

## A Modern Anabasis : The official diary of Colonel Garioni, the commander of the Italian contingent in China (1900-1901)

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**A MODERN ANABASIS :  
THE OFFICIAL DIARY OF COLONEL GARIONI,  
THE COMMANDER OF THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT  
IN CHINA  
(1900-1901)**

BY  
IGNAZIO DANDOLO

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INTRODUCTION

Italian military regulations specify that in time of war the commander of the unit in action keep a diary. In it must be described briefly the orders received or given, the military operations executed, the troops that effectively took part in the operation, and the daily meteorological situation with its variations. In virtue of this regulation we possess the historical diary of Colonel Vincenzo Garioni which is deposited in the archives of the General Staff of the Italian army in the Folder No. 4, Section No. 4. Before proceeding to a detailed examination of this document it is appropriate to present the situation of China with respect to the west in the last years of the nineteenth century.

Three factors characterized this period. The first is the renewed vigor of Christian proselytism, thanks to the arrival of a great number of Protestant missionaries and to the multiplication of Catholic missions.

The second is the absolutely new factor of the German presence on the Pacific scene.

And the third is the unexpected appearance of a newly composed secret society that, like a meteor, appears on the horizon of Chinese history only to disappear as quickly, leaving no trace.

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

Judging by the gift Pope Leon XIII sent to the Empress Tzu-hsi in 1898 it would seem that the highest religious authorities considered a massive Chinese conversion to Christianity to be imminent. The gift was a ceramic vase on which

was reproduced the famous painting by Giulio Romano representing the victory of Constantine over Massenzio.

If you add to this the agreement signed on March 15, 1899, it is clear the religious hierarchy firmly believed they were solidly implanted in China. This accord reached with the Chinese government established a system of equivalences between the Christian religious authorities and the Chinese civil authorities. Thus a bishop had the same rank and privileges as the governor of a province and a missionary the same as those of a district magistrate. Behind this formally perfect façade, however, there existed a Chinese reality in which the foreign religious authorities as well as the Chinese converts were classed together and considered a foreign body in the Chinese social fabric.

The greater the feeling of separation between these two worlds, the closer the ties became between the religious authorities and their followers. In fact it was current practice to consider that Chinese converts could claim the privileges reserved to foreign priests based on the agreements in force between China and the foreign powers that permitted foreigners not to be subject to Chinese legislation. There was interference by the missionaries in the lawsuits of their converts: the clergy would exert pressure upon the local magistrate who, *pro bono pacis*, in many cases quietly settled the case in favor of the Christian regardless of the merits of the case. This of course augmented the animosity of non-Christian Chinese toward the converts.

The prospect of a rich harvest in the vineyards of our Lord in China had led to quite an increase in the number of Christian missionaries. In addition to the Protestant missionaries from the United States and England, there were German missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word.

The Society of the Divine Word, founded in 1875, was composed exclusively of Germans and Austrians. The Vicariat of Shantung was given to this Society in 1885 in the person of Jean Baptiste von Anzer. In 1886 Mgr. Anzer installed himself in Yen-Chou fu — the Kiang Province. Mgr. Anzer had the intention of constructing a Catholic church there.

The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs made the observation that the construction of a Catholic church in the city where Confucius is buried would mortally offend the Chinese people. The French legation, on which all Catholic missionaries in China depended, succeeded in stopping the project. But in 1896 the Emperor William II ordered the German legation in Peking to take the German missionaries operating in Shantung under its protection. Thus Bishop Anzer obtained the authority to open a Catholic mission in the city of Confucius and made a solemn entrance into the city on September 8th, day of the birth of the Madonna.

As fate would have it, two German missionaries, Fathers Henle and Nies, were killed by members of the secret society of the Big Knife November 1, 1897. Unknowingly these two humble servants of the Lord, in attaining the coveted crown of martyrdom, had at the same time opened the way for the German conquest of Shantung.

### THE TRIUMPH OF THE GERMAN WELTPOLITIK

The proud and extendable motto of the house of Hohenzollern "From the mountains to the sea" must have made a deep impression on young William II, the last emperor of this great house.

In fact, after the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, which gave him command of a larger coastal frontier, he began to think in terms of overseas. This in turn demanded a navy, an absolute necessity for dominating the seas.

On January 8th, 1899, the Emperor opened his heart to the French Ambassador to Germany, Marquis de Noailles, and said: "J'ai une flotte de commerce immense et pas deux bateaux pour la défendre." Then he continued: "L'avenir du commerce, ce n'est pas en Afrique. C'est en Chine et c'est pour ça que je suis allé et que je me suis installé à Kiaochow." The dispatch of the Marquis de Noailles, which is deposited in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the general dossier of correspondence with Germany for the period 1897-1903, reveals two things. On internal politics it shows the contrast between the Emperor and the Reichstag, which refused to approve the requested credits for the construction of a powerful navy; the second thing is the revelation of the personal role the Emperor played in directing German foreign policy in the Far East.

The versatility of William II shows in the field of art: not only is he a great art lover, but he himself paints. The painting entitled "Two German Battleships in the Tempest," dated 1895 and signed Kaiser Wilhelm II Imperator Rex, is indeed painted by him. His was the idea for another painting done by Herman Knachoss and entitled: "The Crusade of the Sister Nations of Europe." There one sees the above-mentioned sisters in warrior dress with arms in hand watching an archangel with a flaming sword indicating faraway regions devastated by the Asiatic fury. This famous painting symbolizing the Yellow Peril was sent as a gift from William II to the Russian Emperor Nicholas II after he had added with his own hand the following: "The people of Europe protect your most sacred rights."

From a political point of view, the gift of this picture was a clear message that Germany did not oppose a Russian advance into Manchuria. To contribute on his side to the opposition to this Yellow Peril, Germany had to be present in the Pacific. To this end William II started his policy of territorial installation in the Pacific. As was rightly noted by M. August Gerard, the French Minister in Peking writing to his Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1887: "Tant que l'Allemagne n'a pas au moins un pied-à-terre sur la côte de Chine, elle ne pourrait être tenue en Extrême-Orient pour une puissance politique."

