Chapter I

THE BAGHDAD MISSION BEGINS (1929-1932)

In a letter dated November 26, 1929, the feast of St. John Berchmans, Father General Wlodimir Ledochowski communicated through Fr. Edward C. Phillips, the Provincial of the Maryland-New York Province, with the other United States provincials concerning a possible mission in Baghdad, Iraq. For some nine years the Holy See had been bombarded with ecclesiastical requests that Jesuits, preferably Americans, inaugurate a school in Baghdad to shore up the weak religious conditions of the country's Christian people. When this project had first been brought to Fr. General's attention, he had fended it off on the score of the numerous and pressing commitments at home and abroad of the American provinces. But, by the close of 1929, the continued pressure on the General and his realization of the worthiness of the cause, influenced him to bring the matter to official American attention with the hope for a serious and generous response. In this first communication he added that a building and an annual subsidy were promised.

On February 15, 1930, Fr. Phillips divulged this request to the provincials of the other five provinces (New England, New Orleans, Chicago, St. Louis, and California) and urged an early reply. Two provinces (Missouri and New Orleans) indicated that they could not cooperate because of their own commitments. Chicago was prepared to send one man if other provinces did the same, but its provincial added that the release
even of one man would be a serious burden. California, Maryland-New York and New England agreed to send one man each. Fr. James M. Kilroy made this decision in the New England Province and then called it to the attention of his consultors in a meeting on March 26, 1931. After receiving the four favorable answers, Fr. Phillips relayed this information to Fr. General, and asked if four men would be considered a satisfactory beginning. Just two days prior to this letter of Fr. Phillips, Cardinal Luigi Sincero, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches (hereafter referred to as the Congregation), again urged the project on Fr. General. Some time during April, 1930, Fr. General informed the Congregation of the plan to begin with four men, and the Congregation agreed to this arrangement.

At the same time the Congregation urged the sending of one man to Iraq as quickly as possible to investigate and to report his findings and conclusions to the Congregation. Such an envoy was first to come to Rome, obtain the blessing of of Pope Pius XI, and receive instructions from the Congregation which would underwrite the expenses of the survey. A name for an investigator was discussed in a New England province consultors' meeting on May 16, 1930. It was assumed at the time that whoever went would be the initial superior of any mission undertaken. While names for the post were discussed, no suitable candidate was settled on, and Fr. Phillips was so informed.
From other sources it would appear that a _terna_ of names was prepared and sent to Rome. Fr. Edmund A. Walsh, the founder and regent of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, was selected and officially approved. Although earlier informed of his designation for this project, Fr. Walsh only on February 2, 1931 received his instructions from Fr. Phillips. The project, he was informed, was undertaken at the urgent desire of Pope Pius XI. The pontiff wanted information on the conditions for a school. A building and an annual subsidy could be counted on. Whatever Fr. Walsh learned was not the grounds for any decisions on his part. His findings were to go to the Congregation. On arriving in Rome, Fr. Walsh not only met with the Pope and the General, but he was given more specific instructions by the Congregation.

It is the instructions of the Congregation that must now be of concern. They were unexpected and limited. Fr. Walsh was not authorized to propose a school, but the possibility of setting up a boarding house -- a _pensione_ -- for students in Baghdad. This house would be presumably for Iraqi, in and outside Baghdad, who attended the chief governmental schools at which graduates of secondary schools matriculated. These were chiefly the schools of law, medicine and engineering.

Why did the Congregation _tie_, in effect, the hands of Fr. Walsh, limit him to views on a _pensione_, and ignore what had been the desire of the ecclesiastics and lay leaders in Iraq? Perhaps it might be ventured that the Congregation believed that four men could more readily handle such a more limited work of
giving corrective instruction and supplying a religious atmosphere in a pensione than in inaugurating a secondary school. At least there was no facile recognition that the initial four and their early associates were giants. With these restrictive instructions, Fr. Walsh arrived in Baghdad on March 7, 1931, and resided, as did the first two fathers -- in another year, with the Carmelite Fathers.

When Fr. Walsh contacted the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Antoine Drapier, O.P., whose official headquarters were then in Mosul, and the heads of the various Christian rites (Chaldean, Syrian, Armenian, and Greek), they too were amazed at the instructions, so removed from all their hopes and requests. Fr. Walsh could ask for their comments. At an early stage at the insistence of the Apostolic Delegate, he visited well outside Baghdad. He went north to Mosul and its environs, and to Basra in the south. In all places he found all clamoring for a school.

