DECADE OF DISORDER - 1908 TO 1918

By the fall of 1918, when the Tripoli Republic was established, Libya was a country in turmoil. The events of the previous decade, which set the stage for the Republic's brief appearance, had deeply divided the Libyan elite and seriously disrupted the country's economy.

A province of the Ottoman Empire until 1912, Libya had been intimately tied to the reform and reaction which swept the Empire during the late nineteenth century, and like the rest of the Ottoman lands, it was shaken by the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Supporters of the new regime undertook a campaign to rid the provincial administration of the 'reactionary elements' of the old guard and not a few of the newly unemployed officials offered their services to Italy, whose interest in the province had been common knowledge for decades.

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For example, the Muntasir family of Misratah, a coastal town east of Tripoli, provided aid to the Italians; as Ahmad Dhiya al-Din Muntasir was to explain:

The Young Turks came and, because of their hatred of the partisans of Abd al-Hamid, pounced on our family. First, when there were the elections (for the reopened Parliament), I, who was elected deputy for the sanjak of Khums and Tripoli, was not confirmed by the Government of the Young Turks on the pretext that I did not know the Turkish language well while there were many others confirmed who knew less than I. Then I was unjustly dismissed as qaimmaqam of Tarhunah and they hired some murderers to kill my brother Abd al-Qasim, who was barbarically killed on the street, after protection had been promised to the murderer...Fortunately for us, we came to know Italy had decided to occupy Tripoli and my brother Salim and I joined with...the Banco di Roma...in denouncing publicly everything the Turks had committed against us. We offered them our cooperation in the occupation of the city of Tripoli..."

Although the Muntasir family was not alone in its unhappiness with the Young Turk Revolution, the Italian invasion of Libya in September 1911 was by no means popular. During the following year-long war between the Empire and Italy many of the province's leaders rallied to the Imperial cause. Among those who took up the defense of the province against the Italians were two of the deputies who had been confirmed to represent the province in the reopened Parliament after the 1908 Revolution: Sulayman al-Baruni and Farhat Bey. Baruni, a prominent man of letters and leader of the Ibadi Berbers of Jabal al-Gharb, had been imprisoned during the reign of Abd al-Hamid for subversive political activity and he had enthusiastically embraced the cause of the Committee of Union and Progress after the 1908 Revolution. Farhat Bey had spent his youth in Tunisia and France, spoke French, and on his return to Libya had been a judge in his home town, Zawiyah. 'Twice dismissed for political intrigues' before the Revolution, he, too, joined the side of the Young Turks and represented his native district in Parliament. By the end of October 1911, Baruni and Farhat Bey were traveling
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throughout their districts preaching resistance and calling up volunteers to join the Ottoman officers who had established a camp at Aziziyyah, south of Tripoli. It was, according to the French journalist Remond, 'thanks to the unflagging activity of the deputies Farhad Bey of Tripoli and Suleiman Baroni of the Debbal (that) this force...has been brought under discipline.'

By the late summer of 1912 and faced with the imminent outbreak of war in the Balkans, the Imperial authorities in Istanbul opened negotiations with Italy. These led to the Treaty of Lausanne, signed in Charb had in 1912, and once again divided the provincial leadership. Italy occupied only a few coastal towns and the terms of the treaty held out hope for those who rejected Italian rule since the Empire did not cede sovereignty over the province to Italy. The Ottoman Sultan merely issued a declaration to his Libyan subjects, conceding them full and complete autonomy and reserving the right to appoint an agent to protect Ottoman interests in the country. The Italians reaffirmed their previous annexation of the province, an act that was not recognized in international law until after the World War I Allied peace settlement with Turkey in 1924.

The ambiguity of the provisions in the treaty and the legal status of the province was matched by the equivocal posture of the provincial leadership. The Italians, hoping to avoid a costly military conquest but determined to rule directly, instituted what they called their politica dei capi by which they would win the purposes if not the hearts of the provincial notables and thereby win the province. On the morrow of the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Ottoman administrators and provincial leaders of Tripolitania met in what became known as the Congress of Aziziyyah to decide on their stance in light of Italy's declared annexation of the province and the Empire's grant of autonomy. In an acrimonious meeting, two positions were outlined: cooperation with the Italians and continuation of the resistance. The major proponent of the first position was Farhat Bey; the second was urged by Sulayman al-Baruni. Baruni, whose efforts to create an autonomous Ibad province in the Jabal al-Lawz had landed him in jail before the Young Revolution, appears to have felt that the autonomy accorded the province by the Ottomans offered a better chance of realizing his goal. Farhat Bey, by contrast, was familiar with the French Protectorate in Tunisia and hoped to gain what appeared to be the advantages of European tutelage through cooperation.