Certainly William II was fully aware of the necessity of having a space on the Chinese coast, and his ministers in Peking gave a lot of thought to finding some way to respond to this necessity.

In 1897 the German Minister in Peking hesitated no longer and requested from the Tsungli Yamen the lease of Kiaochow as coaling station. The Chinese government did not give its consent but William II was determined to occupy Kiaochow. With this in mind he paid a visit in 1897 to Emperor Nicholas II in St. Petersburg to get the agreement of Russia.

Then by a stroke of destiny two German missionaries were assassinated in Shantung on November 1, 1897. On November 6th, William II gave the order for three German warships that were in the port of Shanghai to proceed to and to occupy the bay of Kiaochow. November 14th the German Rear Admiral Diederich occupied the bay of Kiaochow and the town of Tsing-tao.

William II went to Kiel to greet his brother and pronounced the famous speech "of the iron fist": "I am conscious that it is my duty to extend and enlarge what my predecessors have bequeathed to me... May everyone in those distant regions be aware that the German Michael has firmly planted his shield with the sign of the

German eagle upon the soil of China in order once and for all to give his protection to all who ask for it... Should anyone try to detract from our just rights or to injure us, then up and at him with your mailed fist."

In the next two years Germany organized its naval base in Tsing-tao and the nearby territory, which was in the region of Shantung. In this same region the secret society of the Boxers developed its activity, a coincidence that was not lost on the vigilant Bebel who brought it to the attention of his colleagues of the Reichstag. This activity of the Boxers, which ended with the siege of the foreign legations in Peking in July 1900, compelled Germany to intervene again militarily in China. The German contingent left from Bremenhaven July 27, 1900, and William II gave a farewell speech on the basis of which this expedition is known as the "Hunnenkrieg." "When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Just as the Huns a thousand years ago under the leadership of Etzel (Attila) gained a reputation by virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China, that no Chinese will ever again dare to look askance at a German."

Faced with the incredibly savage violence of this speech Bebel, ever Bebel, raised his voice in solemn protest in the Reichstag. Chancellor von Bulow tried to excuse the Emperor saying that, carried away by a passionate impulse, William II had not spoken like a diplomat but as a soldier to soldiers.

Bebel replied with a phrase worthy of Plutarch: "An Emperor should not speak either as a diplomat nor as a soldier. He should speak as Emperor."

### THE BOXER METEOR

As Bebel pointed out in the Reichstag, at the same time as the German military occupation of Tsing-tao there was a corresponding rise in activity of a new secret society called the Boxers. One of the great protagonists of Chinese history, the General Yüan Shih-kai, was governor of Shantung province at the time. His brother, a career military man, arrested a group of Boxers who were shouting the slogan: "Vive the Ming, down with the Ching."

On the basis of the article relative to the crime against the security of the state that figures in the Ta-Ching lü-li, the Chinese penal code in force at the time, Yüan shik-kai condemned the head of the group and his accomplices to capital punishment, exactly as prescribed in the code. And then in celebration of this event he composed the following poem:

In the summer of the 22nd year of Kuang-sü the  
Sword Society suddenly sprang into existence.  
The rebel leaders were Liu-Shih Tuan and Tsao Te-li.  
One morning the leaders were arrested  
They suffered death by decapitation.  
Afterward the Fist Society started, with  
Leaders Yu Ching-hiu and  
Chen Hung-teng  
They were decapitated and their heads exposed in Chih-ping.

In view of this poor showing the sponsors of this secret society with an unknown past found it preferable to transfer their activity from Shantung to the nearby

province of Che-li, that is to say, near Peking. In addition they changed the slogan to be used to: "Vive the Ching, death to the foreigners."

Paul Pelliot who was in Peking in 1900, in the *Carnets de Péking, 1899-1901*, p. 45, defines the Boxers as an "association d'hystériques, d'hallucinés, de convulsionnaires, de fanatiques et de fumistes." This Boxer organization started its plan of action with the objective of destabilizing the legal Chinese authority, action which would subsequently justify a foreign intervention in China. The timing of the terrorist operation was perfect.

In January 1900 an English missionary was killed. Shortly after, 70 Chinese Christians were massacred in a village church near Pao-ting fu. There followed the plundering of German and American missions complete with killings of Chinese priests. On June 20th the German Ambassador Baron von Ketteler was killed by a bullet in his neck as he got out of his portantina, an execution done by a Manchu soldier named En-hai.

This assassination was followed by the siege of the legations, a siege conducted in such a way as to promote doubts in the minds of the foreign diplomats on post in Tokyo. In fact the Minister of France in Tokyo, Harmand, on July 14, 1900, sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Delcassé, the following note, which is to be found in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the title: Japon, Correspondance Politique, Dossier Général II Oct. 1899-Oct. 1900, p. 66: "14 juillet le gouvernement allemand nomme et fait partir le successeur du Baron von Ketteler. Tout le monde s'étonne. On aurait mieux compris la nomination d'un chargé d'affaires *ad interim*."

Il y a dans cette question du canon et de menace toujours suspendu de bombardement un mystère bien surprenant.

Pourquoi on n'a pas tiré à coups de canon tout de suite sur les légations? Il n'est pas admissible que cela ait été impossible de tous les points de l'enceinte Tartare. Il faut admettre ou que les rebelles sont loin de tenir toute cette enceinte et qu'ils ne sont pas fort nombreux, ou que l'intention de leurs chefs a été jusqu'ici de prendre les Ministres vivants et non de les massacrer peu à peu, ce qui arriverait certainement si l'on soumettait les légations au feu continu de quelques pièces d'artillerie, même d'ancien modèle et tirant simplement à boulets pleins."

The 15th of August the legations were liberated due to the operation of the Indian soldiers of the English contingent. The allied troops established order in Peking and with the method of the *strafenexpeditionen* introduced by the German troops eradicated totally the Boxer Society from the history of China.

### ITALY'S DIFFICULT POSITION

The position of Italy in the field of foreign affairs was very delicate at this time, January 1, 1900. The memory of the military defeat at Adua in Africa was still very vivid. Even more so was the feeling of humiliation suffered on the diplomatic level with the rejection pure and simple on the part of China of the Italian request for the cession of the bay of San Men in Chekiang in February 1899.