Even before he had all the written responses to his instructions, Fr. Walsh wrote his initial findings on the desire for a school to the Congregation on March 27, 1931. When an answer came by telegram, its substance was cryptic. The project was approved, and Fr. Walsh should go ahead with the investigation as outlined in his original instructions. Since this telegram did not clarify what was the approved project, Fr. Walsh told no one in Iraq of its contents. He decided to await a clarification on his return to Rome. By the time this telegram arrived, Fr. Walsh had obtained all the responses from his Iraqi correspondents. All continued unanimously in favor of a school.
On his journey to Rome via Damascus, Beirut, Cyprus and Brindisi, Fr. Walsh completed his formal report.

In this report, Fr. Walsh agreed on the need and value of a school. He included possible methods on its incorporation, and a plan of studies. He stressed the point that a recent convention between the Iraq and U.S. governments made possible American schools in Iraq. That Pope Pius XI, in his audience, had indicated the project as a school was also included. As to finance, Fr. Walsh pointed out that funds could be made available from the Near East Welfare Association of which he had been an officer and fund raiser. Not long after Fr. Walsh's return to the States, sometime in May, 1931, news came that the project for a school had been approved.

For whatever reasons, perhaps because he had not been able or willing to carry out the pensione plan, Fr. Walsh appeared to have been in the dog-house of the Congregation. It was made clear to Fr. Phillips, in an interview in July, 1931, with the assessor of the Congregation, that Fr. Walsh's part in the project had ceased. He was not to deal with the Congregation on the subject, and he was not to be assigned any task of obtaining clearance for the school from the Iraq Government. He was likewise to understand that he had no jurisdiction over the disbursement of funds of the Near East Relief Association. Funds for the project up to $50,000 would come from the Middle East Relief Funds, which were then under the management of Cardinal Patrick J. Hayes of New York. Requests for the funds were to be made directly by the American provincial in charge to the
Secretary of the Congregation. The Secretary would alert Cardinal Hayes about their dispersal. When Fr. General was informed of this impasse by Fr. Phillips, Fr. Ledochowski replied in a letter, dated August 3, 1931, acquiescing in these matters and indicated that there were people who feared Fr. Walsh. For many months after the visit, it was assumed and expected in Iraq that Fr. Walsh would head the first contingent of Jesuits to Baghdad.

After the plan for a school had been approved by the Congregation, Fr. General intimated to Fr. Kilroy in May, 1931, that the mission, once it had officially started, would come under the jurisdiction of the New England Province. Until that time, Fr. Phillips was to continue as the liaison provincial between Fr. General and the other provincials. Both to Fr. Kilroy and to Fr. Phillips, the General indicated his desire that they confer with them and Fr. Walsh and that he himself be informed of their projected plans.

The results of this conference were reported to Fr. General by Fr. Phillips in a letter dated July 10, 1931. It was proposed that, in view of the varied and at times rival Christian groups in Iraq, the school be above any partisan struggle by being placed under some special care of the Holy See. The legal direction of the school should be assumed (as Fr. Walsh had recommended in his official report) by some sort of a U.S. corporation consisting of representatives of some five or six U.S. institutions of higher learning. The function of this corporation would be to give prestige, but it would in no way be
The value of French for incoming missioners was stressed because so many of the leading lay and ecclesiastical figures, while gradually learning English, were most competent in French. It would also be a help to know some Arabic to deal with tradesmen. Prior to their arrival in Baghdad, a stay for indoctrination would be helpful either at Rome or at Beirut. From the outset, the superior should have adequate money to obtain and equip both a residence and a school structure.

Perhaps it would be good to have Fr. Walsh return and arrange a governmental authorization for the school. Ironically, Fr. Phillips had to append in a postscript to this summary of recommendations, the news of his having been summoned to Cardinal Hayes' residence to be informed, among other things, that Fr. Walsh's part in the project was over and done, and that Near East Relief Fund money was outside his jurisdiction. In a final note, Fr. Phillips wondered whether the work in Baghdad could ultimately employ regents as well as priests.

Simultaneously with this conference work and report, and with the visit for instructions with Msgr. (later Cardinal) Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, the assessor of the Congregation, Fr. Phillips had to inaugurate correspondence about the exact four persons who were to begin the work. He sought the names so that these might be forwarded to Fr. General for approval. Fr. Charles H. Cloud, the provincial of Chicago, was the first to respond. On July 14, 1931, in discussing aspects entering into his choice, he indicated that he was considering Fr. Martin J.
Carrabine or Fr. Edward J. Hodous. But on July 25th, his choice was definite. The man was Fr. Edward F. Madaras, who was to be the originator of the newsy and valuable Al Baghdadi. Fr. Cloud wished to be able to announce this choice at a ceremony for other departing missioners.