The meeting broke up without an agreement and Farhat Bey met with the Italian governor outside Tripoli to sound out Italian intentions. According to de Leone, the governor was unaware of the dispute within the Libyan elite and interpreted Farhat Bey's overture as an accurate reflection of general opinion:

Thus was born, on this fundamental misunderstanding, the politica dei capi, which long precluding any constructive contact with the population which was abandoned to the arbitrary will of a few men, cost Tripolitania years and years of upheaval, disorder, bloody anarchy, absurd contradictions, enormous waste of public funds, and heavy sacrifice of human life.

Although the Italians appeared to be progressing in their occupation of the hinterlands despite local resistance during 1913 and 1914, the appearance was deceptive. A revolt of Libyan troops under Italian command in April 1915 sparked a province-wide uprising and this battle, known as Qasr Bu Hadi, or Gardabiyah, marked the end of any semblance of Italian control in the interior. By the time Italy entered World War I, their occupation was limited to Tripoli city, the coastal towns of Khums, Banghazi and several other coastal regions in Cyrenaica; they would make no progress into the interior for the duration of the war.

The outbreak of World War I found Italy and the Ottoman Empire once again at war and Ottoman officials once again openly in support of the Libyan resistance. It was a time, however, when the Empire itself was being called into question by Arab nationalists and competition for the allegiance of Libyan notables widened as the British joined the fray in Cyrenaica and anti-imperialism came to mean a variety of things in Arab circles.

In Cyrenaica, the Ottomans called upon pan-Islamic sentiments to encourage an attack by the Sanusiyyah against British positions in Egypt against the better judgment of its leader, Ahmad al-Sharif. Although sixty thousand British troops were tied down by an estimated fifteen-to-thirty thousand mujahidin, as the Libyan resistance fighters had come to be known, the superior force of the British eventually prevailed. Ahmad al-Sharif's cousin, Idris, had already made contact with the British in Cairo and, as Evans-Pritchard reports,
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'He seems to have made it clear to the British Authorities that his view of the situation did not entirely agree with that of his cousin, and from this time the British favoured his pretensions to the leadership of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica. In the aftermath of his defeat, Ahmad al-Sharif, apprised of the Ottoman influence of the Seneb in eastern Tripolitania, including Warfalla, where the local leader, Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr, saw, not without unhappiness, his own influence diminished. Misratah was the headquarters of a elaborate administration which supervised tax collection and military recruitment, had its own ammunition factory, printed its own money, and ran its own churches and hospitals. In the Jabal al-Qurb Baruni continued to direct military operations, styling himself that region's governor. His influence, like Ramadan's, was contested, however, by other local sons. The autonomy of the Sanusiyyah in Cyrenaica was formally recognized by the Italians in the agreement of Akramah signed in April 1917, negotiated through the good, and by no means disinterested, offices of the British. Concerned that further upheaval in Cyrenaica would undermine the security of their positions in Egypt's Western Desert, the British arranged a modus vivendi in Cyrenaica by which hostilities were to cease and confirming that the responsibility for security in the regions then controlled by the Italians and the Sanusiyyah rested with the Italian Administration and Idris respectively. The Italians, as Britain's junior partner in the Allied war effort, were obliged to acquiesce in the arrangement despite serious misgivings; Idris agreed in order to win lifting of the British blockade and the resumption of commerce with the coast. The practical autonomy of Tripolitania was not recognized by the Italians yet it was no less real. In fact, the leaders of the western Libyan province were cooperating with no one. During the early months of 1918 Nuri Bey was recalled to Istanbul and replaced first by Ishaq Pasha, a military commander who had distinguished himself in the Libyan war of 1911-12, and later in the summer by Ottom Prince 'Uthman Fuad. Neither of these men proved any more able than Nuri had been to unite the various political figures in Tripolitania; Ishaq Pasha had a serious falling out with Baruni soon after his arrival, and 'Uthman Fuad apparently spent most of his time in Libya wishing he were elsewhere. According to British sources, by the
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end of the war-

The Turks did not even figure in the eyes of the local population as the Government, much less in those of the local leaders. They were there to help fight the Italians; they sometimes provided arms and money and were always very encouraging.

