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## British Policy towards Tunis (1830-1881)

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BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS TUNIS  
(1830 - 1881)

PART 1

by  
ANDRE RAYMOND  
ST. ANTONY'S COLLEGE  
OXFORD

1953

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British Policy Towards Tunis  
(1830 - 1881)

A thesis presented by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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(1838) to FO 102 144 (1881)
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the Consulate): FO 335 56. to FO 335 154
- FO 195 Turkey: Embassy and Consular Archives.<sup>2</sup>
- FO 7 General correspondence Austria
- FO 27 " " France
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- 
1. They are referred to by the number of the series and the number of the volumes.
  2. 8 volumes contain correspondence between the Consuls in Tunis and the Ambassadors at the Porte.

Ben Dhiāf<sup>1</sup>: Ithāf ahl az zaman bi ahbār mulūk Tūnis wa 'ahd el amān. Several copies of this unpublished chronicle are deposited in the Public Library of Tunis. References will be given to an unpublished translation which, for the period studied is divided into four parts:

Reign of Ahmed Bey (1837-1855)  
 Reign of Mohammed Bey (1855-1859)  
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---

1. Born in Tunis in 1219 H (1804) Ibn Abi ad Dhiāf served Ahmed Bey as his Chief Secretary with the rank of General. Appointed to the Commission of reforms by Muhammed Bey (1857) he became a member of the Supreme Council (1860) and President of the Provisional Tribunal (1860). He is known as a poet but above all as the author of a history of Tunis which is our main source for the period of the Husseini dynasty. He died in Tunis in 1291 H (1874)

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Musulmans Paris, 1868.

- 
1. Khaireddin at Tunisi, born in 1225 H (1810) in Circassia was taken to Tunis as a child and brought up in the Palace of the Beys. He was entrusted with several missions in Europe by Ahmed Bey. Appointed General and Minister of Marine, he became President of the Supreme Council in 1860. He resigned his functions of Minister and President of the Supreme Council in 1862. In 1867 he published the *Aqwām al masālik fi ma'rifat ahwāl al mamālik* of which the preface was translated into French in 1868 under the title of "Réformes nécessaires aux Etats Musulmans". In 1869 he became president of the International Commission and was Prime Minister from 1873 to 1877. After his dismissal by Sadok Bey he was called to Turkey by Abd ul Hamid and became Grand Vizier in 1878. He died in Constantinople in 1308H (1889)

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## Introduction

Tunis under the Turks.

1. The ultimate Turkish reconquest of the Goletta from the Spaniards (1574) after fifty years of struggle for the control of Tunis provides a useful reference mark for the beginning of the "Turkish period" in Tunis; but one should not be deluded as to the real character of the regime which was to last three centuries (1574-1881)<sup>1</sup>. The Turkish organisation as established by Sinane Pasha (a Pasha appointed by the Porte for three years, to govern with the help of the Divan) did not last very long. As early as the beginning of the XVIIth century, the Regency of Tunis started to break away from the direct authority of the Porte (this process was also noticeable in Algiers, but was much slower and less complete). A double struggle began first between the Deys and the Pashas, then between the Beys and the Deys.<sup>2</sup> The militia of

- 
1. There is no available recent history of Tunis (Henri Cambon's "Histoire de la Régence de Tunis" does not fill that gap): the best accounts for the Turkish period are to be found in Ch.A. Julien "Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord" T II, and in "Initiation à la Tunisie" (an article by Jean Pignon about "La Tunisie Turque et Husseinite").
  2. Benazet et Fitoussi L'Etat tunisien et le protectorat français, p.18.

the Janizaries had been divided into 40 sections, each of them under the command of a Dey: in 1590 the militia slaughtered the officers of high rank and the 40 Deys elected one of them as their chief. The Dey quickly became the real head of the government in Tunis, whilst the Pasha just retained the honorary function of representative of the Porte (who continued to grant him the investiture). Later, in the XVIIth century one of the Dey's most important officers, the Bey, who held financial and military functions strengthened his authority until it challenged the Dey's supremacy: Murad Bey, a Corsican slave (1612-1631) succeeded in being appointed as Pasha by the Porte (1631) and in handing over his functions to his heirs. The Dey nevertheless continued to be elected by the Divan but was progressively deprived of any real authority.

A series of conflicts between Murad's successors put an end to the Muradi dynasty at the beginning of the XVIIIth century: in 1702 Ibrahim Sherif, the Turkish Agha of the Spahis (native cavalry) succeeded in coming into power in Tunis and in holding the titles of Bey, Dey and Pasha at the same time. His defeat and capture by the Algerians (1704) put an end to his power but did not interrupt the process which had been going on for a century: another agha of the

Spahis, Hussein ben Ali, was proclaimed Bey in his place, and later suppressed the title of Dey (1705) and was recognized as Pasha and Governor of Ifrikiya by the Porte (1708). Hussein ben Ali then established the heredity of the beylical function in his family: his dynasty is still reigning over Tunis. During that long historical process, as well as during the fifty years of war with Algiers which followed, Hussein's reign, the Porte had played no active part in the political changes which had occurred in Tunis and had only ratified them after the events. The Sultan had rewarded the formal obedience of the Tunisian Rulers with purely honorary distinctions (particularly by granting them the title of Pasha): "Sa Majesté le Padishah des sept climats et le souverain de la terre et de la mer, nous a confirmé dans les titres de Mirimivan et de Miriliva et nous nous sommes assis avec joie sur le Trône". Hammuda Pasha wrote to the King of France on his accession.<sup>1</sup>

2. One of the main reasons why the Regency outlived half a century of civil war and Algerian intervention (1704-1756) was the strong administrative organisation which the Turks had received from the previous Arab

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1. Plantet Correspondance des Beys de Tunis III, N 267.

dynasties and particularly from the hafcides<sup>1</sup>: the Beys were indeed reduced in status to tributaries of the Algerian Pashas, but the long reigns of Ali Bey (1759-1782) and Hammuda Pasha (1782-1814) restored the prestige of the Husseini dynasty. Historical evidences agrees that Hammuda Pasha was an outstanding sovereign: "le prince joignait à des sentiments élevés, à une générosité rare, à une remarquable pénétration et à un jugement droit et solide, quoiqu'emprunt de l'esprit 'barbaresque' de son époque et de son pays, une fermeté de caractère qui seule put consolider son pouvoir au milieu de difficultés sans nombre qui s'élevèrent aut<sup>re</sup> de lui". During the period of unrest which followed his death, his reign was referred to as a Golden Age, the "Augustan age of Tunisia".<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt at all that Hammuda's reign was remarkable for a strengthening of the internal authority of the Government: internal security was maintained, sometimes by using very energetic methods with the tribes (the lawless Usseltia were scattered all over the country); public works were carried on; the central administration was improved by the creation of specialized

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1. Julien II, p.277.

2. Rousseau Annales Tunisiennes, p.280, Thomas Maggil Nouveau Voyage a Tunis p.13 and f., Louis Franck Tunis, p. 70-71, Grenwille Temple Algiers and Tunis I. p.191 and f., Benazet p. 41 and f.

ministers: (1) Prime Minister, Minister of finances (Khaznadar), Keeper of the seals (Sahib et tabaa).

Hammuda Pasha's most spectacular successes however, were achieved in the field of his relationship with the Europeans. The following anecdote gives an idea of their situation in Tunis: For some time, Maggil reports, Hammuda Pasha had taken pleasure in driving his carriage himself. The American Consul had a very handsome one: the Bey saw it and took a fancy for it; he sent to demand it of him without further ado, and told the Consul that as he needed it he advised him to buy another one.<sup>1</sup> His long war with Venice (1784-1792), his financial demands from the Italian and Northern Powers (eight European states were bound by treaty to send him consular gifts and a triennial tribute; others, like Great Britain and France, until 1782, offered presents) show that the balance of power in the Mediterranean had not yet definitely turned in favour of the Europeans who remained subjected to the regime of "war or tribute" and of "peace by presents".<sup>2</sup> The French government themselves had to take the Pasha's exigencies into account and were often obliged to resort to presents in order to conciliate the Bey: as

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1. Maggil, p.101.

2. Plantet, LXIII and f.

France was slow in meeting the Bey's demands, the French Consul was warned that "ce ne serait pas une chose bien extraordinaire (qu'il fût) envoyé aux Travaux Publics".<sup>1</sup> Hammuda's Pasha's main achievement was the settlement of his relationship with Algiers: a series of wars put an end to the tribute, but were only brought to a conclusion in 1822.

Towards the Porte, Hammuda Pasha showed the same anxiety to assert the independence of the Regency, but he had to proceed with prudence towards his goal. When invited by the Porte to put a stop to the naval war with Austria (who had just made peace with the Ottomans) the Beys obeyed the order (1783). But in 1795 he intervened in the Regency of Tripoli and re-established Ali Karamanli on his throne, thus putting an end to the usurpation of the Turkish corsair Ali Borghul, without even consulting the Porte (the expectation of Ottoman displeasure at that initiative was however to give rise to serious apprehensions in Tunis).<sup>2</sup> When the Porte declared war on the French during the Egyptian expedition, Hammuda showed some hesitation in obeying the Sultan's request: the Pashas of the three

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1. *ibid.* N 531: Devaize to the Comité de Salut Public May 14, 1795.
  2. Plantet III, N.527.

Regencies, the French Consul wrote, are well aware that we have Capitulation treaties with the Porte and treaties with Barbary, and that to violate them by the Porte's order would amount to recognize its suzerainty. They know the difference between respect of and submission to it.<sup>1</sup> The Bey decided ultimately to abide by the conduct of the Pasha of Algiers (perhaps for fear of reprisals), but he assured Devoize (the French Consul) of his regret of being compelled to break the friendly relations which, since his accession, he had the pleasure to maintain with France.<sup>2</sup> Hammuda concluded a truce with France as soon as August 1800, but was obliged to yield to the "urgent pressure of the Capidje of the Porte" in order not to "compromise himself in the eyes of the Porte", and resumed the hostilities in April 1801.<sup>3</sup>

The destruction of the janizaries showed Hammuda's gradual emancipation from Ottoman influence, more clearly than his foreign policy which had to remain prudent. With a view to resist Algerian pressure Ali Bey had called upon the services of Turkish soldiers and the importance of the Turkish militia had been

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1. Plantet III. N.703. Devoize to Talleyrand, November 26, 1798
  2. Plantet III, N.705. Devoize to Talleyrand January 4, 1799; these assurances did not prevent Hammuda from harshly treating the French and their Consul when confined in their Fondouk (market place).
  3. Plantet III, 775. Devoize, April 10, 1801.

increased accordingly. From the beginning of his accession Hammuda Bey was aware of the dangers of this situation for his authority: he ceased recruiting troops in the Levant, removed the Turkish officials from the most important posts in the administration and surrounded himself with Mamelukes (mainly Circassians and Georgians).<sup>1</sup> The Turkish soldiers became irritated at their falling into disfavour and ultimately 5,000 janizaries rose in a body on August 30, 1811: the population of Tunis armed itself and helped the Bey's native troops to crush the revolt. The militia was severely punished and the Turks lost all their political influence in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> The international situation of Tunis wholly justified Maggil's conclusion that as the Barbary Princes were actually independent from the Porte, they should be treated as such by the Powers.<sup>3</sup>

3. Hammuda's death (1814) was followed by a great change in the relationship between Tunis and Europe, and also by a corresponding weakening of the Regency. Hammuda's succession gave rise to rivalries between the elder and younger branches of the Husseini family: Othman Bey was assassinated (1814) and Mahmud Bey

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1. Pignon, p.107.
  2. Rousseau, p. 270-275.
  3. Maggil, p.112.



acceded to the throne (1814-1824). That change was of course accompanied by the sudden fall of the favourites of the overthrown Bey, but the country remained remarkably calm, a further proof of the solidity of the dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

The new Bey completely lacked authority and his weakness partly accounts for a second Turkish rising in 1816; the militia was again crushed and the ring leader Delibashi vainly tried to secure popular support.<sup>2</sup> There was, however, a widely spread discontent which had been created by the unprecedented humiliation which Lord Exmouth's expedition had just inflicted on Tunis. Piracy had never been as important in Tunis as it was in Algiers: "This nation, Shaw had already remarked at the beginning of the XVIIIth century, (has been) for many years more intent upon trade and the improvement of their manufactures than upon plunder and cruising."<sup>3</sup> The Tunisian fleet was relatively weak (16 sails and 24 small corsairs according to Franck, towards 1810). But privateering was a source of important benefits for the Bey, either from the captures at sea, the sale of christian slaves, or the presents and tributes which

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1. Rousseay p.291-295.
  2. *ibid.* p.317-318.
  3. Shaw Travel or observations, p.155.

the Powers gave the Bey to avoid war or obtain peace. One could not understand the prolongation of that state of affairs until well into the XIXth century, in spite of the obvious disproportion between the European and North African naval forces, without taking into account the dissension between the Powers and their commercial rivalries: In case of war, Franck remarked, this scourge which fell on everybody was a means of hindering and ruining the navy and trade of the enemy; these Pirates would have been less daring had there been less jealousy between the Christian Princes.<sup>1</sup> It is of course difficult to determine with whom the main responsibility rested: the French were prone to accuse Great Britain, the main naval power, of that culpable tolerance; on the other hand Devoize's distrust of the British endeavours to put an end to piracy in 1816 ("L'Angle terre a cherché en même temps à porter un coup mortel à notre navigation .... en nous mettant en concurrence avec les deux principaux états d'Italie")<sup>2</sup> seems to justify Nyssen's opinion: "If England and France, he said to Pückler Muskau in 1835, had not found their private advantage in the existence of the piratical states, how

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1. Franck, p.124.