Fr. Phillips opposed such early announcement of the name, since all four names had to be approved by Fr. General. On August 1, 1931, Fr. Phillips indicated, in a letter to Fr. Cloud, that his own choice was theoretically between two people, one of whom appeared to describe his ultimate choice, Fr. Edward J. Coffey. Fr. Coffey was at that time returning from his tertianship in a French-speaking house after completing four years of theology at Lyons.

In early August, the California province had unanimously agreed on the designation of Fr. John A. Mifsud, about to begin his tertianship in Rome in September 1931. His linguistic competency was highly commended.

The last province to inform Fr. Phillips of its choice was New England. On August 27, 1931, Fr. Phillips informed Fr. Kilroy of the other three choices and urged the designation of someone with a good American name to balance such names as Madaras and Mifsud. He also intimated that the New England representative should be the superior, since once the missioners had set out, the N.E. province was to be in charge.

It is hard to understand why Fr. Phillips as late as August 27, 1931, did not know the N.E. province choice, but it does appear that the man himself did not know of his own
selection until September 2. In a July 8th meeting, Fr. Kilroy informed his consultors that the N.E. representative was to be the superior. He asked for names with this consideration in mind. After a lengthy discussion, as the minutes say, Fr. William A. Rice, the rector at Shadowbrook, was selected. In the event that a second man might be required, Fr. James L. McGovern was to be, surprisingly, this choice. The choice of Fr. McGovern as a second possibility could have been influenced by a letter of Fr. Walsh in which, detailing the qualifications of men for Baghdad, he had indicated that one might be someone versed in secondary school education. Fr. McGovern, after one year as prefect of discipline at Boston College High School, had been its principal since 1920 and so continued until the late winter of 1936. In a letter of September 4, 1931, to Fr. General and, presumably, now including Fr. Rice's name, Fr. Phillips urged the appointment of a New England man as superior. It is interesting to note that the name Rice had become the family name when the French-Canadian father of Fr. Rice had changed it from Raiche to Rice.

On September 30, 1931, Fr. General responded to the report on the requested meeting of Fathers Phillips, Kilroy and Walsh. The date for the superiorship to pass to New England was settled as the time when the first two men left the U.S. While approval as missioners was given to the four designated fathers, Fathers Kilroy and Phillips were between them to choose a superior, and this choice would be eo ipso approved by Fr. General.
The initial journey was to be made by two of the four, the superior and one available man, either Fr. Madaras, or Fr. Coffey, as selected by the two provincials. Fr. Madaras was selected in October and so informed. Fr. Coffey was to be in residence at Georgetown as a purchasing agent and a student of Arabic and of Iraq history. On the journey, there was to be a stop at Beirut, but none at Rome. Fr. Walsh could acquaint them with whatever information he had as a result of his exploratory trip.

As far as the amount of $50,000 was concerned, the method indicated by Msgr. Cicognani should be followed. Fr. General did, however, recall that, as of May 26, 1929, the Congregation had promised an annual subsidy. A plan, which Fr. Walsh had proposed for raising an additional $50,000 from American Jesuit schools, was vetoed. Too much affluence should be avoided.

Obtaining the promised $50,000 was somewhat of a long drawn-out affair. In view of Msgr. Cicognani's instructions and Fr. General's acquiescence in them, it seems strange that the initial request was made by Fr. Phillips to Cardinal Hayes on November 20, 1931. On that date Cardinal Hayes was informed that preparations for the journey were well laid out, and that funds promised by the Congregation from the Near East Relief Association would be appreciated. The Cardinal replied on November 24, that he had no such instructions from the Holy See or from the Congregation. He was, moreover, without discretion in allotting these funds. Normally the money was sent to Rome
On December 2, Fr. Phillips expressed his regrets at bothering Cardinal Hayes. He had presumed that, since it was from Cardinal Hayes that the funds were to be obtained, he had written directly to him. Then on December 10, 1931, a letter in French was sent to Cardinal Sincero requesting, in view of the pending departure, that authorization for disbursement of funds be given to Cardinal Hayes.