There was never any chance of Tripoli becoming once again a Turkish province. Even Ramadan, the most Turkophile Arab in the country, was at the same time the most bitter opponent of Turkish rule, which could only mean a diminution of his influence.13

In October 1918, the Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice agreement which ended its involvement in World War I. By that time Libya had been the object of repeated attempts by Italians and Ottomans to win control of the population and determine its future. The decade which had preceded the Armistice had thrown the provincial leadership into disarray and the almost constant battles for control of the provincial territory had caused great physical destruction. The population of Tripolitania had, reported the British, 'suffered considerably by the diminution of their numbers to about a third and the destruction of much property such as palm trees and houses largely owing to internal strife. The loss of population by deaths from famine, plague and Spanish influenza are stated to have reduced the numbers of natives from about 650,000 including the Fezzan to about 250,000 altogether.'14 Italian estimates, which in the view of Evans-Pritchard were somewhat exaggerated, put the loss of population in Cyrenaica in the same order of magnitude: the population of 300,000 in 1911 had been reduced to 120,000 by 1915.15

The countryside had been devastated, the leadership was divided and disorganized. Courted and abandoned by turns by both the Italians and the Ottomans, the provincial elite had seen its local support erode as well, in the ravages of almost a decade of war. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire required the withdrawal of all but the most symbolic support of the Libyan opponents of Italian rule by their erstwhile allies. For the Italians this was a major stroke of luck, since the war had left Italy exhausted, divided against itself, and unprepared to reassert its authority in the North African province by force. For the first half-decade after the war 50

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the Italians availed themselves of the lack of international competition in the province to resume a version of their previous politica dei capi, and acquiesced, if unhappily, in British patronage of the Sanusiyyah.

THE TRIPOLE REPUBLIC - THE CALL FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Toward the end of World War I a young Egyptian, Abd al-Rahman Azzam Bey (who would become the first Secretary-General of the Arab League after World War II), arrived in Misratah from Cyrenaica. He had studied medicine in England, travelled in the nationalist circles of Tunisia and Egypt, advised Idris in his negotiations with the British and Italians, and, upon his arrival in Tripolitania, took up the cause of unity and resistance as advisor to Ramadan al-Suwayhi.

President Wilson's declaration of his support for national self-determination in January 1918 was warmly received in Libya, as elsewhere in the Arab World. The modus vivendi of Akramah which the Italians had signed in April 1917, according the Sanusiyyah local autonomy, was also welcomed in Tripolitania as a suitable starting point from which to obtain self-determination. What was needed was a broadly-based organization to represent Tripolitanian interests. When it became clear in the fall of 1918 that Ottoman support was no longer going to be available to Tripolitarians, a meeting of the region's notables was held in Misallatah. At the conclusion of the meeting the birth of the Jumhuriyyah al-kufristuwa, or Tripoli Republic, was announced.

Although the name of the new organization was proposed before the form of government had been agreed upon - this was the first formally republican government in the Arab world - its choice appears to have been less a reflection of the republican sentiments of its founders than of their inability to agree on a single individual to act as its head of state, or Amir. The position was offered to Uthman Fuad Pasha, the Ottoman Prince resident in Misratah, but he declined it. A Council of Four was therefore established to act as the ruling body, composed of Ramadan al-Suwayhi, Sulayman al-Baruni, Ahmad Murayid of Tarhuna, and Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr of Warfalla. Azzam Bey was the Council's Secretary, and a twenty-four-member advisory group was established, its members carefully selected to
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represent most of the regions and interests of the province. The Republic's headquarters were in the "Aziziyrah."

The Republic's announcement of Tripolitania's independence and its leaders' attempts to plead their case at the Paris Peace Conference after the War met chilly reception from the European Powers. The Italians, however, agreed to meet with the Republican leaders, hoping to negotiate an arrangement similar to the one they enjoyed with Idris. The two sides met in April 1919, each operating under a fundamental misapprehension of the other's intentions. The Republic leaders were negotiating, or so they thought, as the equals of the Italians: two independent governments were discussing disputed territory. The Italians, by contrast, viewed their talks with the Tripolitanian leaders as the inauguration of a system by which they would rule undisputed through the native chiefs. The misunderstanding was never resolved, but the negotiations led to the announcement of the agreement of Khallet al-Zaytuna, named after the village outside Tripoli where the discussions took place.

This agreement laid the groundwork for the promulgation of the Legge Fondamentale of June 1919, or, as it was sometimes called, the Statuto. It was extended in October 1919, in a comparable statute to Cyrenaica. These laws provided for a special Italian-Libyan citizenship and accorded all such citizens the right to vote in elections for local Parliaments. They were exempted from military conscription, and taxing powers rested with the locally elected Parliament. Positions in the local administration were to be filled by appointment by the Italian governor after nomination by a ten-man council, eight of whose members were Libyans selected by the Parliament.