It seemed only good sense for the Italian government to keep a low profile on the diplomatic front while waiting for better times. And it seemed that was the

attitude adopted in the first half of 1900 by the Italian government with regard to what was being called "the events in China."

Two telegrams exchanged between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Italian legation in Peking clearly show the cautiousness with which the problem was treated. The 28th of January the Minister of Foreign Affairs Visconti Venosta sent the following telegram: "The telegraph agencies are announcing serious events there. Please telegraph notice about the situation and about the security of foreigners." To which the Minister of Italy Salvago-Raggi answered: "For the moment the sole event is the decree naming the Hereditary Prince. At present the security of foreigners is no more threatened than it is ordinarily."

On the military front there was equal caution. The only measure taken was the nomination of Rear Admiral Count Candiani as commander of the Italian Naval Forces in the Far East. Then in the second semester of 1900 everything was precipitated and Italy found itself participating in the military expedition against China with a contingent of soldiers. Why?

The answer to this question can be found in a careful reading of the diplomatic documents relative to the events in China in 1900 presented to the Camera dei Deputati by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prinetti. One finds that on June 15, 1900, the Italian Ambassador in Berlin told the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs that the foreign press was accusing Germany of having hidden designs on China. If Italy had been in a position to develop an independent foreign policy, information of this type would logically have led at least to a watchful period in regard to the Chinese question. But Italy had no space to maneuver. The Treaty of the Triple Alliance concluded in 1882 between Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary bound her to German policy. So it was inevitable that in these same documents one reads the following declaration made in regard to the Chinese subject by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Visconti Venosta: "Italy must maintain her role of Great Power and proceed in agreement with Germany. Therefore Italy must contribute to establishing order in China with a military participation and must maintain her troops in China for some time after, together with those of other nations to assure the maintenance of the reestablished order."

To really understand how limited was the Italian adhesion to the idea of an international expedition it is enough to compare the above statement to the position taken by France, which we can consider as expressed in the message of the President of the French Republic Loubet to the troops departing for China under the command of General Voyron. The President says: "... a campaign made necessary by the violation of our rights, the ignorance of our legitimate interests and the brutal assault given on all that represents civilization and progress in China."

At first the Italian government decided to participate in the International Expeditionary Corps with a battalion of Bersaglieri under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Salsa. Naturally, the powerful ally did not approve and Italy was forced to augment its participation. In the acts of the Ministry of War one can read that on July 5th the Ministry informed its Military Commanders that it was the intention of the Italian government to participate in the International Expedition with a regiment of infantry and invited these Commanders to have ready the contingents necessary for the constitution of such regiment, this regiment to be officially known as the Royal Troops in the Far East. As head of this Royal Troop was nominated Colonel Vincenzo Garioni who, to assume this new appointment, left the commandment of the 24th Infantry Regiment.

## THE OFFICIAL DIARY

For all overseas operations undertaken by Italy after the foundation of the monarchy the principal logistic base was always the port of Naples. Therefore it was at Naples that the expeditionary corps to China was formed from the 14th to the 16th of July, 1900. The corps was made up of the following sections including officers and soldiers:

- Headquarters
- 1 infantry battalion
- 1 Bersaglieri battalion
- 1 machine gun company
- 1 detachment of engineers
- 1 camp hospital of 50 beds
- 1 company of assistance

Three ships of the Società di Navigazione Generale Italiana were designated for the transportation of the expeditionary corps. They were the Singapore, 3,685 tons, the Marco Minghetti, 2,518 tons, and the Giava, 2,578 tons. The first two were made ready for troop transportation while the third was for the transport of the horses.

July 16th Colonel Vincenzo Garioni took command of the expeditionary corps and as his first act set up the plan for the embarkation of men, horses, and war material suggested by experience and by the circumstances.

Four pages of perfect calligraphy written by the clerk of the expeditionary corps specify with extreme precision the mode of embarkment. This can be found in the same Folder No. 4 which contains the Historical Diary of Colonel Garioni. Also in this folder is to be found an agenda indicating that the embarkation is to be spread over three days, July 18, 19 and 20. However, because of "an unexpected advance in the date of departure" (Garioni's words), the embarkation is completed on July 19th at 16 hours. The reason for this acceleration was that King Umberto I, who was supposed to start his vacation in the Villa Reale at Monza, decided instead to pass in review the Expeditionary Force on July 19th and afterward to be present at the embarkation.

So July 19th was the start of this long anabasis of modern times which is described in 311 pages, impeccably written by the military clerk for each day, and each day signed by Colonel Garioni.

While the three Italian ships, notwithstanding the fact they are capable of different speeds, all set sail together from the port of Naples, in the distant port of Bremenhaven a new invincible armada was converging with the following composition:

- 2 infantry brigades
- 1 artillery regiment
- 1 cavalry regiment
- 1 battalion of Pioneers
- 1 battery of howitzers
- 1 hospital section
- 1 column of artillery ammunition
- 1/2 column of howitzer ammunition
- 2 columns food supplies
- 1 column camp ovens



The total number in this expeditionary force is 500 officers and 11,000 soldiers — information sent to the Italian Ministry of War by the Military Attaché in Berlin.

The force was accompanied by a number of medical personnel sufficient to install a hospital aboard a hired ship which will be good company for the hospital ship offered to the English Expeditionary Corps by a group of Indian maharajahs.

The expeditionary force was to be transported by ten ships which were not to leave in one convoy but would leave port in four groups, divided according to velocity. Their arrival was predicted for September 24th, but this apparent lateness did not preoccupy the German command (according to the Italian Military Attaché) because the rainy season would prevent any military operations toward the interior of China before the first days of October.

In order to speed up the description it seems more convenient to divide the story into five distinct parts as follows :

The Voyage  
 The Landing  
 Military Operations  
 The Winter in Peking  
 Going Home

## THE VOYAGE

The text of the diary for July 20th, first real day of the trip, has this to say: Navigation in the Tyrrhenian Sea, telegram to the Queen for her birthday. Clear sky, calm sea, temperature 23°. From the 21st day the diary contains information relative to the number of sick soldiers, which is already twenty. The commander is well aware of the dangers to the soldiers' health of this long uncomfortable voyage and proceeds to the vaccination of everyone.