In early January, there had been no news from Cardinal Sincero. However, on December 29, 1931, Cardinal Sincero, by letter, had authorized Cardinal Hayes to supply the funds. On receiving this news, Cardinal Hayes wrote on January 15, 1932, that at the moment he could hand over only $25,000 if loss of funds was not to result from an immediate sale of securities. This letter was acknowledged on January 18, with the added hope that, beginning with March, some added sum might be released each month. As a matter of fact, Cardinal Hayes paid the whole remaining sum of $25,000 on March 28, 1932. It was the receiving of the first sum in middle January that prompted the earliest possible sailing of the two missioners on February 9, 1932.

In the minds of some, the delay in departure, hoped for by the end of 1931, was attributed to an awaiting of a favorable reply from Iraq on the establishment of a school. On January 28, the Chaldean Patriarch wrote that he had learned, through a Chaldean priest visiting in the United States, that a delay in departure was being caused by the expectation of a favorable reply to an official governmental request to begin a school in
Baghdad. Fr. General was also apprised of this alleged reason for slowness in departure and on the basis of it he wrote to both Fr. Phillips and Fr. Kilroy a strong letter of his sorrow and embarrassment. Although the reception of a favorable governmental reply concerning a school was not an inhibiting factor in regard to the departure, the request was somewhat slow, it would appear, in being formulated and dispatched. It should be noted that Fr. Walsh might have made provision for this placeat on his visit, but the narrow character of his mandate made such a request impossible.

Despite the considerable abundance of documents on initiating the Baghdad Mission once Fr. General had officially authorized it, it is not evident when the formulation of a request to the Minister of Public Instruction in Iraq was begun. In a letter as late as December 20, 1931, Fr. Walsh informed Fr. Phillips that he would have a rough draft of this letter for approval before Christmas. Such a letter in its final form could arrive in London by January 10, 1932, and then be forwarded to Baghdad by January 15 to 17. With the money soon hopefully available, the missioners could leave by mid-January and receive details on Iraq's permission when at Beirut. In the event that no news had come from Iraq when Fr. Rice arrived in Beirut, he could and should go on to Baghdad to care for the permission personally. Thus it was clear to Fr. Walsh that there was no need of delay once the funds were at hand.
When Fr. Phillips replied to this letter on December 23, he urged that, since an American corporation, as planned, had not yet been set up, the request should be made in the name of the separate sponsoring colleges. He indicated too, that the only grounds for delayed departure would rest on the reception of the Congregation's funds. The promised letter of Fr. Walsh was submitted through Fr. Rice due to Fr. Walsh's absence in Minneapolis. Fr. Phillips had proposed, on December 29, that Fr. Rice's name be either in the text or on the signature as the appointed local superior.

The copy of the final letter was signed only by Fr. Walsh but Fr. Rice's name was involved in that Fr. Walsh recounted at length his visit to Iraq and his findings. He mentioned a sponsoring group of American Jesuit Universities without referring to them as yet in incorporated form, and gave references to establish their educational standing. The proposed school was briefly described and the readiness expressed to follow Iraq educational regulations as outlined in the convention signed between Ambassador to London, Charles G. Dawes, and the Iraqi Ambassador at London. The favor of a cabled reply was requested. But the letter ends with the odd statement that the first two accredited representatives of the American schools would start as soon as a favorable reply was obtained. The start toward Iraq which Fathers Rice and Madaras were to begin on receipt of a favorably reply could be understood not as beginning from New York, but from some point enroute. Nevertheless, it was an odd statement.
The letter, when formulated, did not go at once in early January, but was to await news of the grant of funds. But Fr. Phillips wished the letter to go out once to London and then to be forwarded to Iraq when London was apprised by cable of the time to send it. With favorable news of the $50,000 grant reaching Cardinal Hayes on January 15, Fr. Walsh, on January 18, cabled London to send the request air mail to Baghdad. Fr. Rice then made early arrangements to begin the journey. On January 26, the date for sailing had been set for February 9, 1932.

Simultaneously with these arrangements for travel had come the complaints of the Chaldean Patriarch who could have been able to say that a request had not even been made of the Iraqi government. Hence, too, the sending of the belated and non-germane "dolens audivi" letter of Fr. General on February 3, 1932. On February 2, a similar complaint had been sent to Fr. Kilroy by Msgr. Cicognani. On receipt of it on February 11, Fr. Kilroy planned to write that the departure date had been February 9. As of that date, Fr. Kilroy placed in the official files a brief notice, that in accordance with Fr. General's instruction, the mission of Baghdad passed over to the sole jurisdiction of the New England Province.