2. Plantet III, N.1095. Devoize to Richelieu, December 31, 1816.

long, defenceless as they are, could have they maintained themselves, to the disgrace of Europe."<sup>1</sup>

The situation was however deemed intolerable at the end of the Napoleonic wars and a stronger course of action was publicly asked for in Europe, for the abolition of Christian slavery and of privateering in the Mediterranean. Admiral Exmouth was sent to the Barbary States to notify them of the decisions taken at the Vienna Congress. Mahmud Bey could not but follow the example of the Dey of Algiers and yield to the threat of a naval bombardment; on April 17, 1816 he promised to free the christian slaves still detained in the Regency, and to abolish Christian slavery in the future.<sup>2</sup> Two years later the Powers decided, at Aix, that France and Great Britain should be intrusted to intimate to the Regencies that they had resolved to put an end to privateering in the Mediterranean. Admirals Jurien and Freemantle arrived before Tunis in September 1817 and the Bey, after a show of resistance, was again obliged to yield.<sup>3</sup> Military and diplomatic initiative had been definitely taken over by the Europeans.

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1. Pückler-Muskau, Semilasso in Africa, III, 299.
  2. Rousseau, p. 306-313.
  3. Rousseau, p. 334-337.

The European intervention in 1816 and 1818 seemed to indicate the beginning of the decline of the Regency. The internal situation worsened; financial difficulties aggravated by serious administrative defects nearly brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy; in 1828 the Treasury was almost empty and Hussein Bey had to have recourse to Shakir Sahib et tabaa, a Georgian Mameluk, who tried to remedy the situation by a stern programme of economies, fiscal improvements and encouragement to agriculture.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the Bey's external position was weakened; after the intervention of 1818 the tributary powers followed the example of Holland who informed the Bey that she would henceforth refuse to pay the tributes stipulated for in the Treaties. The Bey "dut subir la loi du plus fort. L' époque ou la Régence imposait aux puissances chrétiennes était passée sans retour. C'était à elle de s'humilier devant ceux-là même qui jadis sollicitaient et achetaient son alliance."<sup>2</sup> In Tunis the influence of the European Consuls was more and more heavily felt by the Beys. The Porte tried to take advantage of that situation to make the Beys feel a suzerainty which had long remained somewhat remote; in 1821 the Sultan

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1. Rousseau p. 381-384.

2. Rousseau, p. 333.

ordered the rulers of Algiers and Tunis to make peace; the two Pashas obeyed more readily as they were induced by increasing European pressure to settle their differences.<sup>1</sup> Mahmud Bey later answered the Sultan's call for naval assistance: the Tunisian fleet (or rather what remained, as most of it had been destroyed by a storm in 1821) was destroyed at Navarino with the Ottoman fleet.<sup>2</sup> Hussein Bey, however, did not go so far as to take a part in the Algero-French dispute, after 1827: in spite of the objurgations of the Sultan and of the Dey of Algiers, the Bey indeed felt some kind of satisfaction at the difficulties which his long-feared neighbour was experiencing.<sup>3</sup>

Tunis in 1830.

4. A review of the situation of Tunis round about 1830 would show that many institutions which then appeared still to be in existence, had lost all their significance. Pückler Muskau reports that at the Bardo (in 1835) he had seen the four Turkish slaves who were formerly entrusted with the mission of executing the Pasha, should the Sultan be dissatisfied with his conduct;<sup>4</sup>

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1. Rousseau p. 340 and f., and Julien p. 301.
  2. Cambon, p. 28.
  3. Rousseau, p. 375. f.
  4. Puckler Muskau, II, p. 277.

but the presence of these executors just as the Bey's "election" by the Divan ("avec le consentement... de tous les seigneurs et par l'acord unanime des sénateurs des Divan et des membres de la...milice." Mahmud wrote in 1815 when announcing his accession)<sup>1</sup> were ceremonials without meaning. The hereditary succession (by primogeniture in the Bey's family) brought absolute sovereigns to the throne: "Toute l'autorité, toute loi, toute disposition judiciaire en administrative émanent purement et simplement de la volonté du Bey qu'aucune borne n'arrête" Filippi remarked in 1829.<sup>2</sup> The administration, which was very simple and very centralized, was in the hands of the Bey: when a European Prince would need 100 civil servants to carry out the affairs of state, four or six clerks do the needful in Tunis.<sup>3</sup> The Divan only retained honorary functions; the ancient Dey, the Douletly (Sahib ed Doula) was nothing more than a kind of prefect of police for Tunis: "Il est entouré de l'ombre des vieilles institutions dont la réalité entourait ses plus anciens prédécesseurs... Il joue avec l'imperturbable gravité d'un Turc une comédie

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1. Plantet N.1047, Mahmud Bey to Louis XVIII January 6, 1815.
  2. Monchicourt Relations inédites...p.158. Desfontaines (towards 1785) used nearly the same words (Fragmens d'un voyage .... p.27).
  3. Franck, p.57.

ou il n'y a de réel que quelques coups de bâton qu'il donne et quelques piastres qu'il reçoit."<sup>1</sup>

In two centuries the Beys had acquired a real independence from the Porte; the protocol of investiture with a pro forma meeting of the Divan and a traditionally humble letter to solicit the Sultan's investiture, remained in conformity with the ancient ceremony. But the real marks of dependence were unimportant in 1830 and did not hinder the Bey's action in the least. The Bey did not pay any tribute to the Sultan; he sent customary presents to the Porte, generally every three years. The coinage was made and the Friday prayer said in the Sultan's name; the Sultan granted the firman of investiture and the caftan whenever they were asked for by the new Beys; the custom of the annual confirmation, which still existed when Franck visited Tunis (towards 1810) was given up towards 1830.<sup>2</sup> In spite of their marks of respect and of their expressions of devotion towards the Porte, Filippà wrote in 1829, the Beys tried as much as they could to put aside all which might remind them of its suzerainty.<sup>3</sup> As the janizaries had been practically eliminated in 1811 and 1816, the

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1. Pellissier Description de la Régence, p.13.
  2. Franck, p.57.
  3. Monchicourt, p.144.

Government had completely lost its Turkish character: The Turks had gradually become one with the country: it may be said that at the beginning of the XIXth century the process was finished and that the Husseini Dynasty had become a Tunisian Dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

There was in 1830 nothing like an organised central government: in case of need the Bey called a Council together; he invited whom he pleased and even the ministers (Sahib et Tabaa: Keeper of the Seal, Khaznadar: Minister of Finance, Agha: Commander of the Army) had but little authority because the orders came directly from the Bey. The only official who had some influence, Pellissier remarked, was the Bey's secretary (Bach Kateb).<sup>2</sup> The Beys, since the elimination of the Turks, surrounded themselves with Mamelukes who occupied the main political and administrative posts - Justice was similarly simple and centralised: the Bey held daily judicial audiences which, the travellers report, were full of colour and expeditions.<sup>3</sup> The Court of Charaa was competent for the religious causes; the Caïds dealt locally with the ordinary offences. In such a highly centralized state, the army should have played an

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1. Julien, p.301.

2. Pellissier, p.12.

3. Franck, p.58.66. Pückler Muskau, p.182-190.  
Desfontaines, p.27.28.



important part; but it was too weak to do so. The naval force had been destroyed first by a storm (1821) and then by the Allied fleets at Navarino (1827), but the prohibition of privateering had already struck a hard blow at the Bey's fleet. In the army the most conspicuous feature was the elimination of the Turks: the Army had been reduced by financial difficulties from 20,000 (5,000 Turks) at the beginning of the XIXth century to about 5000 towards 1830 (2000 Kabyle infantry from the Zouaoua tribe and about as many Turkish soldiers). To these regular troops the Bey could add 10,000 horsemen provided by the tribes.<sup>1</sup> Just before 1830 the Bey had undertaken to follow Sultan Mahmud's example and to modernize his army by creating a Nizam Djedid, but his effort had been but partly successful.<sup>2</sup> The Tunisian army in 1830 was in no way formidable: at least it was not superior enough to the tribal forces for enforcing an undisturbed internal order.

We have abundant information about the relative insecurity which prevailed in some parts of the country in 1830. Prince Pückler Muskau gave up the idea of going to Gafsa owing to "the insecurity of the way and of the predatory excursions continually made by the

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1. Monchicourt: Filippi, p.131-139.

2. Monchicourt: Calligaris, p.319-320.

robber Bedouins."<sup>1</sup> Along the western frontiers mountain tribes were in a permanent state of insubordination: the Majeurs were considered as the most wicked people in all the Kingdom. The Kabyles, Pückler Muskau remarks, "have always been in bad repute, and are only so far subject to the Bey of Tunis as to pay him a trifling tribute, which must be collected every year by an armed force sent to scour the country. At this moment (in 1835) they are engaged in a sort of rebellion."<sup>2</sup> Pellissier reported some years later that some border tribes crossed the frontier and entered in Algeria in order to avoid paying their taxes when the Bey's army was coming into their districts to collect them.<sup>3</sup> The only regions which were permanently under the Bey's authority were the Northern region and the Sahel, where sedentary agriculture was the prevailing livelihood. With a view to ensure order and to collect the taxes, the Beys sent a "Camp" twice a year to the interior of the country, under the command of the heir apparent (the "Bey of the Camp"): one Camp went southwards during the winter (after the olive and date harvests); the other visited the western districts during the

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1. Pückler Muskau III. p.191.

2. ~~Revue des Deux Mondes~~, p.76. Ibid. T II p 68

3. Pellissier Revue des Deux Mondes 1856, p.138.

summer (after the corn harvest). But it happened that refractory tribes greeted the Camp with gunshots.<sup>1</sup> Local administration was entrusted to the Caids: the administration of their districts, maintenance of order, justice, the collection of taxes were their main duties. The Caids often deserved their somewhat unfavourable reputation: being farmers of their offices they tried to regain their initial outlay as quickly as possible: the Caid, Filippi wrote in 1829, becomes a veritable tyrant over the population which he rules, and often his rapacity knows no limits.<sup>2</sup> The office of Caid was gradually settled in some important families and became hereditary. The Djellulis were Caids from father to son in Sfax, the Ben Ayads in Djerba; the omnipotent Caid of the Kef had with him his sixteen year old son as "deputy Caid". The only limit to the Caid's arbitrary power if his vexations became too open or too impudent was the danger of being dismissed by the Bey, and of being in his turn deprived of all his ill-gotten riches.<sup>3</sup> Shakir Sahib et Tabaa tried to limit the power of the Caids and to remedy the worst defects

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1. About the Camps: Shaw, p.165-214, Desfontaines, p. 63-64, Monchicourt Filippi, p.209 and f., Pückler Muskau III, p.262.
  2. Monchicourt: Filippi, p.74 and f.
  3. Franck, p.67.

by giving them a fixed salary, but it does not appear that his reforms provided a definitive answer to the problem of local administration.<sup>1</sup>

5. It is very difficult to give a precise account of the economic situation in Tunis towards 1830: travellers give much information, but it is too often vague or contradictory. The Europeans who sojourned in Moslem countries were often the victims of too hasty generalisations, of the information they found in the books of previous travellers, or of their "idées reçues" about the Arab world. They entertained strange illusions about the fertility of the soil ("It need only be turned up with a stick in order to bring forth everything without manure, care or toil" according to Pückler Muskau who is generally better inspired in his remarks).<sup>2</sup> They were also but too prone to compare a situation which was far from brilliant with a past which they invariably described as a golden age. The impression of decline which the travellers have generally obtained in Tunis seems however to be fully justified by facts.