The cooperation implicit in the Legge Fondamentale or Constitutional reform was a gamble for both the Italians and the Libyans. The Italians hoped to buy time, and law and order, in their colony while they attended to more pressing political problems at home. For the leaders of the Republic the arrangement represented a compromise of their desire for complete independence required by the exhaustion and strained circumstances of the general population. As a British report suggested, the leaders of the population in Tripolitania were possibly beginning to feel that they might lose control of the inhabitants, if their own people suffered further casualties in fighting at a period when war had rendered the economic situation as bad as it could possibly be and there was no further prospect of arms or money arriving from Europe.

Within weeks of the ending of the festivities which surrounded the law's promulgation, mutual accusations of bad faith were exchanged; it could hardly have been otherwise, since neither the Italians nor the Libyans viewed the Legge Fondamentale as a permanent arrangement. The Italians hoped that by making members of the Republic officials in the colonial government - a Governor's Council had been agreed upon at Khallet al-Zaytuna and several of the Republic's leaders served on it - they might buy local acquiescence in their presence in Libya. The Republic leaders, by contrast, saw the statute only as marking a temporary stage on the route to complete independence. Within six months of the institution of the law, whose provisions for a locally-elected Parliament were never carried out in Tripolitania, the Italian governor felt obliged to remind the Governor's Council that they had agreed to its provisions, which precluded discussion of complete independence.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR NATIONAL REFORM - COOPERATION FOR AUTONOMY

With the acceptance of the Legge Fondamentale, the Republic briefly reconstituted itself as an 'Association for National Reform,' whose formation was announced in September 1919. Ramadan al-Suwayhli was its honorary president, Ahmad Murayyid its 'active president', and 'Abd al-Rahman Azzam its general secretary and actual guiding light. Its declared aims included 'to safeguard for the Arabs their rights which are stated in the new fundamental law for Tripolitania...to bring about a good understanding between Arabs and Italians on the basis of complete equality and unity of interests... (and) to spread knowledge by all available means so that western industrial and scholastic civilization may enter the country while the qualities of Islam are preserved and the glorious traditions of the Arabs are revived.' The Association was to fail to reach any of its aims.

The Parliament of Cyrenaica met five times
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under the Presidency of Safi al-Din before it was abolished in 1923; in Tripolitania, the elections were never held. A French observer attributed the delay in implementing what he derisively called the 'super destour' in Tripolitania to a dilatoriness 'toute bureaucratique.' In fact, escaping the watchful eye of the British protectors of the Sanusiyyah in Cyrenaica, the Italians made little effort to apply the Legge Fondamentale in Tripolitania. In Cyrenaica they were required by British intervention to recognize and work through the Sanusiyyah, which they did only ill-humorously; in Tripolitania, they temporarily

Dissatisfaction with the modus vivendi of 'Akramah led the Italians to reopen discussions with the Sanusiyyah in 1920, and by October they reached a new agreement with Idris, known as the Accord of a-Rajma, which superseded that of 'Akramah. Under the terms of the new arrangement Idris was granted what the Italians viewed as the honorific title of Amir of Cyrenaica and permitted to organize an autonomous administration. In return, Idris agreed to cooperate in the application of the Legge Fondamentale of Cyrenaica, to disband the Cyrenaican military units, and not to tax the local population beyond the Sanusi religious tithe. The most important Sanusi concession, disbanding the military units, was not carried out.

Nonetheless, Idris was accorded a personal stipend of 63,000 lire a month, and the Italians agreed to pay for the policing and administration of the regions under Sanusi control; they provided 2,600,000 lire for general expenses, including 100,000 lire in gold, and they paid stipends to a variety of local administrators. As Evans-Pritchard puts it, 'Notables, zawiya officials, qadis, scribes, chiefs of irregular bands, political counsellors, and informers were all on the Italian payroll. The Italians were, in fact, bribing the whole country to keep quiet.'

The willingness of the Italians to formally recognize the Sanusiyyah and to allow its leaders to determine the division of the patronage it provided enhanced the Order's standing in Cyrenaica and enabled it to maintain a semblance of regional administration and unified action. In Tripolitania, however neither the Republic nor the Association for National Reform ever won formal recognition from the Italians. Although the membership of the Council which oversaw administrative appointments under the Legge Fondamentale was nearly identical with that of

the founders of the Republic, the Republic itself was not recognized and the Italians did not acknowledge its authority to administer the hinterlands autonomously. As a consequence, there was no local coordination of the finances provided to the various leaders by the Italians.