In the meantime the temperature has risen to 32° and with that the number of sick, as well as the seriousness of their complaints. Thus at Aden on July 29th three soldiers are taken off the ship and put in the local international hospital.

Also at Aden Colonel Garioni, by way of a Reuter's dispatch, learns of the killing of King Umberto I.

The distance Naples-Aden has taken nine days. Leaving Aden they proceed to the Indian Ocean. No Italian military transport ship has ever had any experience with this ocean. The technical knowledge of the Italian military supply office must date from that acquired on the occasion of the occupation of Eritrea.

Colonel Garioni learns at his expense that the meteorological conditions of the Indian Ocean are different from those of the Red Sea. The food provisions stored in the holds of the *Singapore* and the *Marco Minghetti* are supposed to last for a thirty-day voyage and the first thirty days in China. In fact, the eleventh day they discover that the flour stored in cloth bags has started to ferment due to the humidity. It should have been stored in tight metal containers. A certain quantity of sacks of flour are put up on the deck to expose them to the air. Doing this of course limits the free space needed to permit the troops to participate in some military exercises. These exercises are considered necessary for the better cohesion of the troops that had been put together, as we shall see later, in a rather heterogeneous manner.

Finally the Singapore and the Marco Minghetti arrive at Singapore August 12th. The third ship, the Giava, which had been prepared for the transport of horses, arrives in Singapore August 22nd. We learn of a dramatic situation aboard, where typhoid has broken out, causing the death of one soldier.

In Singapore Colonel Garioni learns from the local newspapers that the allied troops already in China are marching toward Peking with the purpose of breaking the siege of the Boxers around the foreign legations.

But in Singapore on August 12th Colonel Garioni has other things to think about. He has seven soldiers admitted to the international hospital there, two of whom will die.

August 13th aboard ship there is the ceremony of the oath of allegiance to the new King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III.

At Singapore the temperature rises. Aboard the ships all the technical improvements installed by the Società Generale di Navigazione Italiana to improve the ventilation in the hold and the cabins cease to function properly.

August 14th the commander of the Royal Ship Stromboli, which is part of the Italian Naval Forces in the Far East, takes command of the convoy, which heads for Hong Kong, arriving August 20th. There Colonel Garioni learns that the foreign ministers and all the diplomatic personnel are safe and sound, thanks to the entrance into Peking of the Indian troops.

At this point it might have been opportune for the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs to correctly inform the Commander of the Italian Expeditionary Force, Colonel Garioni, of the real military situation — the telegram received from the Italian Minister to Peking Salvago-Raggi reads like this: "The foreign troops entered Peking today without encountering resistance."

August 22nd the convoy leaves Hong Kong. The same day the Commander of the Stromboli, which should have escorted the convoy in the Yellow Sea, leaves to take on coal in the port of Chefoo, leaving the rest up to Colonel Garioni. After seven days of navigation the convoy arrives in the bay of Taku where they find all the other ships of the Italian Naval Force under the command of Rear Admiral Count Candiani.

## THE LANDING

On arrival in Singapore Colonel Garioni had been informed that the command of the Royal Troops in the Far East was hierarchically under the command of the Italian Navy in the Pacific. The first encounter or effort at collaboration between the two commands had been none too happy, as we have seen. The Stromboli, that was to have escorted the Italian Expeditionary Force in the Yellow Sea, had to leave them for lack of fuel.

The second collaboration, absolutely essential, to wit the disembarkation of men and equipment onto Chinese land, is even less happy. The Italian naval forces, which consist of the ships Fieramosca, Elba, Calabria and Stromboli, are in no way equipped for the operation.

A certain time has passed when Rear Admiral Candiani finally succeeds in acquiring a tugboat from an American civilian for the round sum of 100,000 lire. In the meantime, according to the diary, the English are the first to give a helping

hand to the Italians by putting at their disposal a landing raft with the related tugboat. This permits the men to go ashore from the Singapore.

Then it is the Russians' turn to lend a raft and a distiller for drinking water, because those of the Italian Expeditionary Corps are in the bottom of the hold — this thanks to the hurried embarkation in Naples due to the King's presence.

Finally, in the spirit of war comradeship, the German corps of engineers arrives, those that had left from Genoa on a fast ship for China in order to be in the bay of Taku before the arrival of the German Expeditionary Force. Once ashore the trials and tribulations of the Expeditionary Corps continue.

Contrary to the other nations that are all logistically and territorially well settled on Chinese soil, Italy does not possess a square meter on which to install its soldiers. So thanks to the good-heartedness of the provisional interallied government of Tientsin the Italian soldiers are billeted in the buildings of the Hospice for Poor Widows of Tientsin, and obtain, out of pure Christian charity, the possibility of installing their camp hospital in the Protestant church of the English concession.

On September 6th a ship arrives in the bay of Taku with a load of cigarettes for the Italian Royal Troops in East Asia. Naturally, and one can say, almost fatally, the cigarettes are moldy. The State Tobacco Company in Rome didn't know that in the Far East cigarettes have to be packed in aluminum boxes hermetically sealed.

Still on the subject of landing it should be said that Colonel Garioni was spared the pains of also landing coolies. The Italian Supreme Military Command could never have imagined that an efficient military expedition in China necessitated the command of a large quantity of auxiliary workers who are known there as coolies.

In the Report of General Voyron on the expedition in China, on page 74 is to be found a list of the total number of coolies (3,758) that had been landed in China as of September 21, 1900, divided as follows:

England .....	2,900
Japan .....	700
France .....	505
Germany .....	223
Italy .....	0

For England, France and Japan it was a matter of continuing a military tradition that had already been put to the test in the wars that these three nations had already fought with China. For Germany it was a beginning.

The German organizational capacity had resolved the problem with regular contracts passed in Japan thanks to which they had their necessary quota of coolies at the price of four marks per day. Another stroke of German organizational genius was to not transport horses from Germany together with the troops.