The Europeans in Tunis were particularly impressed

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1. Pückler Muskau III, p.21-24 and 168-234, Pellissier p.43, 181-183, 319-320.

2. Pückler Muskau II, p.163.

by the diminution of the Bey's financial resources; the Public Revenue had fallen from about 20 million piasters towards the end of the XIXth century (Desfontaines says 12 to 20 millions and Nyssen 24 millions in 1790, Maggil 24 millions in 1810) to 8 millions in 1830.<sup>1</sup> The causes of that decline are not easily accounted for. Maggil thought that the "normal" resources (taxes) provided only a small part of Hamouda's income; it is difficult to estimate the amount of extraordinary resources (prizes, slave trade) which ran dry after the European intervention of 1816 and 1818. The sale of christian slaves, Filippi reports, was an important item of the budget; but the Bey must have felt even more strongly the loss of the prizes and of the tributes. The decay of Bizerte towards 1830 was partly due to the interruption of piracy; the prosperity of Sfax was largely based upon privateering (the Djellulis, Temple wrote in 1833, had fitted out up to 23 cruisers at the same time).<sup>2</sup> The tributes and presents were undoubtedly an important item in the Bey's budget: 8 states gave consular gifts and triennial tributes to Hammuda Pasha; Spain gave 250,000 piasters at the conclusion of the

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1. Desfontaines, p.31, Monchicourt: Nyssen p.18, Maggil, p.87, Monchicourt: Filippi p.150 and f.
  2. Monchicourt: Filippi p.181, Temple I, p.142.

treaty of 1791, the United States 93,000 dollars in 1799 for the creation of their consulate, Holland 500,000 francs in 1815, etc.<sup>1</sup> Rousseau's assertion seems to be at least partly justified: "L'Angleterre porta un coup terrible aux finances des deux Régences en les privant des ressources considérables qu'elles retiraient de la course et du rachat des esclaves."<sup>2</sup> These changes, however, cannot completely account for the diminution of the Bey's resources which is largely explained by the economic decline of the Regency.

The depopulation of Tunis gives a striking picture of that decline: the plague of 1784-1785 (which is said to have caused the death of one third of the population)<sup>3</sup>, the famine of 1805, the plague of 1818-1820 (according to Rousseau there were 50,000 victims in Tunis only) explain the extent of a diminution which it is almost impossible to figure with precision. Nyssen gives the number of 5,000,000 before the plague of 1784: it may be exaggerated though Maggil confirms it and estimates the population at 2,500,000 in 1810; Temple (1833) says 2,000,000 and Pellissier gives the rather pessimistic estimate of 800,000 (in 1845).<sup>4</sup>

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1. Plantet III, p.LXV and f.
  2. Rousseau p.3131.
  3. Plantet III, N.935.
  4. Maggil, p.47, Temple I, 224, Pellissier p.329.

The basic natural resources of the country had not changed much since the XVth century: cereals in the North, olives in the Sahel, palm trees in the south, cattle breeding in the interior. But from the beginning of the XIXth century the travellers unanimously remarked on the diminution of cultivated areas and the increase of nomadism: the agriculturists showed a marked tendency to join the Tribes and to abandon their villages.<sup>1</sup> Agriculture was neglected and abandoned because nobody dared to cultivate more land than they needed for their bare subsistence and the payment of taxes.<sup>2</sup> The peasants were overloaded with excessive taxes and the extortions of the Caids and the farmers of Revenue. The arbitrary proceedings and oppression of the agents of the government, Pückler Muskau wrote, explained why "the greater part of this fruitful soil is still uncultivated except in the neighbourhood of the towns."<sup>3</sup> The development of the monopolies discouraged the agriculturists, and Filippi for instance explained the decline of the olive cultivation in the Sahel by the institution of the oil monopoly.<sup>4</sup> The confusion of

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1. Pellissier, p.331.
  2. Temple I, 225.
  3. Pückler Muskau II, p.163.
  4. Monchicourt; Filippi, p.109.

the system of land tenure (the regime of the "melk" - private property - affected only a small part of the lands, but the collective lands, the religious foundations - habous -, the domanial lands covered very extensive areas) the metayage system (the metayer generally received one-fifth of the produce and was called Khammes) hindered the progress of agriculture.<sup>1</sup> There was no modern industry and the traditional handicrafts were affected by the same difficulties as agriculture (over taxation and monopolies); in addition the competition of European produce threatened some of the formerly most prosperous crafts: the manufacture of the sheshias employed 15,000 workmen at the beginning of the XVIIIth century and the Tunisian sheshias ~~were~~ exported everywhere in the Ottoman part of the Mediterranean; Maggil already remarked its decline which Franck and Filippi ascribe to the monopolist policy of the government and to the competition of cheap European products of mediocre quality.<sup>2</sup>

The extent of Tunisian trade was comparable with the trade of Beyrut at the same time: 275 ships arrived in the Port of Tunis in 1830 (with a tonnage of 30,424 T):

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1. See P. Sebag La Tunisie, p.37 and 100.
  2. Peyssonnel Relation d'un voyage... p.56 and f. Maggil, p.169.-170. Franck, p.84, Monchicourt Filippi p.118 and f. Pellissier p.357-358.



341 in Beyrut (21,247 T) in 1835.<sup>1</sup> The external trade, estimated at 5,000,000 francs (imports) and 5,300,000 francs (exports) in 1788 had of course been severely affected by the Napoleonic wars (in 1816 the imports had fallen to 2,200,000 francs and the exports to 1,900,000). By 1830 the trading had recovered its balance: the imports reached 8,100,000 francs and the exports 5,100,000 (with about 2,000,000 francs of fraudulent exports).<sup>2</sup> But the Europeans complained that the Bey's trade policy hindered the progress of transactions and injured their interests: as the import duties were limited to 3 or 5% by the Treaties, the Beys increased the exports duties, sold permits of exportation (teskeres), or monopolized the commerce of certain Tunisian products. The caravan trade with Central Africa (which brought black slaves, gold-dust and ivory to Tunis) was still flourishing at the beginning of the century: Franck reports that three caravans arrived yearly from Ghadames (and twelve from Algiers). Although Pückler Muskau still pointed out its importance, it had begun to decline;<sup>3</sup> at all events the Tunisian Saharian trade was ruined soon after 1830 by the action undertaken by the Powers against the slave

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1. Bailey British policy and the Turkish Reform Movement, p.102.
  2. Plantet III N.421 (1788) N 1099 (1816) N 1344 (1828)
  3. Franck, p.122-123, Pückler Muskau (1) p.2-3.

trade, the abolition of slavery in Tunis, and the diversion of the central African trade towards Tripoli.<sup>1</sup> Trade with Algiers, after a long interruption caused by the Tuniso-Algerian wars, was gravely hindered by the French occupation: "Algiers used to supply some native manufacture, Consul Reade wrote in 1832. But not since the French took possession of it; from that moment its extensive overland trade with Tunis has entirely ceased."<sup>2</sup>

We have remarked again and again that the Tunisian fiscal system was generally held responsible for the economic difficulties of the Regency. Although the situation worsened particularly after 1830, the difficulties had begun long before. The taxes were heavy, numerous and complicated; besides the "legal" taxes (the tithes; Achour of the cereals, Canoun of the palm and olive trees) there were innumerable administrative duties and taxes, not to mention contributions which were sometimes completely arbitrary ("right of hospitality" offered to the newly appointed Caids, fines....). The collectors of the taxes were the Caids and the Farmers of revenues (who were often the Caids themselves); they rarely shrank from resorting to extortions to recover the money they had disbursed. Some local products had

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1. Pellissier, p.151.

2. FO 335 57 / 3. Commercial Report for 1832.

become government monopolies: the government farmed them out and their number increased continually (the main monopolies, towards 1830 affected the hides, wax, coral, tobacco....). Further abuses were brought about by the system of monopolies and further barriers to the progress of economy.<sup>1</sup> If one takes into account the exactions of the agents of the government it appears that although the government suffered from a lack of financial resources, the load was nearly unbearable for the population. The situation became nearly desperate in 1828 and the Bey, as we have seen before, relied on the energetic administration of Shakir Sahib et Tabaa to bring about an improvement in his finances, but with very limited success.

6. The Regency was fortunately spared the difficulties which the existence of Christian minorities created for the Ottoman Empire: the only Christians living in Tunis in 1830 were Europeans and their number was relatively small (2 or 3000): it was to increase very quickly after the occupation of Algiers (in 1845 Pellissier estimated the number of Christians at about 15,000). The rest of the population was almost exclusively Moslem: the Arab invaders had mixed with the Barber population

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1. Pellissier, p.322-325.

who had been completely arabized. The Turks however formed a class apart but there were only a few thousand of them and their political, military and social importance was declining; the Mamelukes on the contrary, though few in number, played a prominent part in political life and lived around the Bey. The purely Tunisian population was divided according to their habitat and livelihood more than according to ethnic considerations. But the difference was so sharp between the townsmen and the sedentary agriculturists, and the nomads that travellers were prone to distinguish between two races, the Moors and the Arabs, whom they endowed with contrasted and imaginary national characteristics: the Moors were indolent, cowardly and lazy, extremely miserly and treacherous, and often apathetical and careless. The Arabs were chivalrous, warlike, faithful to the plighted word, though full of guile.<sup>1</sup> In the towns there were other racial elements (Turks, Andalusians etc.) which, though not very numerous, gave the urban population a special mark. Economically as well as socially and intellectually the towns constituted a separate world. It was there, and particularly in Tunis, that the important Jewish minority was gathered. Its

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1. Filippi, p.128. Dunant: Notice sur la Régence de Tunis, p.191 and 202.

constituent elements had very varied origins: the main body of the Jews had come to Tunis from the East (sometimes before the diaspora); but there were also the descendants of Judaized Berbers; many had been expelled from Spain (after the XIVth century) or had come from Italy during the XVIIIth century. They numbered between 20 and 30,000 and formed a separate community, living in special quarters, paying a special tax, under the authority of their rabbis, who judged them according to the mosaic law. They were on the whole well treated by the Moslem majority but their social status was still inferior at the beginning of the XIXth century and was symbolized by the special costume which they were obliged to wear. Their situation however was improved after 1830 owing to Ahmed Bey's humanitarian policy and to the influence of the European Representatives.<sup>1</sup>

Great Britain and Tunis.

7. Since the intervention of the Powers in 1816 and 1818 the Regency had become a "question" in which British interests were involved. As for commercial interests, the part Great Britain played in Tunisian trade cannot be compared, for instance, with British commercial influence in Morocco (where she had the

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1. Franck pp.95-98. Pückler Muskau pp.179-181.

largest trading interest)<sup>1</sup>. France had partly lost her predominance of the last decades of the XVIIIth century when she accounted for half the Tunisian trade (4.7 millions out of 10.3 millions in 1788); but her part still included one third of the imports and exports (4 millions out of 12 in 1826).<sup>2</sup> The Italian States with another third of the trade came far ahead of Great Britain whose share did not amount to more than one eighth of the total trade (in 1830, 44 ships with a tonnage of 3.825T out of 276 ships with a tonnage of 30.424 T).<sup>3</sup> As the total amount of the Tunisian trade did not exceed £500,000 (12.9 millions francs in 1829) British trade with Tunis was not very important (in 1830 Great Britain's trade with Turkey reached £3,500,000)<sup>4</sup>. But Tunis provided a part of the provisions which were needed for the base and the fleet of Malta, and this consideration accounts for the interest which the Admiralty and the Colonial Office took in the Tunisian trade. On the other hand the British Consuls and tradesmen were of course desirous of keeping the door of Tunis opened for a future increase in British trade, and they hoped that the Regency might become a better market for

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1. Flournoy British policy towards Morocco, p.31-32.
  2. Plantet III N 421 (1788) N 1265 (1826)
  3. FO 77, 21 and 22. Commercial reports.
  4. Bailey, p.74.