Indeed, as Azzam Bey was to observe in his memoirs, the Italians used the reliance of the Tripolitanian leadership on Italian patronage to sow dissension in the ranks of the Republic. He himself was offered a subsidy for his newspaper, al-Isra', which was the mouthpiece of the Republic. But deprived of Italian aid, but wany Libyan notables were deprived of any other source of funding for their local projects, did not. Ramadan al-Sawayhi, for example, was said to receive 'over a million francs monthly from the Italians for his aray' at the same time as his opponents were said to be in the secret pay of the Italians as well. The scarcity of resources and the desire of the notables for administrative posts and their attendant tax-collecting powers exacerbated internal disputes within the Republican leadership. Ahmad Murayyid of Tarhuna objected to placement of his district under the supervision of Misratah, which was governed by Ramadan al-Sawayhi, and Ramadan was shortly embroiled in a similar dispute with 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr of Warfalla. Ramadan is generally reported to have come from a long line of horse thieves - an accusation attributed by one writer to those who had not forgiven him his youthful pranks but he had a large and loyal following. A British report perhaps summarized best the general consensus in commenting that 'he is an extremely brave man and has a reputation for great charity with money (which is almost invariably stolen, to judge by what is known by his habits).' He was thought to be quite intelligent, with some education, in contrast to 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr, who was described by the British as 'one of the biggest black-guards living... practically the same age as Ramadan but has not got his brain.'

Scarce resources undermined the unity of the Republican leadership in the Jabal as well, although differing political aims may also have played some part in Sulayman al-Baruni's disenchantment with his Republican colleagues. He hotly contested the widely-held belief that he too received a monthly stipend from the Italians, particularly after the Ottoman government announced that since he was being paid by the Italians his salary as an Ottoman Senator
would be discontinued. Paid or not, he had rallied to the Italian cause after the promulgation of the Legge Fondamentale. He was thought to still harbor ambitions of an autonomous Ibad Berber province in the Jabal, and his adherence to the Tripoli Republic, with its Arab nationalist tendencies, was considered by the Italians to have been merely tactical.

For their part, the Italians had long entertained hopes of dividing the Berbers of the Jabal, who had shown themselves more favourable to Italian rule early in the occupation, from their Arab cousins. Perhaps in order to convince Baruni of the foolishness of continued attachment to the Republic, perhaps by chance - the Italian sources are not clear on this point - they named several of Baruni's opponents to administrative positions in the Jabal. Fighting followed. Accusations of diversion of funds as Baruni's supporters, notably Khalifa Ibn Askar, did battle against the local notables who disputed Baruni's claim to pre-eminence in the Jabal. The Italian government, whose aid was solicited by both sides, remained neutral at the outset but eventually decided to support Baruni 'to counterbalance the action' of the Tripoli Republic supporters in the Jabal, who despite Baruni's position on the Council of Four - were opposing his ambitions there.36 Elsewhere the Republic was in little better shape. During the fall of 1919 the Italians half-heartedly attempted to mediate disputes among its leaders, who were also at that time, of course, counsellors of the Italian government under the Legge Fondamentale. A quarrel between Ramadan al-Suwayhli and ‘Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr had broken out because the latter 'refused to accept the supremacy of Ramadan...and disapproved of his hostility toward the Sennussi. Also there were mutual accusations between Ramadan...and Abdul Nabi bil Kheir about accounts of expenditure of the large sums sent during the war from Constantinople.'37 The Italian efforts at mediation appeared successful at the time but by the spring of 1920, Ramadan had expelled the Italian advisor sent to Misratah under the terms of the Legge Fondamentale reforms and had several Italians put under arrest there. The British reported that Ramadan, 'an austere, incorruptible, religious man of strong character and intelligence, rules independently (with) about 10,000 armed men.'38 He shortly found himself the object of local, and, it was said, Italian intrigues to unseat him; as the British report had it -

Abdulkader Montasir, one of the three sons of Cavaliere Ufficiale Omar Pasha, who reside with their father in Tripoli, his two brothers and perhaps he himself and his father, being in Italian pay, has for the last month or two been going about in the Tarhuna-Orfella (Warfalla) region. He is engaged in commerce, but his movements have excited the suspicions of Ramadan Stewi (al-Suwayhli) between whom and the Montasir family, of whom he hanged two in 1917, and whose wide lands in the Misurata and Sirt regions he has ravaged within the last few years, there is a deadly feud. There is also a quarrel between Ramadan Stewi and Abdul Nabi bil Kheir, Chief of Orfella, the latest cause of quarrel being, I hear, the pretension of the latter to have two of his own family appointed calmacams or subgovernors in the Orfella region.39