Having discovered that horses imported from Germany into Shantung could not stand the extreme variations of climate in China, the German General Staff decided to acquire the horses necessary for the cavalry regiment and for the transport of artillery and supplies in California, Australia, Argentina and Chile. For that purpose missions composed of veterinarians and army officers were sent to the above named countries to select horses for mounting and for hauling. This plan was meant to function, and did function with the same precision as that of von Moltke when he gathered together by train the troops that were to win the battle of Sadova.

The only slight defect in this gigantic organization was that Field Marshal

Count von Walderssee and his brilliant General Staff, in order to pass in review the allied troops on their arrival in Shanghai, were forced to accept the kind loan of the horses of the Indian Cavalry Regiment of Bombay.

### AUTONOMOUS MILITARY OPERATIONS

In order to have a better perspective of the purely military accounts of Colonel Garioni's diary two extra pieces of information are needed. The first is represented by the following table which is to be found in the report of General Voyron, the Commander of the French Expeditionary Force in China.

	Officers	Soldiers	Coolies
Germany.....	391	7,787	223
England.....	293	8,058	2,300
Austria-Hungary.....	25	374	30
United States.....	181	5,427	0
France.....	228	6,347	505
Italy.....	96	2,445	0
Japan.....	644	20,290	700
Russia.....	370	15,200	0
Total.....	2,230	65,928	3,758

The second piece of information is the report that the Colonel sent to the Ministry of War and which can be found in the Folder No. 10, Fascicule 30. Garioni says that there is little to be heard from the regular Chinese troops and the information on the Boxers is even more vague. He adds that after the regular Chinese troops did intervene, the importance of the Boxers declined and has practically disappeared.

From the first we learn that the Italian Expeditionary Corps, apart from the Austro-Hungarian representation, is the smallest military unit in action and therefore *taillable et corvéable à merci* by the other more powerful members of the coalition.

The real problems that Colonel Garioni has to face in China are finding the combustible necessary for preparing the food of the soldiers and the sad state of their uniforms after their long journey with the addition of the rain once they had arrived in Tientsin. The combustible problem can be solved by gathering the wooden debris left in the ruins of the houses destroyed by the bombardment of the allied fleet. For the problem of the uniforms the Colonel will not allow any soldier out if his uniform is not in decent condition.

While the Italian Expeditionary Corps waits for someone to decide on their departure for Peking to contribute to the maintenance of the reestablished order, Colonel Garioni is contacted by the English General Dorward. He would like the cooperation of the Italian troops in a punitive operation against the Boxers. Colonel Garioni accepts to participate in the action with three infantry companies, a company of Bersaglieri and a detachment of sailors.

The military objective proposed by the English General is the conquest and the destruction of the city of Ta-liu, guilty of having given asylum to some Boxers during the month of July 1900, some of whom are still present. While the Italian and English troops advance the Boxers in question disappear leaving no trace. They reach the city, which the English General has decided to burn, but first he

authorizes the troops to plunder it. The Chinese population is evacuated. The pillage of the town is rapidly and efficiently done, after which the entire city is burned down by the Madras Indians. In another report to the Ministry Garioni expresses his disapproval for the savagery of such an action and expresses the fear that such an example of cruelty may have a negative influence on the military discipline of his men.

Then moved by a presentiment, he requests that he be sent the matriculation papers of all his soldiers. As it takes 81 days between the sending of a letter to Italy and the arrival of an answer in China, more than three months will pass before Colonel Garioni sees these matriculation papers. This will be the bitter tea of Colonel Garioni in China.

On September 20th the Russian commander requests the cooperation of the Italian troops in taking the forts of Pei-tang. Remembering the logistical help of the Russians at the moment of landing, Colonel Garioni agrees. The Italian troops are present at the Russian artillery bombardment but do not observe any answer on the part of the Chinese, who have evacuated the zone for some time already.

The only wounded among the allied soldiers are caused by mine explosions, mines the Chinese had planted in front of the forts.

#### THE MILITARY OPERATIONS UNDER GERMAN COMMAND

The diary notes on September 25th the order received from the Commander of the Italian Navy to put the Royal Troops under the command of Field Marshal Count Alfred von Waldersee, named by William II Supreme Commander of the International Expeditionary Corps in China. At that moment Colonel Garioni does not yet know that the French and American governments have not accepted to put their troops under the command of von Waldersee.

What the Colonel does know is that he and his soldiers are lodged in the Hospice of Poor Widows while General von Waldersee is lodged in a splendid Western style villa. Besides that, he learns, by way of the Italian Colonel Enrico de Chaurand de St. Eustache, that Count von Waldersee is surrounded by a brilliant international general staff of which he, Chaurand de St. Eustache, is part. Garioni learns that von Waldersee was received by King Vittorio Emanuele III and the young Queen Elena who made a very favorable impression on the old Field Marshal (von Waldersee is 68 years old) due to her lovely eyes and her perfect and melodious German. He hears the story of how von Waldersee managed to make such a rapid sea voyage. It seems that he embarked at Naples August 25th aboard the Sachsen, a commercial liner headed for Nagasaki. This was possible because he forced all the first class passengers to go ashore, paying them twice the cost of their ticket. De Chaurand tells Garioni that Austria-Hungary, notwithstanding the fact she is part of the Triple Alliance like Italy, has informed the German government that she does not intend to send an army to China. The navy forces that are already in the China seas and a detachment of seamen in China will be sufficient to participate in the operation.

But the most important news that Garioni hears is when de Chaurand tells him of a conversation he had had with the Field Marshal aboard the Sachsen (Von Waldersee was Chargé d'Affaires at Paris in 1871 and speaks French well). He said he intended to collaborate often with the Italian Expeditionary Corps. This last information of de Chaurand proves to be correct.

By order of von Waldersee the Italian infantry battalion leaves for Peking by train and there is lodged in a group of pagodas which are given the name of Caserma Umberto I. One company is even placed in a part of the Summer Imperial Palace.

Von Waldersee and his General Staff, *noblesse oblige*, are lodged in the Imperial Palace itself. On the front of troop lodgings there seems to be an improvement compared to that in Tientsin, but on the health front things are worse. The diary of these days speaks of 60 sick, almost all of dysentery. Three soldiers die of peritonitis and typhoid. To make matters worse, an Italian sailor is killed by a drunken French sentinel.