British manufactures and provide a greater supply of agricultural produce and raw materials.<sup>1</sup>

The protection of the Europeans was no longer a problem in Tunis in 1830; since the beginning of the century their situation had been completely changed. Instead of being treated in an off-hand manner by the Beys (the Consuls, Franck reports, come to the Palace with two pairs of shoes. They take off the first one when they enter the Bey's rooms; they then kiss hands)<sup>2</sup> The Europeans had acquired a self-confidence which was turning into arrogance in many cases. That rapid change was brought about by the interventions of 1816 and 1818, by the weakening of the Bey's authority and by the conquest of Algiers (the custom of the kissing of hands lasted for some years after 1830 and was only suppressed after the refusal of the French Consul to submit to it). Pellissier, while describing some years later the privileges enjoyed by the Europeans in Tunis (the Consuls judged the mixed civil and commercial cases in which the Tunisians were plaintiffs, and actually all criminal cases), was to remark that they were "exorbitant" but "necessary".<sup>3</sup> There were very few

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1. Maggil, p.131-135 develops that point of view.
  2. Franck, p.91.
  3. Pellissier, p.338-341.

Englishmen in Tunis in 1830 but the British Consuls had to protect a somewhat numerous Anglo-Maltese population, between 2000 and 3000 in 1835 according to Reade.<sup>1</sup> The Maltese, scattered in the centres of the Regency, in close contact with the native population with whom they traded, or trafficked (they were often engaged in usury or contraband), put serious difficulties in the way of the British Consuls, out of all proportion to their actual number. The conduct of the Maltese "has become so daring and outrageous" Reade wrote in 1833, that he had felt obliged to report to the Foreign Office; "unfortunately, he continued, they have a very bad reputation and if any crimes are committed they are immediately suspected.... They are violent in the highest degree to their own authority."<sup>2</sup> In 1836 the Bey made a complaint to the Consul: "Nous vous avons écrit au sujet des Maltais, he wrote, parceque leur malveillance a augmenté considérablement dans notre pays au préjudice de tout le monde par l'assassinat, le pillage des propriétés et le vol."<sup>3</sup> Under the circumstances the question was not so much that of protecting the Maltese from the Tunisians as the Tunisians from the Maltese.

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1. FO 77 29 Reade, December 30, 1836.

2. FO 77 24 Reade, November 2, 1833.

3. FO 335 65, the Bey to Reade, August 25, 1836.



8. If, materially, the British position in Tunis was somewhat weak, the strategic importance of the Regency could not fail to impress British statesmen. Situated in front of Malta, Tunis commanded the southern shore of the straits which unite the two parts of the Mediterranean and could eventually neutralize the British Mediterranean base. There was no such problem as long as Tunis was ruled over by an independent dynasty which was too weak seriously to threaten the British strategic interests; but these interests would indeed be imperilled if a great naval Power occupied that formidable position. The only Power whom Britain could suspect of entertaining such designs was, of course, France whose Mediterranean policy had failed in 1798-1800, but who was likely to resume her expansion at the first opportunity.

Before 1830 such perspectives were remote indeed but it is none the less obvious that a struggle for influence was already raging between the French and British Consuls in Tunis. French policy was still very vaguely shaped in the Barbary States but as soon as the end of the XVIIIth century characteristic features had begun to appear in the French appraisal of the situation of Tunis: France tended to recognize the quasi independence of Tunis and to negotiate directly with her Beys, more with a view of easing her relations with them than

of preparing the way for an annexion;<sup>1</sup> France claimed in Tunis a predominant "influence", the significance of which was not clearly defined, but which rested on the long duration of her relations with the Porte and Tunis (where she had had Consuls since 1577), the importance of her trade with the Regency, and her Mediterranean vocation. The idea that France was destined for a "rôle spécial" in Tunis became more precise at the beginning of the XIXth century, after an eclipse during the Napoleonic wars:<sup>2</sup> "Sous le point de vue politique, il nous importe de recouvrer notre ancienne prépondérance à Tunis et de l'accroître autant que possible" Chateaubriand wrote in 1823.<sup>3</sup>

Great Britain had her own Mediterranean positions and ambitions and could not but view these pretensions with apprehension: her influence in Tunis was more recent (the first British Consul had arrived in Tunis in 1623), her interests less powerful, but her position had been strengthened by her naval victories and supremacy in the Mediterranean. Lord Exmouth's intervention in 1816 had given a further proof of British interests and prestige. For that very reason it had given rise

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1. Plantet III N 703, 705, 725, 749, 1194.
  2. Plantet III N 1103.
  3. Plantet N 1184.

to serious apprehensions in the French quarters in Tunis (the French Consul spoke of the "politique tortueuse des anglais").<sup>1</sup> The French and English Consuls were already in opposition in Tunis; after 1827 when the question of Algiers became acute their rivalry increased and the relations in Tunis between de Lesseps and Reade worsened as they did indeed between Rousseau and Warrington in Tripoli.<sup>2</sup> Just as the French statesmen were taking more interest in the Regency, so the British were more concerned with protecting the Regency against eventual French encroachments and maintaining the political status quo there.

9. These conflicting tendencies could not but give rise to antagonist policies when the French government gave up their first project of limited naval action against the Dey of Algiers and began to think of the temporary occupation of Algerian ports. Tunis was likely to be affected by that change of policy as the French, once settled in Algiers, could not fail to take interest in the fate of the neighbouring Regency, and were bound indeed to try to develop there influence therein: "On commence par les bons offices, on finit

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1. Plantet III N 1082. Devoize March 22, 1816.  
2. Darcy Cent ans de rivalite coloniale p.63.

par l'occupation.... Des compétitions internationales peuvent seules retarder ce dénouement..."<sup>1</sup> Great Britain was similarly bound to oppose that inevitable development of French influence in Tunis, in order to defend her own commercial and strategical interests and ultimately to prevent the upsetting of the political equilibrium in the Mediterranean.

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1. P.H.X. (D'Estournelles de Constant) La politique française en Tunisie, p.2. This book, although it was published in 1891, remains the best and most lucid account of French policy in Tunis.

I. The problem of the 'rapprochement' between  
Tunis and the Porte (1830 - 1855)

"The difficulty as to Tunis is the  
number of status quos there. The Porte  
has one ... There is the French status  
quo ... Then there is another status quo."

(Rose 1853)

## I. The elements of the Tunisian question (1830-1835)

1. During the five years which elapsed between the two events which were to prove decisive for the future of Tunis - the capture of Algiers and the re-establishment of Turkish domination in Tripoli (1830-1835) - there was no statement of a definite British policy towards Tunis after the brief crisis which occurred in the first months of 1830. In general the new and intricate problems which faced Great Britain in the Mediterranean, especially since the Greek crisis, were to remain without diplomatic solution for several years. The Algerian Problem itself, which was then likely to produce the main difficulties in North Africa, lost much of its importance soon after it had arisen. The accession of the Orleans family to the throne induced the British Government to think that France would sooner or later abandon a precarious and expensive conquest: this was an illusion which they were to keep for many years. Furthermore, after July 1830 their attention was turning to the European difficulties, and they

were so aware of the need for good relations with France that the French settlement on some parts of the Algerian coast lost much of its importance for the Foreign Office.<sup>1</sup> The two governments tacitly agreed not to continue the discussions and to leave the matter as it stood.<sup>2</sup> There is another reason, of a rather technical kind, which helps to explain why the Foreign Office displayed little interest in the Barbaresque countries: that region was within the control of the Colonial Office<sup>3</sup> and Tunisian problems reached the Foreign Office only after passing through a ministerial department which naturally did not evince much interest for the political questions involved. It must be added that until 1835 no serious crisis occurred which seemed to call for more efficient methods in the handling of political affairs in North Africa.

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1. Seton-Watson Britain and Europe, p.169.
  2. Darcy, France et Angleterre. Cent ans de rivalité coloniale, p.167.
  3. The Consuls on the coast of Barbary had been "from early times" under the direction of the Home department and the Colonial Office (Parliamentary papers, VI, 10 August 1835, p.155).

Tunis and the Algerian expedition.

2. In the first weeks of 1830, however, Tunis was involved in the Algerian question by an incident which was connected with the prospective operations against Algiers. In September 1829 Drovetti, then French Consul at Alexandria, had informed Polignac, that Mohammed Ali was ready to undertake the conquest of the three Regencies on behalf of the Sultan; he would require, however, 28 million francs, four men of war and French diplomatic protection. Polignac readily availed himself of that opportunity of attaining his own object at little cost, and of putting an end to the long and unsuccessful blockade of Algiers;<sup>1</sup> he accordingly drafted a plan which was roughly similar to Mohammed Ali's offer. The ensuing negotiations with the Pasha and the Sultan were to be conducted secretly in order to avoid the possible opposition of Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

While Mohammed Ali was giving his agreement to Polignac's scheme (though asking for modifications in the material conditions of French help) Guilleminot brought up the plan at the Porte on the 1st of December 1829. At first, the Reis Effendi seemed to be

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1. Darcy, p.71.

2. Douin, Mohamed Aly et l'expédition d'Alger, XII.



favourable, but he afterwards changed his mind probably under the influence of Sir Robert Gordon. The British Ambassador, without waiting for instructions from the Foreign Office, took a strong line against the issue of the Firman which was to entrust Mohammed Ali with the conquest of the Regencies.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Polignac, in the last days of 1829, drew up a project modified to meet Mohammed Ali's objections, and had it accepted by the French Government on January 3, 1830. It was then sent at once to Cairo.<sup>2</sup>

It had been impossible to keep these negotiations secret; as early as December 24, 1830 Lord Stuart of Rothesay inquired in Paris about the rumours which were circulating and was given a categorical denial by Polignac. But through Gordon and Cowley the Foreign Office was at last given reliable information (January 13, 1830). It only remained for Polignac officially to inform the European Courts of his project: the two dispatches of 16 and 18 January 1830 gave the main features of the agreement with Mohammed Ali: Ibrahim Pasha was to subdue Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers and re-establish the sultan's authority therein. Polignac was well aware that the extension of

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1. Darcy, p.79; and Douin, XXVI.

2. Douin, XXXI to XXXV.

the military operations to Tunis and Tripoli might raise some objections "à raison du caractère pacifique de nos relations avec les Régences de Tunis et Tripoli" - But he wanted to consider the question as being settled between "gouverneurs de plusieurs provinces d'un état étranger" and laid the emphasis upon the benefit which the European Powers would reap from a more regular management of the administration in these countries.<sup>1</sup>

The British Government gave immediate expression to their opposition to the scheme: while admitting that the abolition of piracy would be advantageous to Europe, they feared lest behind Mohammed Ali, French influence should be established in North Africa; also it seemed dangerous to allow Mohammed Ali to increase his strength when it was assumed in London that his final aim was to secure his independence from the Porte; the problem of Ottoman integrity was thus linked with the Algerian question.<sup>2</sup>

Aberdeen and Wellington, however, carefully limited the bearing of their reservations. As early as the 21st of January, Aberdeen pointed out to the duc de Laval that the operation contemplated would be

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1. Douin, XLIII.

2. Serres, La politique Turque en Afrique du Nord, pp. 29.20.

conceivable only if Mohammed Ali was to receive "mission ou du moins, consentement du Sultan"; on the 23rd Wellington confirmed the surprise of his government "de voir le gouvernement francais étendre au delà d'Alger ses projets hostiles et compliquer (sa) vengeance avec un plan d'extermination contre Tunis et Tripoli".<sup>1</sup> Wellington "could not but view this scheme as one tending to establish in these Regencies... a French system of government instead of a Turkish one" and concluded by inviting Laval "to submit to his Court the expediency of reconsidering this scheme", the King of France being "sufficiently powerful to obtain ... satisfaction by his own means."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the English Cabinet was taking steps to foil the project. On the 25th of January Aberdeen acquainted Gordon with the uneasiness of the Government and asked him to push forward the Turkish mediation in the Algerian affair so that French intervention might be avoided.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the British Consul at Alexandria was to warn the Pasha "that if he would undertake hostile operations of the nature intended without the authority or command of his lawful Sovereign,

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1. Douin, XLVII and XLVIII.
  2. Wellington, VI, 438, 439, Despatches, correspondence and memoranda.
  3. Douin, p.2.

it would be impossible for His Majesty to regard such a proceeding with indifference."<sup>1</sup> As for the efforts to arouse the opposition of the Powers to the scheme, complete success was met only at Vienna. But even the Courts which abstained from showing any deep hostility raised serious objections and looked at the scheme as wholly unworkable.<sup>2</sup>

This being so Polignac was induced to alter his first plan considerably; France was to assume responsibility for the main operation against Algiers, Mohammed Ali's part being limited to the reduction of Tripoli and Tunis with subsidies reduced in proportion (Council of the 31st of January).<sup>3</sup> Great Britain nevertheless maintained her objections, but greatly toned down by the conviction that the new plan would prove impracticable. On the 19th of February Aberdeen wrote to Lord Stuart that "it does not appear that the Pasha of Egypt has any just cause of war against the Regencies of Tripoli and Tunis; and if it be intended that he should make the conquest of these states without having been authorized by the Sultan the enterprise would assume a character which would scarcely

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1. Wellington, VI, p.580.
  2. Darcy, pp.89-94.
  3. Douin,, LV..

deserve the approbation of Her Most Christian Majesty."<sup>1</sup>

Mohammed Ali, when informed of Polignac's second project (which arrived in Egypt one day after Ibrahim had accepted the first Convention) could not but express his disagreement. The British opposition was only communicated to him officially on the 7th of March, but he made it clear that his refusal was in fact largely due to the unfavourable attitude of the Foreign Office: "J'avais résolu dès le début, he told Baker, de ne pas faire un pas dans cette affaire sans le consentement de l'Angleterre. C'est cependant les Anglais qui m'en ont empêché."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Gordon was warning the Reis Effendi against the Polignac scheme. The determined attitude of the British Cabinet having thus provoked the failure of the plan, the French Government was left to act alone. No-one in London was surprised by the breaking down of the negotiations - as Laval said in a letter to his Government dated March 17, "le Cabinet est persuadé... que les démarches qu'il a faites soit à Alexandrie, soit à Constantinople, ont réussi à arrêter la coopération du Pasha d'Egypte dans les desseins de la France."<sup>3</sup> Consideration for the interests of British

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1. FO, 27, 405.