In June, the Italians sent 'several motorwagon loads of arms and ammunition to Abdel Nabi Bilkhayr and Montasir,' and by August Ramadan felt obliged to launch a campaign against his opponents. His forces were beaten and he took refuge in the captured government garrison at Bani Walid in Warfalla territory. According to the British Consul, His enemies entered the castle. Abdel Kader ('Abd al-Qadiri Montasir) took Ramadan by the arm and was conducting his prisoner away when the latter tried to escape. Then it was that shots were fired from short range at Ramadan, and it is stated that some 150 bullets were fired at him.40

The Montasir family would thereafter flood the Italian Colonial Ministry with requests that they be compensated for this service to Italy while denying that 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr should be equally rewarded.41

THE GHARYAN CONFERENCE AND THE CENTRAL REFORM BOARD - THE END OF THE REPUBLIC

The Republican leadership, reduced by one, but with the still-active support of Azzam Bey, called a general meeting in Gharyan shortly after the Accord of al-Rajma, granting Idris the title of Amir, was announced in the fall of 1920. Baruni was invited
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but refused to attend, saying that his Ottoman citizenship precluded his appearance. In fact, the situation in the Jabal had seriously deteriorated. The Republic's leadership was to accuse the Italians of stirring up Berber- Arabic animosity, the Italians' perspective was articulated by a usually unsympathetic French observer:

Khalifa ben Askar...even being Ibadi, had with him as well orthodox (Suni), Berbers or Arabs, the solidarity of tribe and the identity of interests against our regime in Libya to argue that having until then attenuated the difference of rite. But at that moment, another motive came into play. The confederates (leaders of the Republic) hated in Khalifa ben Askar the friend of the Italians. To better combat him they called up religious hatreds.

Whoever was at fault, the battles in the Jabal were to serve no purpose but that of the Italians. The fighting developed into a full-scale civil war during the first several months of 1921 and by that summer most of the Berber populations had taken refuge on the Italian flag. Baruni was blamed for the disorders by many of the Berbers, according to Italian reports, and he was hated by the Republican leaders. In November 1921 he left Libya.

With the troubles in the Jabal coming to a head, and realizing that internal discord was weakening the Republic's united front, the Gharyan Conference once again reorganized the structures designed to represent Tripolitania. The Republican leaders had given up hope that the Legge Fondamentale - still only a paper agreement - would be instituted, nor did they seem to think that its eventual application would any longer profit them. The conferences resolved that a single Muslim ruler be designated to govern the country but they named no individual. The Italians assumed that they intended the Sanusi Amir of Cyrenaica, Idris, a possibility they viewed with alarm. Zawi claims they had no particular person in mind, and British reports appear to confirm this, citing speculation that the position might be offered to such diverse personages as Baruni, which seems very unlikely, 'an Egyptian or Turkish prince' or 'a Senussi sheikh'.

The Conference also elected a fourteen-member government, known as the Central Reform Board, with

Ahmad Murayyid as President and Azzam Bey as counselor, and arranged to send a delegation to Rome to inform the Italian government of its new position. The delegation was led by Khalid al-Qarqani, a 'political agitator' who had been held by the Italians in compulsory residence in Italy during World War I. The British had earlier reported that his collaboration with Azzam Bey and Ramadan al-Suwayhli was 'one of the most dangerous factors in the country'.

The delegation led by Qarqani was followed to Rome by an 'anti-delegation' organized by the Italian authorities against outside interference in Libya. Like their nationalist counterparts in Tunisia, the Republicans found a sympathetic hearing from the metropolitan left; on the eve of the Fascist takeover in Rome, however, this support was little more than the kiss of death. After about nine months in Italy both delegations returned to Libya, although Qarqani went to Moscow to attend the Muslim Revolutionary Congress organized by Young Turk Enver Pasha before returning home.