Clearing up this matter, on the alleged delay due to expecting some Iraq government clearance, took some little time but it was finally done. On February 17, Fr. General, who had been alerted to the departure, informed Cardinal Sincero of the exact date when sailing began and informed him that the pending required permission from Baghdad, was not a cause for delay. He
also informed the Cardinal that, contrary to the expectation of Iraq churchmen, Fr. Walsh was not a member of the departing group. This was hardly news, since Cardinal Sincero’s Congregation had insisted that Fr. Walsh’s part was finished after his report on the exploratory visit to Iraq. While Fr. Walsh's counsel had been utilized, Fr. General indicated to the Cardinal that there had been unwillingness to sever him from this important work.

On March 1 (one day after Fr. Rice and Fr. Madaras had reached Beirut), Cardinal Sincero expressed his joy to Fr. Phillips that the journey had begun and asked patience with the Chaldean priest who had ineptly and erroneously given rise to misapprehensions. The Cardinal had just written to the Chaldean Patriarch urging him to admonish the priest paternally lest he continue to judge what was not his affair. That all would end well, Fr. Walsh was informed by cable early on the morning of February 20, that on the preceding day the Iraq government had approved the school subject to the usual condition of following governmental regulations and policies.

Even after the sailing and the transfer of jurisdiction to the New England Province, there were loose ends to be tied. The corporation of American Jesuit schools had not yet had its constitution drawn up. On March 13, Fr. Walsh forwarded to Fr. Kilroy the draft of a proposed constitution. He had made some changes of his first draft in view of critical remarks of some provincials speaking in the name of colleges under their jurisdiction. In drawing up the document, Fr. Walsh with the
assistance of Mr. George E. Hamilton, Dean of the Georgetown Law School, had used as a model the type of charter employed for educational and philanthropic societies incorporated in the District of Columbia. Since three residents of the District were required for such incorporation, to the names of Fr. Kilroy and Fr. James H. Dolan, his Socius, were added the names of Fr. Walsh, Fr. W. Coleman Nevils and Fr. Joseph A. Farrell. A board of directors, not to exceed ten, was to administer the affairs of the corporation.

Another letter from Fr. Walsh on March 18, indicated that he and Mr. Hamilton had decided to abbreviate the text of incorporation and to include the names of the presidents of the cooperating institutions. In this final form, the name of Fordham University was dropped since Fr. Aloysius J. Hogan, its President, declined to sign. Loyola of Chicago was not included in the final list of sponsoring schools. There was already a Loyola of New Orleans in the group, and the University of Detroit was a representative of the then undivided Chicago Province. Hence the sponsoring schools were Boston College, Holy Cross College, Georgetown, St. Louis University, the University of San Francisco, Loyola University of New Orleans, and the University of Detroit. These universities were referred to as associate colleges or universities, rather than as incorporators. The actual incorporation took place on April 9, 1932, with the title of the corporation being the Iraq American Educational Association.
Finally, on August 23, 1932, five months after Fr. Rice's arrival in Baghdad, Fr. Walsh wrote to Fr. Kilroy from the Catholic Summer School at Cliff Haven on Lake Champlain that he had sent to Boston the Act of Incorporation engrossed on parchment and done in colors. Since all the work was done in pen, the execution had consumed time. The cost had come to seventy dollars. Twelve photostats had been made so that each of the schools involved would have a copy. Two copies were to go to Baghdad, one to the New England Province files, and one to Fr. General. Some non-signing school seems to have received a copy. The negative was forwarded to Fr. Rice. The colored parchment was first sent to Boston for forwarding to Baghdad. Meticulous instructions for its packaging were supplied for Brother James L. Kilmartin. This August letter of Fr. Walsh suggested the possibility of having the first meeting of the corporation on September 26, the day the school was to open in Baghdad.

In concluding this section, it might be pointed out that Fr. Phillips' power of attorney for receiving and disbursing funds for the mission had come to an end on April 1, 1932. Surely a tribute should be paid to him for all the correspondence which he carried on from the first reception of Fr. General's hope for an Iraq Mission in late November, 1929, until April 1, 1932, when his power of attorney over funds ended. One day prior to this, the Congregation authorized the establishment of the Jesuit religious house in Baghdad. Fr. Phillips wrote to Fr. Coffey that he was happy to lay down his task, but that he would always have a friendly interest for the
school. The Iraq Mission, now dispersed, must clearly include Fr. Edward C. Phillips among its founding fathers. Only his letters carefully prepared and preserved have made the narrative of this chapter possible.