2. Douin, p. XC.

3. Douin, p. LXXVIII.

policy in the Mediterranean, rather than special regard for the fate of Tunis, had helped to dispel the clouds which threatened the Regency. The plan had failed before the Bey, belatedly informed, had even time to invoke Reade's assistance against Mohammed Ali's hostile intentions.<sup>1</sup>

3. Tunis was not affected by the negotiations over Algiers which were being pursued between the French and the British during the spring. In fact Polignac had given up the idea of involving the Regency in the action which he was then preparing, and the Foreign Office did not think it necessary to renew the warnings given when the Mohammed Ali project was being contemplated in Paris. Yet the developments of the Algerian expedition could not but affect Tunis. Reade did not require any specific instructions to keep the area under close observation and to oppose as far as he could the French enterprizes in Tunis. His personal relations with the French Consul, M. de Lessops, had never been very friendly, a situation not unusual in the near East. They continued to deteriorate as the Algerian question was nearing its conclusion.<sup>2</sup> The responsibility for that situation could

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1. FR 77 / 21. Reade to Murray, March 22, 1830.

2. Darcy, p.63.

have been fairly divided between them, and the charges they made against each other were at least partly justified in both cases: "From the moment of his arrival in this country, Reade reported about de Lesseps, he has shown a disposition to interfere in the affairs of others but particularly mine."<sup>1</sup>

Just as Reade was reflecting with some anxiety on the consequences which the taking of Algiers would bring about in Tunis, de Lesseps began to negotiate with the Bey a treaty which openly aimed at the elimination of piracy and the enslavement of Christians (which had, incidentally, disappeared since 1816 in Tunis). But the Treaty also intended to secure for France substantial advantages in the Regency (such as the long disputed privilege of coral fishing, and, in a new article, the concession of a ground in Carthage for the building of a Chapel dedicated to Saint Louis).<sup>2</sup> Polignac instructed de Lesseps to act "avec tous les ménagements convenables mais de la manière la plus positive", but authorized him in case he met any resistance to threaten the Bey with the intervention of the French Navy.<sup>3</sup> Rather than undergo the fate of his

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1. FO 77. 21. Reade to Hay June 7, 1830.

~~2. FO 77. 27. Murray to Reade, May 5, 1830.~~

2. Serres, pp. 45-47.

3. Plantet III, pp. 700-704.

neighbour, the Bey preferred to yield, and signed the Treaty on the 8th of August: he had, however, previously consulted Reade who, left without instructions by his government, could not give him any support. The Colonial Office endorsed his attitude when, sometime later, it advised Reade to adhere "to a strict neutrality in any disputes which may arise between the French government and the Bey, and abstaining from all interference whatever". The Office thereby defined a policy prudently limited to the defence of British rights in Tunis.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion of the agreements between Clauzel and Hussein Bey (for the installation as rulers of Constantinople and Oran of two princes of his family who would have become vassals of France and would have paid tribute) induced Reade to go beyond these instructions and to advise the Bey to be very careful in his relations with France and to avoid any decision which could increase French influence in the Regency.<sup>2</sup> The Colonial Office did not, however, deem it necessary to take any step against the execution of the agreements in January 1831: ultimately the failure of the

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1. FO 77. 27. Murray to Reade, October 6, 1830.

2. Serres, 72-75.



agreement<sup>1</sup> justified this inaction and dispelled Reade's fears.

The decline of British influence in Tunis (1830-1834).

4. In spite of the assurances repeatedly given by the Bey when in difficulty, and of Reade's confidence, the British influence in Tunis could not avoid being seriously affected by the French settlement in Algiers; on the contrary the French influence continued to increase, and even if he resented the pressure which occasionally was brought to bear upon him (as in August 1830) or the disappointment created by the failure of the Clauzel agreement, the Bey could not but acknowledge the changes created by the presence near his frontiers of a powerful French army. Reade noticed these changes in his daily relations with the Bey: "Since the treaties of Constantine~~le~~ and Oran ... I have experienced every difficulty in the most common affairs ... The Tunisian government have become exceedingly difficult and I may add, insolent." Each difficulty he experienced revealed, he thought, the hidden

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1. The French government refused to approve a transaction which seemed to prejudge the future of Algiers in a moment when they desired to avoid any commitment in that matter (Thureau-Dangin, Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet, III, 463).

and hostile influence of de Lesseps: "They have his advice although secretly upon any affair which is now brought before the Bey ." Reade expressed openly his conviction that "a very decided language" was to be used with the Bey: "our influence has suffered very much indeed; but the moment a man of war or two are sent here to support me in the claims I have to make, I am persuaded it will be fully re-established." And again: "A small squadron of ours would put all to right."<sup>1</sup>

The arrest in the island of Djerba of the captain of a Greek vessel, the Andromache, seemed to provide in the nick of time the opportunity of showing British strength in Tunis which, Reade was confident, would restore his position. The Colonial Office, probably under the influence of the Foreign Office which was directly concerned with the case,<sup>2</sup> decided that the detention of the Andromache (which as a Greek vessel enjoyed British protection) justified a demand of reparations from the Tunisian Government. It was thus gratifying Reade's wishes to the full: "It is a very mistaken idea, he wrote, to flatter and compliment

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1. FO 77 / 23 Reade to Hay, October 30, 1832.

2. Backhouse to Hay, February 6, 1833. FO 77 24.

these people."<sup>1</sup> Goderick's instructions were brought to Tunis on a warship, a circumstance "which I am sure (will) have the best effects in my future communications with the Bey", commented the warlike Consul.<sup>2</sup> As it happened the Bey was obliged to yield and make the reparations which were demanded of him. "I am persuaded that these authorities will be more cautious how they interfere with British interests for the time to come" concluded Reade when reporting the successful conclusion of the affair.<sup>3</sup>

The Consul showed rather too much optimism in believing that such an action, drastic as it was, could in itself reverse a state of affairs of which the causes went much deeper. Hay, himself speaking for the Colonial Office admitted "the decline of (British) influence at Tunis ... The truth is that the French expedition against Algiers has had the effect of materially weakening British influence all over Barbary", and seemed to look at these changes as inevitable: "In this state of things we must be content for a while to see these rulers truckle to France."<sup>4</sup> Accordingly

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1. FO 77 27. Goderick to Reade, February 11, 1833.
  2. FO 77 24. Reade to Hay, April 22, 1833.
  3. id. Reade to Goderick, April 13, 1833.
  4. FO 77 27. Hay to Reade, February 11, 1833.

Reade was instructed to be careful in his dealings with the French at a moment when they were threatening Constantinople: "You will understand that it would be inconsistent with the friendly relations in which this government stands towards France, to give any encouragement to the Bey of Constantinople."<sup>1</sup> The occupation of Tripoli by the Turks, as well as the annexation of Constantinople, which soon followed, suddenly created problems which compelled Britain to give up this attitude of self-effacement.

The occupation of Tripoli by the Turks (1835)

5. The occupation of Algiers was one of the main causes of the expulsion from Tripoli of the Pasha Youssef, last member of the Karamanlis, the dynasty which had ruled over the Regency since 1795, under the very loose suzerainty of the Porte. In 1830, the sending of a French fleet had imposed upon him a Treaty roughly similar to the one which the Bey of Tunis had accepted on the 8th of August.<sup>2</sup> Interior difficulties, complicated by the intervention of the French and British consuls, each of them supporting his candidate, allowed the porte to re-establish its direct authority

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1. FO 77 27. Stanley to Reade, April 7, 1834.

2. Serres, pp.82-92.

in Tripoli. A Turkish squadron was sent to Tripoli and its commander Shakir Bey succeeded without great difficulty in dismissing the Pasha and appointing a new governor fully submitting to the authority of the Porte (May 1835).<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman government still retained some hope of regaining possession of Algiers: their recovery of control in Tripoli gave them a strong footing in North Africa which could be used to this end; but it was also obvious that Tunis would inevitably be affected by the change in Tripoli, and this consideration justifies the anxiety with which Reade had watched the events in the neighbouring Regency.

The Porte had always considered that the three Regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli were integral parts of the Empire. But after 1835 that attitude ceased to be wholly academic and involved very precise and serious consequences.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1833 the Bey undertook negotiations to induce the Porte to grant the investiture of Tripoli to his brother and heir apparent Mustapha: the demands of the Porte (an important sum of money, an annual tribute, and the payment of the debts of the Pasha of Tripoli) had brought the

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1. Serres, pp. 121-123.

2. Serres, p. 125.

scheme to nothing.<sup>1</sup> But in 1835 Tunis was more directly concerned with the fate of Tripoli: in January a Turkish envoy came to Tunis and asked for Hussein Bey's help; but was received with some coolness by the Bey who considered without much satisfaction the Turkish operations in Tripoli and entertained serious fears for his own situation. In June 1835 Mustapha Bey who had just succeeded to Hussein, was under such apprehensions about a supposed Turkish attack against Djerba that he decided to send to Constantinople his principal Minister Shakir Sahib et Tabaa; Shakir took with him a considerable number of presents in order to avert the threat. But before his departure a Turkish Frigate landed in Tunis Shakir Bey himself; he announced the complete success of his mission at Tripoli and invited Mustapha Bey to provide the new Pasha with "tout ce que ce dernier pourrait faire demander". The conclusion of the message he brought was rather ominous: The Sultan considered, he said, "que les Régences de Tripoli de Tunis et d'Alger lui appartenaient" and consequently his duty was "de prendre intérêt a ce qui touche ces pays et de surveiller attentivement tout ce qui s'y passe".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Serres, pp. 107-108.

2. Serres, p. 137.

Reade watched in a half hearted way the development of Turkish policy; he did not conceal the fact that he would be sorry to witness the possible occupation of Djerba by the Turks; while doing so he undoubtedly thought of the immediate trouble such an action would create in Tunis; he was obviously not referring to any clear conception of the relations between the Regency and the Porte.<sup>1</sup> The political situation in Tunis was already deeply affected by the new Turkish policy; the Bey's apprehension with regard to the real disposition of the Porte towards him had just been given an appearance of justification; Shakir had been coldly welcomed at Constantinople where people were openly speaking of repeating over Tunis the successful operation of Tripoli. Mustapha Bey was therefore induced to turn towards France who was not yet firmly established in Algiers and was then preparing the conquest of Constantine. For these reasons she was naturally hostile to the presence of direct Ottoman rule near her North African possession.<sup>2</sup> But French intervention of any kind was to provoke an inevitable reaction in British policy, and give a Mediterranean importance to the Tunisian question.

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1. Reade to Ponsonby, July 9, 1835. FO 195 / 104.  
2. Serres, pp. 139-142.