By the time the Republican delegation returned to Libya, the Italians were negotiating a new agreement with the Sanusiyyah in Cyrenaica. This agreement, known as Bu Maryam and signed in November 1921, represented what proved to be the last Italian attempt to negotiate control of the eastern province. In it, 'mixed camps' of Sanusi and Italian troops were organized and made jointly responsible for the security of the countryside. In light of the deep-seated animosity of the two sides, the arrangement was, as Evans-Pritchard rightly notes, 'fantastic', and it was destined to be short-lived. Its very signing suggested, however, the importance of British protection of the Sanusiyyah. The Republic's leaders, fresh from their failure to win support for their cause in Italy and concerned that their internal cohesion was being seriously eroded by Italian promises and payoffs to those who would
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defect, saw little hope for their own survival except in joining their compatriots under the British protective umbrella. At the end of that year, representatives of the Gharian Conference met in Sirt with delegates from the Sanusiyyah. With Ramadan al-Suwayhli dead and Sulayman al-Baruni out of the country, the major opponents of Sanusi influence in Tripolitania were gone, and the conference at Sirt were able to agree on a proclamation announcing their intention to elect a Muslim Amir to represent the entire country. The text of the agreement also declared that Tripolitania and Cyrenaica would "unite against our enemy, who is trying to seize our country by force and against those who are trying to sow dissension." Although the agreement did not specify that Idris would become the Amir, it was commonly understood - by the Italians as well as the Libyans. When the Tripolitanian delegates returned to Misrata, they found the city under siege. A new Italian Governor, Giuseppe Volpi - later to be known as Conte Volpi di Misurata - had lost patience with attempts to govern through the Libyans, and had made known the new Italian policy by attacking the town.

Negotiations with Volpi in March 1922 broke down after the Central Reform Board refused to discuss Tripolitanian issues separately from Cyrenaica, arguing that the regions had been ruled as a single province under the Ottomans. Unable to come to an agreement with the Italians, the Reform Board leaders sent a delegation to Cyrenaica to request that Idris assume the Amirate of all Libya. Idris at first balked; as Evans-Pritchard puts it, 'To have replied 'yes' would have brought him into conflict with Italy. To have replied 'no' would have alienated him from those Tripolitanian Arabs who genuinely sympathized with the Sanusiyyah.'

By October 1922, however, it was apparent that conflict with Italy was unavoidable; the Sanusiyyah was going to lose its special prerogatives no matter what position Idris took. He therefore accepted a renewed request that he become the country's Amir and fled to Egypt, where he would remain until 1943. This was precisely the excuse the Italians were looking for to justify a military operation, and by the spring of 1923, as the Fascists consolidated their power at home, they abrogated all accords and agreements with the Libyans and began the military reconquest of the colony.

By 1923 the Tripoli Republic no longer existed. 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam Bey had left for Egypt with Idris and he won a seat in the Egyptian Parliament in 1924. Ramadan al-Suwayhli was dead. Sulayman al-Baruni, who had left Libya in 1921, was expelled from Tunisia as an undesirable agitator, traveled to France, Egypt, Turkey and Mecca before settling in 1924 in Oman, where he was appointed Finance Minister. 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr continued armed resistance in southern Tripolitania and Fazzan until 1927, when he took refuge in southern Algeria. He was reported to have died of thirst in the French Sudan in 1930. Ahmad Murayyid left for Egypt before 1924; he settled in Fayyum, where he acquired land with Ahmad al-Suwayhli, Ramadan's brother. Khalid al-Qarqani left for Egypt as well, although by 1935 he was in government service in Saudi Arabia.

The experiment in independence or even local autonomy had failed. Wilsonian self-determination had not been meant for Libya any more than for the rest of the Arab world, and bereft of international support, the Republic was divided and its followers ruled by the Italians until the Second World War. The Republic's history had not been a happy one and those of its adherents who took up the cause of Libyan independence in exile and after World War II chose not to revive it. Italian policy changed and after the military reconquest of the country would deprive the Libyans of most of their educated elite, making the ambitions of the Republic seem like empty pretensions in what was among the poorest countries in the world at independence.

Nationalism, Arab unity, anti-imperialism are, however, nothing new in Libya. That the Libyans in exile took up residence throughout the Arab world suggests the measure of their identity; indeed, as the internal disputes demonstrated, local attachments were as likely to be submerged - when they were submerged at all - in Arab rather than Libyan affiliations. It was the Europeans - the British and Italians - rather than the Libyans who insisted on Azzam Bey's Egyptian nationality, and the Libyan exiles themselves scattered to the four corners of the Arab world.