On the military front at Peking it is to be noted with regret that the conduct of the Italian troops is in line with that of the other contingents. On October 9th an operation is conducted against a village where the Boxers had killed a Chinese convert. The guilty person is put to death and the village set on fire. Also in other similar cases there is always this *ad hoc* military code of additional punishment, consisting of burning the houses of the guilty and accomplices. One reason for this is that precious fuel can be salvaged from these houses for the military camp kitchens.

There is a communication, sent August 10, 1900, by the Italian Military Attaché in Berlin, General Prudente, to the Italian General Staff, which could not or would not pass it to the commander of the Italian troops in China. This communication reads as follows: General von Wittich, aide-de-camp to William II, said that it was the intention of His Majesty, the Emperor of Germany, not to send other military units to China until he saw how relations between the various nations interested in China developed. Actually he would not exclude the possibility that the war started now in the Far East might later end in Europe.

General von Wittich insisted: "It is necessary to be there well represented because as His Majesty said during the lunch (at which I was present) the actual war is a sort of military exhibition by which one can see to what degree each army taking part is trained and disciplined. However there is no need to be in a hurry to send a great number of troops out of the country in this uncertain political period."

In the light of this dispatch (in Folder 5/22 of the Expeditionary Corps in China and which contains 24 words in code) it is easier to understand why William II, the great director of this colossal staging, entrusted the role of leading man to Count von Waldersee, naming him Supreme Commander of the International Expeditionary Corps in China. Colonel Garioni learns all this from his colleague, de Chaurand. The Italian General Staff, on request of the German government, had assigned de Chaurand to the staff of von Waldersee. It seems highly likely that he would have known of Communication No. 59 of General Prudente deposited in the archives of the Supreme Command June 12, 1898. This note is very revealing. Above all it shows the special relationship between the Emperor William II and Count von Waldersee.

In 1881 the Emperor had married the daughter of Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein, Augusta Victoria. Count von Waldersee had married the widow of Duke Frederick, who happened to be a daughter of David Loeb of New York. Count von Waldersee therefore was the step-father of the wife of William II.

The report of Prudente goes on to say that von Waldersee's diplomatic talents had been used in Paris in 1870 when he was Chargé d'Affaires. Prudente adds that the Count is very ambitious and there are rumors in Germany that he intends to take over the post of Bismark. Meanwhile, in 1888, the archetype of a German Field Marshal, Marshal von Moltke, proposes von Waldersee as Chief of the General Staff

of the German Army. William II accepts and from 1888 to 1891 von Waldersee serves in this prestigious post. However in 1891 differences arise between the Count and the Emperor, and Waldersee leaves the post of Chief of the General Staff.

Prudente describes the salon of von Waldersee and his wife as being frequented by the best society of Berlin and says that he is held in great esteem in German political circles. In 1895 von Waldersee, who is already 63 years old, is promoted to Colonel-General with rank of Marshal. In 1896 the Emperor nominates the Count Chief of the Ninth Artillery Regiment, an appointment generally reserved only for Generals of princely extraction.

October 12th is the start of the operation leading to the occupation of Pao-ting fu. Colonel Garioni was certainly not able to evaluate how many men or what means were put into the operation by the two big powers, Germany and France, two powers that from a state of ferocious antagonism on European ground seemed united in a rather surrealistic brotherhood of arms in China. Politics makes strange bedfellows. But the Colonel's diary does note the five objectives that must be reached with the operation Pao-ting fu in which he is participating:

- 1) Defeat the imperial troops still to be found to the east of the Chinese wall.
- 2) Finish off the Boxers.
- 3) Liberate the Europeans held captive in Pao-ting fu.
- 4) Punish Pao-ting fu.
- 5) Threaten the court so as to convince it to come quickly to terms for peace.

To obtain these objectives von Waldersee had in mind a classical pincer maneuver. From one side the troops that he had under his command, that is, the German, English and Italian troops, were to move from Peking October 12th and go south toward Pao-ting fu. From the other side the French troops under the command of General Voyron, who were not under the command of von Waldersee but who had accepted to participate in the operation, were to march west from Tientsin to meet up at Pao-ting fu with von Waldersee. As the military columns start their movement from Peking and Tientsin, they learn that Pao-ting fu was occupied on October 13th without firing a shot by the French Lieutenant-Colonel Brude. The cold military prose of the official diary synthesizes what was to be the epic capture of Pao-ting fu thus: that the Imperial troops had retreated beyond the wall, that as usual no trace of the Boxers was to be found, that Pao-ting fu was punished by the execution of the prefect and of his principal collaborators, by the destruction of the temples that had been used by the Boxers for their rites and by the opening of a gap in the city wall. Garioni is silent about objective number 5, that of the menace that was to convince the Imperial Court to negotiate the end of hostilities.

To arrive at the historical truth we have here necessarily to refer to material exterior to the official diary. We can imagine that back on June 2, 1900, Colonel Garioni, well occupied directing his 24th Infantry Regiment, had not read a short article in the French daily *Le Temps* and duly reproduced by all the important papers. This stated simply that to prevent the massacre of the diplomats in Peking it would be sufficient for the Western powers to make known their intention to destroy the tombs of the Ta-ching dynasty. It would seem that General Voyron, Commander of the French Expeditionary Corps, had not read this either. However this little idea expressed in the newspaper article had already had its effect in the higher spheres. The proof is that when General Voyron arrives in China he receives the order on September 16, 1900, from the Minister of War to request and receive

orders only from the Ambassador of France in Peking. This is the Minister Pichon, a journalist catapulted into the diplomatic corps, who perhaps already then was known as "the man of the sad mustache." The first letter that Voyron receives from Pichon indicates clearly the interest in the occupation of the tombs of the Imperial dynasty. Naturally Pichon owed his instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

But how is it possible that this little idea expressed in a newspaper, even a paper as important as *Le Temps*, found such an echo in the official world? The explanation can be found in the writings of Professor de Groot who was teaching Chinese language and culture at Berlin University in 1888. In his fundamental work *Religious System of China* Vol. III, p. 1051, while illustrating the respect the Chinese have for the ancestral tombs, he wrote the following two paragraphs, the first of which was taken from a work of Eitel: "... but invariably to dispatch messengers instructed to find out the ancestral tombs of the several leaders of the rebellion, to open the tombs, scatter their contents to the winds and desecrate the graves in every possible way. For this is supposed to be the surest means of injuring the prospects and marring the possible success of the rebels.