It so happened that at the beginning of 1836, at the very time when the elements of the Tunisian problem were more precisely defined, the responsibilities of the British policy in Tunis fell into other hands: in 1835 the Committee on Consular establishment had suggested that the Consulates in the Barbary States should fall in future within the competence of the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office gave support to a measure which was intended to bring to British policy in these countries the required unity and efficiency to meet the developments in the affairs of Tripoli and Constantine.<sup>1</sup> In April 1835 Palmerston informed the Commons that the Government was preparing the transfer of the correspondence from one department to the other.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Parliamentary Papers, VI, 1835.
  2. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Third Series XXXII, 1196.



2. Palmerston and the policy of "rapprochement" between Tunis and the Porte (1836 - 1841).

1. Just as the Tunisian question was reaching a decisive stage, British policy in the Mediterranean was taking a more resolute turn after a gradual evolution which had lasted for many years. While it might be an exaggeration to say that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century "the British public in general and the Foreign Office in particular had very little interest in the affairs of Turkey"<sup>1</sup>; it seems nevertheless obvious that the Greek crisis greatly increased the interest Great Britain took in Mediterranean questions. The development of commercial intercourse with Turkey and the increasing importance of that market for British export trade were one of the primary motives of Britain's determination to maintain the Ottoman state.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the problem of the Road to India was assuming a new aspect; and the need was being felt for a shorter way by land (towards the Euphrates or across the Isthmus of Suez); a specially appointed commission reported favourably to the House of Commons in 1834, and a year

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1. Bailey, p.38.

2. Bailey, pp. 80-82.

later the Euphrates road was actually explored. Great Britain could not but view in a new light the Power which controlled those new roads to India.<sup>1</sup>

Palmerston's attitude towards the Mediterranean question had been gradually defined after 1830: in 1832 and 1833 the Foreign Secretary had shown some hesitation with regard to the amount of support he was to give to the Porte against Mohammed Ali's claims. It is true that his reluctance to intervene was partly due to British commitments in Europe,<sup>2</sup> but it is also obvious that, in spite of Stratford Canning's warnings, Palmerston did not then realize that there was any immediate danger for Ottoman integrity.<sup>3</sup> And again in 1833, although he understood better the necessity of avoiding the disruption of the Empire, Palmerston had rather uncertain ideas about the nature of Turkish domination in North Africa (he considered the "Barbary Deys" as autonomous rulers).<sup>4</sup>

Indeed the crisis of 1833 was a decisive turning point: it gave to Palmerston's policy the two complementary aspects which it was to keep afterwards;

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1. Guyot La première entente Cordiale, p.156-157.  
Swain, The struggle for the control of the Mediterranean  
p. 53-54.
  2. Temperley, The Crimea, p. 63-65.
  3. Swain, p.85-86 and p.132.
  4. Bulwer, Life of PalmerstonII: Palmerston to Temple,  
March 21, 1833. (p. 145)

resistance to Russia and reform in Turkey.<sup>1</sup> The treaty of Unkiar Skelessi threatened British positions in the Near East; Palmerston's reaction came too late through lack of preparation; but after the Treaty he began to consider that area as the mainspring of his whole Mediterranean and Indian policy.<sup>2</sup> The aims of his policy were clear: Primarily Britain was to support the Turkish Empire "heartily and vigorously" and "by reforming it to make it more capable of resisting its enemies and able to play its part in the balance of power in Eastern Europe."<sup>3</sup> This policy, which he purposely limited to material improvements (in the army, the finances and the administration), was to stop the internal decline of the Empire, and in the meantime any sign of disruption was to be energetically checked: in October 1834 Palmerston warned Mohammed Ali against "a declaration of independence or any interference with the status quo".<sup>4</sup>

It was precisely at the time when the "entente cordiale" was meeting its first difficulties that this new English policy threatened to multiply the causes

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1. Webster II 790. The Foreign Policy of Palmerston. Temperley passim. See also Verete, Palmerston and the Levant Crisis.
  2. Swain, p.51.
  3. Webster II, 540.
  4. Seton-Watson, p.193.

of antagonism in a very tender area for Anglo-French relations: as early as 1834, the year of the Quadruple Alliance, Talleyrand, on leaving London, made the funeral oration of the British alliance.<sup>1</sup> The following years saw a continued increase of difficulties, up to the climax in 1840, particularly in the Mediterranean where in every country (Spain, Greece, Egypt, North Africa) as well as in every field (political, strategical, and economical) France and England were in bitter contention.<sup>2</sup> But most of all it was Mohammed Ali's policy which roused a mixture of rivalry and fear which induced the Foreign Office to consider him to be a 'mere tool of Paris' and a permanent menace to the existence of Turkey; a situation which ultimately gave rise to the Egyptian crisis.

After 1835 Tunis impinged upon British policy in the Mediterranean in several of its aspects. In the general framework of Turkish recovery it was to be expected that the Porte would try to renew in Tunis her successful Tripoli operation; the Foreign Office could not very well at the same time preach the doctrine of Ottoman unity in Alexandria, and refuse to support

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1. Guyot, p. 124.

2. Swain, p.102.

the Sultan against his Tunisian vassals' growing desire for independence; but the French government, who strongly supported Mohammed Ali, had even more pressing reasons for preventing Turkish domination in Tunis, even if it was necessary to do so by developing there their own influence. This attempt would inevitably cause the hostility of the Foreign Office who was becoming more and more suspicious of any move which looked like French encroachment.

Thus from the start the Tunisian question involved two conflicting aspects: a Turkish policy eager to go ahead in Tunis with the support of Great Britain who saw in this action an opportunity for strengthening both the Regency and the Porte - and the Beys' determination to save their virtual independence which obliged them to turn towards France for help; the interests of the French in this particular question were similar to those of the Bey; they could also be tempted to exploit the situation in order to establish a kind of moral protectorate in Tunis. The "French danger" induced Great Britain to hope for a "Turkish solution", but any imprudent step might create a conflict with far-reaching consequences. As early as 1836 the Foreign Office had to face this dilemma.

Shaping of British policy (1836-1837).

2. At the very beginning of 1836 the new trends of French policy in Tunis were given an unambiguous expression. Marshal Clauzel openly advocated the establishment of a French protectorate in Tunis; this was to become the traditional policy of the army and the Algerians during half-a-century. At the same time the Ministre des Affaires Etrangères informed Admiral Roussin of the alleged views of Turkey on Tunis, and invited him to "faire presentir à la Porte que toute tentative tendant à implanter sa domination à Tunis l'exposerait à nous trouver sur son chemin".<sup>1</sup> The presence of a French brig before Tunis, and later of Admiral Hugon's squadron (when it was rumoured that the Turkish Fleet had been sent to Tripoli and Tunis), gave much weight to the explanations which Thiers sent to the European Courts on July 3, 1836: the security of Algeria, he said, compelled France strongly to oppose any Turkish landing in Tunis; the Barbary Regencies were in fact enjoying "a complete independence", and France was to maintain, if necessary, the independence of Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Serres, p.143.

2. Serres, pp. 150-152.

Confronted with the French views about Tunis, Palmerston defined his own position with the same vigour, during two interviews he had with Bourqueney on the 29th of July and the 9th of August 1835: the friendship which France professed towards the Sultan seemed scarcely compatible with any attempt "to prevent the Sultan from exercising his just rights within his own dominions". France's assumption that she was entitled to prevent a Turkish landing in an Ottoman dependency could only appear as an attempt to exercise a kind of suzerainty in Tunis; France could not expect Great Britain to allow her to renew the operation of Algiers: "It would be impossible for England to see with indifference the occupation of Tunis by France".<sup>1</sup> Bourqueney, of course, denied any such intention on the French side; and, as simultaneously the Capitan Pasha stated that he had never intended to go to Tunis, the crisis was peacefully brought to an end.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 27 /518. Palmerston to Granville, November 1, 1836.
  2. It is possible that the Capitan Pasha after having heard of the instructions given to the French Admiral had been induced to give up whatever secret plan he might have had. About the "pensées secrètes" of Pertew Effendi and a plan for overthrowing Mustapha Bey, see Serres, p. 165.

3. French official quarters considered that the naval intervention had saved the Bey from a Turkish action. They tried to impress this upon Mustapha Bey himself; in any case the Tunisian Ruler could not fail to notice the activities of the French Navy at the Goletta, while on his western frontiers a powerful French Army was then trying to reduce the resistance of Constantine (but was to fail in November 1836). His policy had to take these facts into account. Reade was impressed by the growing influence of the French, and was getting uneasy about the mysterious negotiations which were taking place between the Bey and the French. Reade was prone to worry about the weakening of his influence and to report about the alleged subserviency of the Tunisians towards France; a blunder of the Tunisian government soon justified his fears, and gave him an opportunity to reassert his authority in Tunis.

The quasi totality of the British residents in Tunis were Maltese; we have already remarked that their conduct "daring and outrageous" had been generally criticized by the successive British Consuls<sup>1</sup> while the Tunisian authorities did not cease complaining

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1. Reade to Hay, September 27, 1833. FO 77 / 26.



against their insubordination: "If I was to send away all those who disturb public tranquillity, Reade wrote in 1835, it would take several vessels to carry them".<sup>1</sup> After a series of violent incidents and finally a riot on the 27th of December 1836, the Bey took a drastic decision: he intimated to Reade the expulsion of the whole Maltese population at three days' notice.<sup>2</sup> The decision was unconsidered, and practically inapplicable; furthermore it was so likely to lead to very serious trouble with the British government, that the Bey's stubbornness in the matter in spite of Reade's strenuous representations, shows to what extent British prestige had weakened in Tunis.

The Foreign Office took the matter very seriously: Palmerston sent very firm instructions to Reade: The Pasha was required to withdraw his order and a naval force was to be sent to Tunis in order to ensure the protection of British interests;<sup>3</sup> in the meantime the British Ambassador at Constantinople was instructed to demand that "the Pashaw [should] be positively ordered to respect the rights" of British subjects resident in Tunis.<sup>4</sup> From a local incident the British

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1. Reade to Hay, April 29, 1835. FO 77 / 26.
  2. The Bey to Reade, December 28, 1836, FO 77 / 29.
  3. FO 77 / 30. Palmerston to Reade, February 13, 1837.
  4. FO 78 / 300. Palmerston to Ponsonby, February 10, 1837.

Government endeavoured to reap a diplomatic profit by encouraging the Porte to assert its suzerainty over Tunis. The Bey already regretted his hurried decision and was looking for an honorable escape in order to soothe British anger while saving his own dignity. But Reade obviously refused any kind of compromise and, by imposing an unconditional surrender, tried to regain at once all the ground lost since 1830. A very lengthy exchange of correspondence took place from January to April 1837: from one letter to another the Bey was gradually losing ground, but could not meet Reade's requirements; in the end, threatened as he was with a breaking down of diplomatic relations, Mustapha agreed to acknowledge his defeat by simply and solely cancelling his decree.<sup>1</sup> Some days after that capitulation, Reade struck the finishing blow by producing a Vizierial letter which acquainted the Bey with British complaints and demanded that he give an immediate remedy to them.<sup>2</sup>

4. The Porte decided in 1837 to avail itself of Britain's good will by attempting to settle the long pending problem of its relations with the Regency. In

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1. The Bey to Reade, April 20, 1837. FO 77 / 30.  
2. FO 77 / 30. The Grand Vizir to Mustapha Pasha, March 1837.

the first place Ibrahim Bey was sent to Tunis with kind words and an offer to add Tripoli to Tunis (against payment of an annual tribute)<sup>1</sup>; the Porte then notified the Powers as mildly as possible of the departure of the Capitan Pasha, July 1837: he was to go to Tripoli, and there "si la saison et les vents lui permettent d'aller à Tunis, il s'y rendra aussi pour détruire les soupçons et calmer les alarmes [de son] gouverneur actuel S. E. Moustapha Pasha".<sup>2</sup>

Ponsonby had been asked to support the undertaking: his assent was worded in a form which was henceforth to become the official doctrine of the F.O., and was to be repeated, with only minor changes, throughout the following half century. Ponsonby assured the Beys of the sincerity of the Porte: "The Sultan is honestly desirous, it is his interest to be so, to draw closer the connection and intercourse between himself and the Pasha of Tunis." Both of them had the same interest in strengthening their mutual relations: the Bey because "he is too little to stand alone" and because a closer union with the Porte would guarantee him against any hostile intentions; the Sultan in order

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1. Serres, p.172.