For the leaders of the Tripoli Republic and their intellectual heirs, nationalism was to be intimately associated with a profound distrust of the West and a broad definition of anti-imperialism. The willingness of the British to support the Sanusiyyah was eventually to secure the throne of independent Libya for the Order's leader, Idris. The Tripoli Republic went unrecognized in Europe both during its lifetime and thereafter; permitting

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the Italians to manipulate its leaders financial dependency then and allowing the West to ignore its very existence later. Yet its aims - notably independence, self-determination, anti-imperialism, and Arab revival - as well as its weaknesses - particularly organizational instability - foreshadowed those of the government which succeeded the Sanusi monarchy in independent Libya. The observer of contemporary politics in Libya neglects the country's history to his detriment, for few of the present political goals are without precedent.

REFERENCES

5. ASMAI 150/16.
9. On this battle, see among others, Evans-Pritchard, op.cit. p.122.
10. de Leone, op.cit. p.429.
12. ASMAI 150/4 January 1913.
14. This incident is treated from the Sanusi point of view by Evans-Pritchard, op.cit. p.123.
15. Zawi, op.cit., passim provides an interpretation more sympathetic to Ramadan.
18. On these negotiations, see Evans-Pritchard, op.cit. pp.141-44.
20. PRO, FO 371:3806, June 1920.
21. ibid.
22. Evans-Pritchard, op.cit. p.120.
23. This appears to be why de Leone, op.cit suggest he was acting at British direction, a possibility for which there is no evidence. (p.480) Evans-Pritchard, op.cit., claims he was in Libya at the instigation of the Turks and Germans. (p.147) Adrian Pelt agrees with Zawi's estimation that he was motivated 'above all by a strong sense of Arab nationalism' (Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization) Yale University Press (New Haven) 1970, p.14, a conclusion borne out by Azzam's memoirs (Safahat min al-mudhakarat al-sirriyyah li-zawal amin lil-jami'h al-arabiyyah) 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam (Pages from the private memoirs of the first Secretary General of the Arab League, Abd al-Rahman Azzam') ed. by Jamil Arif, Vol.1, al-maktab al-misri al-hadith, (Cairo) n.d. Probably the most detailed Italian account of this period, upon which de Leone draws heavily, is Ottone Gabelli, La Tripolitania dalle fine della guerra mondiale all avvenuto de Fascismo (A.Airoldi Editore (Milan) 1941.}

27. A translation of the announcement of the Association's establishment, from which this quotation is drawn, is at PRO, FO 371:3806, 22 Feb 1920.
29. ibid.
30. A translation of the announcement of the Association's establishment, from which this quotation is drawn, is at PRO, FO 371:3805, 26 Sept 1919.
32. Evans-Pritchard, op.cit. p.149.
34. PRO, FO 371:3805, 19 August 1919.
35. Pushaykhah, pp.29.35.
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9/1.2-5/3. Captured British intelligence reports, 26 April 1918.

34. Rodd Balek, *op.cit.* reproduces a letter Baruni published in a Tunisian newspaper denying allegations that he was in the pay of the Italians. (p.116) His denials appear to be at least partly true, the Italians were paying his rent in Tripoli, but he was not receiving a stipend; the Italian government did, however, promise to replace his Ottoman salary if it was discontinued. (ASMAI 150/4)

35. Baruni's interest in an autonomous province in the Jabal al-Gharb was interpreted by the Italians to be motivated by ethnic identity, that is, Berber separatism, but it seems more likely that Baruni envisioned his province in political and religious terms, as a revival of the medieval Ibadi Rustamiyyah state which had once ruled there. Since most of the Berbers of the Jabal were of the Ibadi sect of Islam, in contrast to the Sunni Islam of the Arabs and Turks - including the Sanusiyah - the religious and ethnic distinction was never entirely clear. The religious tenets of Ibadi Islam were at variance with those of the Sanusiyah, and this contributed to opposition to the Order in the Jabal. Baruni's background and role in the Libyan resistance is treated in Zawi, *op.cit.* and some of his voluminous writings have been collected by his daughter Z'ima al-Baruni in a volume entitled *Sahafat khalidah min al-jihad* ('Immortal pages from the holy war').

36. On these events, see ASMAI 150/4.
37. PRO, PO 371:3805, 19 November 1919.
38. PRO, PO 371:3806, 4 May 1920.
40. PRO, PO 371:4888, 2 September 1920.
41. Indeed there was considerable dispute about who should be accorded responsibility for Ramadan's death. See ASMAI 150/13.
42. PRO, PO 371:6168, 6 Jan 1921.
44. ASMAI 150/4, 17 November 1921.
46. PRO, PO 371:3806, 22 Feb 1920.
47. Evans-Pritchard, *op.cit.* p.147.
50. this text, reproduced in Zawi, *op.cit.* p.458 et seq., is translated into English in full.