Should European armies have for a second time to march on Peking, it will be worth while trying whether the campaign cannot be shortened and loss of life spared by a military occupation of the burial grounds of the Imperial Family. Indeed, should the Court receive the ultimatum that these tombs will be successively destroyed by barbarian explosives, its belief in Fung-shui will without a doubt force it to submit implicitly to the foreign demands."

The office of political propaganda operating in Berlin did not fail to adopt this little idea and had managed to get it circulated in the highest spheres, the proof being that Marshal von Waldersee was constrained to insert the occupation of the Imperial tombs into his plan of operation for Pao-ting fu. The competition between the French troops on one side and the Germans on the other to see who would arrive first and "conquer" the tombs is too painful and macaber to be described in detail.

Certainly our Colonel Garioni must have appreciated this story when he arrived back in Peking, where he would also have learned that in the course of the combined Franco-German operation the city treasure of 280,000 taels had been confiscated and that a fine of 200,000 taels was levied on the prominent people of the city, all of which was equally divided between the French and German commands.

To complete the picture of the operation Pao-ting fu, it is to be noted that the official German painter by name of Rocholl (incorporated in the General Staff of von Waldersee at the explicit wish of William II) was unable to produce anything of note for lack of material.

And yet the failure to enter into the military history of the world did not prevent Colonel Garioni from sizing up the armament and the means displayed by the French and German armies on that occasion. And from his analysis on the spot he draws certain conclusions which he does not hesitate to impart to his superiors. Garioni says: "The French and Germans have taken care to furnish their troops with the most recent arms in order to profit from the colonial enterprise to experiment their newest offensive weapons, as it is difficult to demonstrate their efficiency on the home firing range. Furthermore the French and Germans have provided their troops with the best material not only so that they don't look bad in comparison with the others, but also to show the power of the army to which they belong."



It can be said that the Italian General Staff profited from these observations in preparing for the campaign for the conquest of Libya where, in 1911, Garioni figured as commander of a special division and in 1918 as Governor of Tripolitania.

The arms that had impressed the Colonel must have been, for the French, a repeating rifle Lebel, model 1886, adopted by France in 1893, and a rapid fire cannon, model 1888, to be considered the best in the world. These were arms of the best quality, to which the Germans opposed the Mauser rifle, model 1888, and an excellent rapid fire cannon.

Added to this Colonel Garioni certainly must have seen that during the operation Pao-ting fu the French command was using maps of the theater of war on the scale of 1/1,000,000 and that the German command had maps on the scale of 1/300,000.

According to the plan of the German General Staff in Berlin the war operations waged in China should be finished before the first of the year. There was no lack of information about China in the German command thanks to the various missions carried out earlier by German officials in China, these same officials being present in the German Expeditionary Corps. The most obvious example was the presence in the General Staff of von Waldersee of Colonel Richter, who had been instructor of Chinese troops in China for ten years.

The German Command's logistical and topographical knowledge of China did not stop at the Chinese Wall. They knew very well the geography of Mongolia just outside the Wall and of the immense quantity of animals raised there. To face the long winter of Peking it was going to be necessary to carry out an *uberdimensionale* raid of animals in Mongolia. Thus the German command organized the operation Kalgan.

Kalgan is the Mongolian name of the Chinese frontier city of Chang-chie-h'ou. It is the entrance into Mongolia and in fact in Mongol the name signifies gate. Beyond this gate stretches a plain rich in camels, oxen, sheep and horses, where there is a flourishing commerce in soft wool and warm furs. This is what is needed for an army that has to pass the winter in Peking where the temperature can descend to  $-17^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

To get possession of a maximum of this wealth is the principal objective of the raid on Kalgan. Von Waldersee gives the order for the Italian troops and Austrian sailors to participate in the expedition. The declared objective is to eliminate the strategic menace hanging over Peking by the presence of a corps of 10,000 regular Chinese troops which had, contrary to all expectations, already disappeared beyond the Wall.

The Italians participate in the expedition that starts November 12th with 24 officers and 575 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Salsa. Their transportation system is composed of 68 carts.

The German troops are ready to go, making a splendid impression in their romantic hats and their glasses furnished by the German military intendance to protect their eyes from the fine sand carried by the wind blowing from the Gobi desert. The German intendance consists of 200 camels, certainly driven by drivers of Turkish origin, possibly recruited by the same office that recruited the coolies in Japan. The entire international column is set in motion under the orders of Colonel Count York von Wartemburg. When Colonel York has ascertained that the Chinese troops have disappeared, the column receives the order to return to its base. On November 27th, upon their return, Colonel York is found dead, asphyxiated in his lodgings.

Instead of letting the second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Salsa take over the command of the column (according to the military tradition of every army) Field Marshal von Waldersee immediately sends Colonel Baron Ekon von Geyl to assume command, the latter being part of von Waldersee's General Staff.

Meanwhile the slaughtered animals taken around Kalgan begin to appear in Peking on November 29th.

November 30th the official diary returns to registering minor events. There is a search for an Italian soldier, who has mysteriously disappeared. The temperature has gone down to  $-6^{\circ}$ . December 1st, by order of General Baron von Geyl, the Austrian sailors and the Italians move to punish two villages guilty of massacring some Chinese converts to Christianity in the previous month of June.

The diary of December 2nd notes that the navigation along the Pei-ho is interrupted because of the freeze. For the same reason the Italian Naval Forces in the Pacific leave the bay of Taku for their winter destination in Japanese ports.

### THE WINTER IN PEKING

In front of this desolate winter picture worthy of Brueghel the Elder of the Pai-ho frozen over and the ships in the south in the seas of Japan, a Chinese diplomat remarks to one of his Western colleagues that if the Chinese had really wanted to get rid of the diplomatic corps, they would have done it during the winter when any help from the naval forces would have been impossible.