2. FO 78 304. Memorandum of the 19th of July, 1837.

to strengthen the unity of Moslem countries and ensure their security. The Bey had to "stand under the protection of his legitimate sovereign"; on that condition he would "rest in safety in the continual enjoyment of all the privileges, authority, dignity and power now possessed by him". In conclusion Ponsonby impressed upon Reade the importance of using his influence to induce the Bey to give a favourable reply to the Sultan's suggestions.<sup>1</sup>

The assurances which the Ottoman government had lavishly given with regard to the Capitan Pasha's mission, could not however allay French suspicion. The French Cabinet considered that the Turkish cruise to Tunis was to be prevented at all costs, either because they genuinely thought that the Turks intended to attack the Regency, or interfere with the question of Constantine, or merely because they wanted to take political advantage of the alleged evil designs of Turkey. Admiral Lalande was accordingly sent to Tunis with positive instructions to prevent the Capitan Pasha from going there, even at the cost of using force. At the beginning of September the Levant and Africa squadrons were gathered at the Goletta.<sup>2</sup> Palmerston's

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1. FO 78 304. Ponsonby to Reade, July 17, 1837.

2. Serres, pp. 177-178.

reaction was immediate and strong: after having reminded the French Government of the assurances repeatedly given in the past with reference to the territorial integrity of Tunis, he pointed out that his government did not doubt that "the French ships of war [would] make no attempt to interfere with the communications which the ships of way of the Sultan [might] be instructed to hold with the Sultan's vassal the Bey of Tunis, as such interferences would be incompatible with the rights of the Sultan."<sup>1</sup> Palmerston was strictly abiding by the policy he had defined in 1836, and which Ponsonby had fully developed in July 1837.

In Tunis however the presence of the French Fleet was more heavily felt than Palmerston's declaration, firm as it had been. It is true that the Bey expressed some embarrassment about this compromising assistance which, he assured, he had never asked for; he answered Ponsonby's recommendations by an assurance of complete submission to the Sultan ("We are but acting agents of our Lord the Sultan and his obedient slaves"). But he confessed to Ancram (then acting British Consul)<sup>2</sup> that

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1. FO 27 537. Palmerston to Aston ~~Aston~~, September 5, 1837.
  2. Reade had left Tunis for some months on leave.

"if the French fleet retired, the Turkish one might arrive which would not free them from their embarrassment", and suggested that only the coming of a British squadron in the place of Lalande's Fleet could dissipate the possibility of a conflict between France and Turkey. At the same moment the execution of Shakir Sahib et Tabaa, whom the Bey suspected of favouring Turkish intervention in Tunis, showed the extent of the Bey's distrust of the real aims of Ottoman policy.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of French intervention the Capitan Pasha, after proceeding to Malta, gave up the idea of coming to Tunis, and went back to Constantinople in September 1837. All the while a French squadron was keeping a close watch on his movements.<sup>2</sup> The Turkish plan had completely failed; the diplomatic support of the Foreign Office had been useless, and as in October 1837 Akif Pasha was expressing the bitterness of his government with regard to the French action, Ponsonby could not but urge him to be prudent, and added a serious warning "The Porte, he said, might be certain England would not quarrel with France in support of any injudicious attempt made by the Porte"; this statement

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1. FO 77 / 30. Ancram to Palmerston. September 18, 1837.

2. Serres, p.180.

gave evidence of the serious difficulties met with in the execution of the policy to which Ponsonby had given his patronage some months before.<sup>1</sup>

#### Difficulties of British policy (1837-1839)

5. In addition to the contradictions which were inherent in British policy towards Tunis and which partly explain the difficulties of 1837, further complications arose by the end of the year. During Reade's absence (he was to come back only in 1839) the Consulate had fallen into the hands of the Vice-Consul, Ancram, a very clumsy person who was totally lacking in prestige and influence. Ancram took over the business of the Consulate at the very moment when, after the death of Mustapha Bey (October 10, 1837), Ahmed Bey's accession was to bring drastic modifications to the general trends of Tunisian policy. The new Bey was secretly desirous of strengthening the independence of Tunis by a gradual loosening of its ties with the Porte.<sup>2</sup> The development of his army (which was to have an adverse effect on Tunisian economy) aimed at that object, while it also gratified the Bey's natural taste

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1. Ponsonby to Palmerston, FO 78 306. October 6, 1837
  2. See Ben Dhiab in his chapter on Ahmed Bey's character and H. Hugon Les emblèmes des Beys de Tunis ... (Paris, 1913).

for military affairs. Placed as he was between two dangers, the Bey was much more afraid of the Turks than of the French,<sup>1</sup> probably because he knew that any French attempt in Tunis would meet with the opposition of Great Britain; for that reason the Bey, Ancram reported, was "most anxious to see an English Fleet in the Gulf". The Bey's personal policy introduced a new element of complication into the Tunisian problem.

6. No sooner had the French armies occupied Constantine (November 1837) than the pressure upon Tunis became more intense. It showed itself first of all in the new expression of an old idea: Constantine would have been given to the Bey, or to a member of his family, in return for which a tribute would have been paid to France. This time the British Government expressed their hostility so clearly ("the appointment of a near relative of the Bey of Tunis to be Bey of Constantine, Palmerston wrote in November, would be looked upon in this country as only a first and indirect step towards the establishment of the political influence of France over Tunis itself")<sup>2</sup>, that the *Ministre des Affaires Etrangères* immediately denied having contemplated the

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1. FO 77 30. December, 1837. Ancram to Palmerston.

2. FO 27 537. Palmerston to Aston, November 28, 1837.



scheme. The second difficulty was created by the question of the frontier delimitation which was to embitter the relations between the Beys and the Algerian authorities for over 40 years, and to provide ultimately the pretext for the French occupation. In these almost inaccessible regions the only (comparative) certainty was the relations of vassalage of the moving and unruly tribes towards the Bey; the French officers tried to establish a frontier line "à l'européenne" and to turn to their advantage some complex and often conflicting historical precedents. Ahmed Bey turned to Ancram for support - The Vice Consul encouraged him to be firm and not to "give up one foot of Territory without the sanction or advice of the Sultan as he held the Regency under him".<sup>1</sup> As was to be expected the Bey was not eager to solicit the help of a Suzerain whom he feared no less than France, and against whom he might some time require the support of the French Squadron. Palmerston tried to allay these apprehensions: the Bey ought to "rely upon the support and assistance of Great Britain .... So long as he remains true to the Sultan according to the relations now subsisting between him and the Porte, Her Majesty's

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1. Ancram to Palmerston, FO 77 30. December 8, 1837.

government will continue to employ in his favour at Constantinople, those good offices which cannot fail to be successful, and will take steps at Paris to secure him against any unprovoked aggression on the part of the French."<sup>1</sup> Palmerston gave no details about what he meant by "the relations now subsisting between (the Bey) and the Porte". That promise of support on the two fronts, added to the strong pressure which had been brought to bear upon him, decided Ahmed Bey to overcome his reluctance and to appeal to the Sultan: "Nous n'avons le droit d'acquiescer à une diminution de territoire, he wrote to the French consul,... qu'après avoir avisé notre Souverain le Sultan."<sup>2</sup>

The Foreign Office fulfilled its engagements towards Ahmed Bey. Palmerston renewed his warnings to Paris: "Great Britain, he wrote to Granville on February 9, could not see with indifference any attempt of France to encroach upon the territory of Tunis, as to alter the political relations which now connect the Bey of that Regency with the Porte." The Foreign Secretary then gave a close criticism of the French demands and went so far as to question the very

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1. FO 102 2. Palmerston to Ancram. January 20, 1838.
  2. Ben Dhiyf: Letter of the 5th of March 1838. Règne d'Ahmed Bey, p.8.

foundations of the presence of the French in Algiers.<sup>1</sup> Molé replied with the now traditional assurances: France would respect Tunisian independence; as for the question of frontiers, it was of very slight importance. Palmerston however had taken further precautions: Metternich had declared his readiness to join in a declaration regarding the Sultan's rights in Tunis (Lamb wrote rather awkwardly: "Prince Metternich does not prejudice what these rights are... but he is ready to maintain them whatever they may be").<sup>2</sup> Palmerston carefully brushed aside the idea of European negotiations about so vague a question; and, limiting the discussion to the precise problem of Tunisian frontiers, he suggested to Metternich that similar instructions to those addressed to Granville should also be sent to the Austrian Ambassador in Paris.<sup>3</sup>

In Constantinople, Great Britain gave the same prudent support to the Bey: anticipating Palmerston's instructions Ponsonby warned the Porte in January 1838 "in the strongest terms of the evils the Ottoman government (would) call down on its own head, if it [should] attempt anything against Tunis", but at the

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1. FO 27 555. Palmerston to Granville, February 9, 1838.
  2. FO 7 271. Lamb to Palmerston, January 26, 1838.
  3. FO 7 270. Palmerston to Lamb, February 9, 1838.

same time advised the Sultan "to refuse to consent to any cession or concession being made by the Bey of Tunis to the demands of the French."<sup>1</sup> Palmerston's instructions, though roughly similar to Ponsonby's language, revealed the beginning of an evolution in British policy: they laid less emphasis upon the rights of the Porte in Tunis than upon "the expediency and policy of leaving the Bey of Tunis undisturbed in his present state of political dependence on the Porte". Palmerston dwelt lengthily upon the motives which "at present" prevented a renewal of what had been done in Tripoli; he nevertheless assured the Turkish Government that the aim of British policy was still to maintain Tunis in her present status vis a vis Turkey and asked them to rely on his endeavours to ensure the success of the common purpose of the two Powers in Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole the frontier question had been a real diplomatic success for British policy: the French pressure upon the Bey was somewhat loosened; the Foreign Office had convinced Ahmed Bey to turn to the Sultan for protection and had thus paved the way for a future agreement; finally it could be expected that the

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1. FO 78 329 B. Ponsonby to Palmerston. January 8, 1838.  
2. FO 78 328. P. to Ponsomby, February 6, 1838.

moderation advocated at Constantinople would create an atmosphere of mutual confidence which was the foundation of that agreement.<sup>1</sup>

7. In actual fact the Ottoman government acted as if they had only taken into consideration in the communications of the Foreign Office what concerned their rights in Tunis, but not the important reservations which Britain was making as to the actual exercise of these rights. That attitude could not fail to provoke a crisis which brought to light the weaknesses of British policy. Just as Ancram was instructed to acquaint the Bey with the favourable results of Ponsonby's action, Rear Admiral Osman Bey arrived in Tunis with Ahmed Bey's caftan of investiture. In the course of private interviews, the Turkish envoy informed the Bey that the Sultan wished to receive from his vassal an annual tribute; the proposed amount was 3000 purses, but the Porte was ready to reduce it, the main point being the establishment of the principle. The Bey consulted his Council and refused; the reason he gave to Ancram whose assistance he badly needed was his financial difficulties. But in his discussions with his advisors as well as in his answer to the Sultan, Ahmed Bey rather

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1. Serres, p. 236.

laid the emphasis upon the reason which actually seems to have brought about his decision; the demand, in his opinion, was contrary to the traditional relationship between Tunis and the Porte.<sup>1</sup> The French government hastily sent Admiral Lalande to Tunis (28th of May); meanwhile the Levant Squadron was instructed to watch closely the evolutions of the Turkish Fleet in case it went to Tunis.<sup>2</sup> It is not clearly known to what extent Ahmed Bey had been informed of that intervention but his attitude showed that he at least "tacitously (connived) at the French protection", and Ancram was convinced that if the Turks intervened in Tunis the Bey would "openly embrace the French protection..!" At all events Ahmed Bey was very careful to evade "any open declaration of the support and intervention of England. There is openly, Ancram concluded, a dislike for some cause or other to openly avow the British protection."<sup>3</sup>

This being so the Foreign Office attended to the most pressing things first: while he asked in Paris for the sake of appearances, the reason for which the French fleet had been sent to Tunis... and received the

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1. Ben Dhiyf. Ahmed Bey's letter to the Sultan (May 1838): (p. 9-10).
  2. Serres, p. 237.
  3. FO 202 2. Ancram to Palmerston, July 8, 1838.

very uncompromising reply that the naval movement had no political object, Palmerston acted with more conviction at Constantinople. On July 5, 1838 he instructed Ponsonby to "represent to the Porte the impolicy of imposing too heavy a tribute upon the Bey of Tunis"; if the Bey refused, he added, the Sultan would have to give up the attempt or to embark upon a military action which "would in all probability raise between the Porte and the French government questions which, at the present moment, it would be much better for the Porte not to stir."<sup>1</sup> With regard to the Turkish demand, Palmerston did not dispute the Sultan's rights, but the vigour of the French action compelled him to impress upon the Porte the necessity of temporarily moderating its demands. It only remained for the Ottoman Government to bow to the inevitable; the Turkish Fleet made a short cruize to Smÿrna, under a close escort of French scouting vessels, and Ahmed Bey's envoy to Constantinople, the Cheikh ul Islam Ibrahim Riahi, was given the promise that the Porte would give up its demand "jusqu'à des jours meilleurs".<sup>2</sup>

The problem of the extent of Turkish rights in

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1. FO 78 329A. Palmerston to Ponsonby, July 5, 1838.
  2. Ben Dhiaf, p.10- 15.