In the meantime it is a question of all the foreign troops resisting the Peking winter. Marshal von Waldersee establishes a truce and creates an international committee to administer the city of Peking under the presidency of the German General Ekon von Geyl, the French abstaining from participation in said committee.

The second of December the war booty taken during the Kalgan operation is divided. The Italian contingent receives 940 sheep, 84 oxen, 50 mules, and 21 camels plus a thousand sheep-skins. In addition the money paid by the various towns visited along the way is divided. Fifteen thousand taels are consigned to the Italian contingent.

December 8th Garioni sets up a military tribunal for the Italian contingent.

December 15th a soldier dies of dysentery. The temperature is  $-8^{\circ}$ .

December 17th they acquire goat skins for four dollars each. Sewing four skins together in a certain way one succeeds in obtaining a sort of poncho that protects the soldiers on all sides. This he wears under the regulation coat. Three blankets per person are distributed to help face the night's cold.

December 18th Garioni registers that the railway Tientsin — Peking starts to function regularly, having been repaired by Russian, Japanese, English and German troops.

December 23rd the body is found of the Italian soldier missing in action during the Kalgan operation. He had been killed. The guilty person is found and decapitated. The houses of his accomplices are burned.

December 25th a Bersagliere dies of pulmonary tuberculosis. January 11th the temperature is  $-15^{\circ}$  and 56 soldiers are in the hospital.

On January 25th, in this climate of absolute administrative correctness installed by the German high command, there is a distribution of more war spoils from the

various operations. The Italian contingent is assigned two Krupp cannon of 8 cm. and four of 9 cm.

February 15th Colonel Garioni registers that von Waldersee has decided to start up military operations again in the month of March if the peace negotiations are not rapidly concluded. February 17 they register 71 cases of respiratory disease.

March 18th forty soldiers are sent home for reasons of health.

April 18th a fire burns the wing of the Imperial Palace where the Germans are lodged. General Schwarzhoff dies in the fire.

May 13th China accepts to pay an indemnity of 450,000,000 taels. Garioni calculates that the amount due the Italians is 77,000,000 Italian lire.

### GOING HOME

Von Waldersee considers that his work is finished and prepares for his return voyage. According to Garioni von Waldersee will stop off in Italy only if he is received by the King.

On June 2nd Garioni notes that von Waldersee has left for Japan. He describes the military parade held in honor of the Supreme Commander of the International Corps but does not talk about the Commander taking part, at the Tientsin cemetery, in the funeral of the two French soldiers killed in a fight with two German soldiers. Nor does he note that at a certain moment von Waldersee indicated that he believes that a war between Japan and Russia is imminent and inevitable. From Japan von Waldersee went directly home where he was given a triumphant reception.

The 16th of June the diary registers 63 persons sick with gastritis or venereal disease. The temperature has gone up to 38°. Mosquito netting is distributed to the soldiers for sleeping at night. For the sentinels there is a distribution of netting for the face and gloves for the hands.

On July 1st the Italian Ambassador Marchese Salvago Raggi tells Garioni the Chinese government has ordered the start of work on the construction of a memorial arch dedicated to the memory of Baron von Ketteler, the German Minister who rests in peace in the tomb prepared in the garden of the legation. The arch will go up on the spot where the Minister was killed. The street on which it is to be erected will be named Ketteler Strasse and the arch will have on it an inscription written in three languages: Chinese, German, and Latin. The arch which was destined to prolong the memory of von Ketteler in Peking had a short life: it was destroyed in 1917 when China declared war on Germany.

But none of this seems to have impressed Colonel Garioni very much. From June 28th on he was immersed in a study of the matriculation papers just arrived of the soldiers that made up the Italian contingent. Already the twelfth of June the Colonel had created a military tribunal. The work of this tribunal consisted of 80 denunciations for the following offenses: 48 robberies, 16 insubordination, 10 murders, 6 carnal violence and attempted rape, 5 service offenses (absence from post, violation of orders, prisoner escape, sale of objects that were state property). Reading these matriculation papers the Colonel finally understands the reason for so many offenses. Two hundred soldiers of the expeditionary corps had already been condemned in Italy, mainly for robbery and injuries. There are among the military recognized criminals who had already been condemned up to thirteen times.

Speaking statistically 13 % of the Italian contingent were criminals. The explanation for all this can be found in the way the Italian Ministry of War had made up the expeditionary corps. The orders sent to the commanders of the various armed corps provided that precedence in the recruitment be given to volunteers. After the rigorous medical visit the quotas of the various companies chosen to supply the contingent was to be filled by drawing lots. A drawing that had evidently been manipulated to permit the commanders of the various companies to get rid of their worst elements by sending them to the expeditionary corps.

The sentences pronounced by the military tribunal are as follows:

- 16 condemnations to military prison
- 2 condemnations to ordinary reclusion
- 30 acquitted for inexistence of the crime
- 9 acquitted for insufficient proof

July 1st the diary registers the arrival of a cargo of cigarettes destined for the troops. Naturally, given that the state tobacco monopoly does not use hermetically sealed wrapping, the cigarettes are all moldy.

July 10th a soldier disappears and is declared a deserter.

August 5th the Italian contingent embarks on two ships: the Singapore and the Washington.

August 31st the two ships are at Aden. One can only suppose that after such a long period the contingent had permission to go ashore. When the two ships arrive at Port Said no one goes ashore because at Port Said there is the plague. This order does not seem to affect the morale of the troops because the diary registers that after the entrance into the Mediterranean the number of sick soldiers in the infirmary had plunged sharply to six. While the cry of Senofonte's soldiers at the end of the Anabasi was "The sea, the sea," the cry of Colonel Garioni's soldiers must certainly have been "Land, land" at the first sight of the Sicilian coast.

The joy experienced by an Italian expeditionary corps that again finds its native Italy has never been a subject for the strict prose of the official diaries. This was done once and for all by a poet who wrote:

Bell'Italia, amate sponde  
 Pur vi torno a riveder  
 Trema in petto e si confonde  
 L'alma oppressa dal piacere.