Tunis remained untouched: The Porte had not definitely given up the idea of demanding a tribute which was in its opinion the very symbol of its sovereign rights; the Bey and the French government, however, agreed to state that no precedent, at least since the establishment of the Husseini dynasty, could be put forward to justify such a pretention. The British attitude rather lacked precision: judging by Palmerston's enquiry after the crisis, "whether the former Beys of Tunis paid to the Porte an annual tribute"<sup>1</sup> it appears that London had no clear idea of what was the status of Tunis towards the Porte. In the general framework of its Mediterranean and Oriental policy, the Foreign Office on the whole supported Turkish pretensions: but the events of 1838 showed that such a policy had no solid foundations, on account of Ahmed Bey's lack of confidence and of his tendency, when in danger, to turn towards France. As on the other hand the Foreign Office did not contemplate going to war with France for the sake of the Sultan's rights in Tunis, it was compelled to endure the French naval evolutions in the Tunisian waters. At the very moment when, by a diplomatic intervention, it tried to persuade the Turks to

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1. FO 102 2. Palmerston to Ancram, 2 August 1838.



act with moderation, the Foreign Office was suffering the consequences in Tunis of a policy which it already knew was almost unworkable in the conditions then prevailing.

8. The ups and downs of the Considine affair give an accurate reflexion of the evolution of political events in Tunis in 1838; they indicate the Bey's gradual estrangement from Great Britain as Turkish demands were becoming more precise. Before his death Mustapha Bey had entrusted Reade with the mission of asking the British government to send an officer "to be attached to his son" as an adviser; after his accession to the throne, Ahmed Bey had confirmed the demand which then assumed greater political importance. The man Palmerston chose had some experience of that kind of mission: strictly speaking two unsuccessful missions to Constantinople<sup>1</sup> had somewhat worn out Colonel Considine's stores of enthusiasm, so much so that, when informed of his new assignment, he declared that he was "a good deal disgusted with Turks in the shape of Pashas".<sup>2</sup> His instructions were vague enough to allow him free scope to act in the interest of British policy: as military adviser to the Bey for

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1. Webster, II. 546.

2. FO 102 4 Considine to Backhouse March 20 1838

the organisation of his army ("It is an important political object for Great Britain that the Bey should be able to place himself in a respectable condition of defence against any attack by land"<sup>1</sup>) Considine would have a good opportunity to lessen the up to then paramount influence of the French instructors, and possibly to exercise a political influence on the new Bey.<sup>2</sup>

Considine's first appearance in Tunis was very promising: warmly welcomed by the Bey he was immediately received in his service, and as early as April 30, Ancram wrote to Palmerston that Considine had received "the command of (the) army under his Highness". The Foreign Office lost no time in promoting Considine to the rank of Major General and in preparing the organization of a staff of no less than 24 officers (the total cost of 2070 pounds was to be borne by Great Britain).<sup>2</sup> As the French government was showing some anxiety, Palmerston informed Granville of Considine's promotion and instructed him to give Molé

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1. ~~FO 108 4. Considine to Backhouse, March 20, 1838.~~

2. FO 102 4. Palmerston to Considine, February 3, 1838. As a further proof of the importance Palmerston attached to the mission we may notice that he remained in direct correspondence with Considine until his return in England.

2. FO 102 4. Palmerston to Considine. May 26, 1838.

assurances which were not void of a touch of irony: "Colonel Considine, he wrote, has no mission or diplomatic character at Tunis. Y.E. is aware that Her Majesty's government have a Consul General at that Regency."<sup>1</sup>

The triumph of Palmerston was unhappily short-lived: as early as May it became obvious that as the question of tribute was developing, Ahmed Bey was becoming more and more amenable to the pressure of the French Consul. Two months after his arrival Considine had not yet taken up his duties, in spite of Ancram's unremitting and clumsy summons. Finally on June 21, the Bey announced that he had never intended to appoint Considine as commander in chief of his army, and accordingly proposed to Considine to remain in Tunis as his personal military adviser (which was the very position he was meant to assume in the first place). It is very likely that Ancram had misinterpreted the Bey's first promise, but Considine made no mistake when he considered that "French intrigue (had) been at work."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore Ancram's insistence had contributed to awaken the Bey's suspicions, carefully cultivated by

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1. FO 27 556. Palmerston to Granville. June 19, 1838.
  2. FO 102 4. Considine to Palmerston, June 21, 1838.

the French, that an Anglo-Turkish intrigue was at work in Tunis: from that point of view it was very unfortunate that Considine had just come from Constantinople, a fact which seemed to confirm these fears. Considine thus remained in Tunis, very well treated by the Bey, but carefully kept away from any practical occupation. His correspondence with Palmerston endlessly repeated the same complaints: the Bey shows the greatest considerations for me " but I have really almost nothing to do .... I am of very little use here<sup>1</sup> .... I continue ... living a life of tiresome idleness. The Bey continues to treat me with great civility but as to consulting me on anything he has ceased to do so."<sup>2</sup> The victory remained with the French instructors of the Bey's army.

After that resounding failure the relations between the Bey and Ancram continued to get worse: the visit of Admiral Stopford, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, was intended, Palmerston thought, to "give weight to any representation which [Ancram] and Major General [Considine] may see occasion to address to the Bey."<sup>3</sup> Its only result was to show

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1. id. October 11, 1838.

2. id. December 9, 1838.

3. FO 102 2. Palmerston to Ancram, August 2, 1838.

the Bey's gradual estrangement from Great Britain (August 1838). Considine severely criticised Ancram: "Mr. Ancram, he wrote, is a very good sort of man but perfectly unadequated with all those little forms of courtesy so necessary in his situation.... His ears are always open to any reports and his mouth too much so, he is fond of hearing himself talk."<sup>1</sup> A series of trifling incidents brought about very bitter discussions between the Bey and the Consul; the responsibility for these disagreements largely rested upon Ancram who was only too prone to qualify the seizure of 41 "British" oxen suspected of having grazed in an olive plantation, as "l'acte le plus offensant auquel a pu jamais être exposé un sujet de Sa Majesté Britannique sous aucun gouvernement civilisé".<sup>2</sup> Threatened with a breaking off of his relations with Great Britain, the Bey, as a last resort, applied to Admiral Stopford who decided in his favour and advised the hot-headed Vice-Consul to keep calm pending Reade's return.<sup>3</sup> In London Palmerston was watching this confusion with increasing irritation ("It seems to me that Mr. Ancram has been picking a quarrel with the Dey and is quite in the wrong")

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1. FO 102 4. Considine to Backhouse, August 11, 1838.
  2. FO 102 2. Ancram to the Bey, November 28, 1838.
  3. FO 102 5. Stopford, December 29, 1838 to Ancram.

and sent peremptory notes asking for Reade's speedy departure to Tunis "as the public service is suffering from the want of a Consul General at that station".

9. At last Reade arrived in Tunis on the 20th of February 1839 and set about re-establishing his relations with the Bey upon a friendly footing and removing the memory of the past difficulties (but as the merciless Palmerston remarked: "This was his fault for not going back sooner")<sup>1</sup>. When in London Reade had referred to the Foreign Office the question of whether it seemed expedient to ask the Bey that the Commercial Treaty concluded in 1838 between Great Britain and the Sultan should "have effect in Tunis as a dependent state upon the Ottoman Empire",<sup>2</sup> Palmerston had approved of the suggestion: Ponsonby was instructed accordingly to "request the Porte to make known to the Bey of Tunis that the provisions of that Convention extend and apply to Tunis, as well as

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1. FO 102 5. Reade to Backhouse, March 4, 1839. With a view to strengthen his prestige Reade had come back to Tunis on a warship. The Consul had also been authorized by Palmerston to expend 50 pounds a year "as presents to such persons immediately about the Bey's person in order to obtain information which cannot be otherwise got at".
  2. FO 102 2. Reade to Backhouse, December 3, 1838.

to other parts of the Turkish Empire"; as for Reade, without broaching the subject himself, he was to assure the Bey, if consulted, that the execution of the Treaty was "imperative".<sup>1</sup> In Palmerston's mind, in addition to obvious commercial advantages, the Treaty provided the opportunity of concretely mooting the problem of Turco-Tunisian relations. But after his return Reade considered that the British political position in Tunis did not allow him to embark on a new discussion which was very likely to raise serious difficulties: Ancram had found it advisable to try the reaction of the Bey's advisers and they had "appeared to be displeased"<sup>2</sup> besides, as the French were spreading the rumour (intended to make the Bey uneasy) that Reade had brought imperative instructions with regard to that question, the Consul thought it more advisable to put it aside temporarily. If Reade was able to solve easily the minor difficulties raised by Ancram, he was completely unsuccessful in his attempt to obtain for Considine the position which had been first contemplated for him: the Bey was uncompromising and after a last fruitless interview in August 1839, Considine offered his resignation and left Tunis.

1. FO 102 5. Palmerston to Reade, January 10, 1839.
2. FO 102 5. Reade to Palmerston, March 4, 1839.
3. *ibid.* July 30, 1839.

This was a hard blow to British influence in Tunis particularly as the Bey, in spite of his assurances of faithfulness to Britain, seemed much more anxious to avoid any difficulties with France; it is very likely that he had no personal leaning towards her, but as Turkey was being put out of action by Mohammed Ali, the only danger for the Regency now came from Algeria. In April, the Bey had sent a mission to Paris; in answer he received heartening words (Soult affirmed that "there was no disposition whatever on the part of the French government to disturb this Regency")<sup>1</sup> which, he declared, "fully satisfied" him. Reade of course was not so easily satisfied with French assurances and he would have wished the Bey to be more suspicious; but neither the rumour of a mobilisation in Algiers, nor the new frontier difficulties, could apparently shake the Bey's confidence. Reade repeatedly urged him "to be watchful"<sup>2</sup> and disclosed his misgivings to Palmerston: "I am rather apprehensive that they do not pay that rigid attention as I conceive they ought to do in regard to the political situation in which this Regency is placed towards the French government".<sup>3</sup> In fact Reade when later repeating

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1. *ibid.* July 30, 1839.
  2. *ibid.* September 27, 1839.
  3. *ibid.* October 3, 1839.



his complaints noticed at last that the Tunisians "demonstrated more anxiety in regard to the affairs in the East".<sup>1</sup> He was thus putting his finger on the main problem: that the development of political events in the Near East deeply affected the Bey's attitude towards France and Great Britain, as far as he considered that his own fate was bound up to that of Mohammed Ali; in the same way the Egyptian question and its consequences for France-British relations was to affect the position of the Foreign Office towards Tunis very seriously.

The crisis of 1840 in Tunis.

10. The deterioration of relations between France and England had begun several years before 1839; in 1835 one could already find indications of their gradual estrangement. But it was in 1839 that the complete overturning of the alliances took place;<sup>2</sup> in the end of that year, after Mohammed Ali's first and resounding successes, Palmerston became fully convinced that France entertained Mediterranean ambitions and that, already established in Algiers, she was now planning to establish a kind of protectorate over a state

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1. *ibid.* October 28, 1839.

2. Temperley, p. 97.

which would have joined Egypt, Syria and Arabia: "If these claims were accomplished, he wrote in December to Granville, it is easy to see that Tunis and Tripoli would soon be absorbed in the same political system and France would become practically mistress of the whole of the southern coast of the Mediterranean."<sup>1</sup> And later, in April 1840, he wrote again to Granville: France did not stop deceiving us "about the affairs of Buenos Ayres, as they have done about almost every matter in which we have had any communications with them such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, Tunis, Turkey and Egypt, Persia, etc...."<sup>2</sup>

Palmerston was so genuinely convinced of the reality of that general threat which Great Britain was to oppose "by war if remonstrances should prove ineffectual"<sup>3</sup>, that his whole North African policy was thereby affected, in Morocco as well as in Tunis.<sup>4</sup> From December 1839 he multiplied his interventions in Paris in order to keep France out of North Africa and to check her alleged hostile intentions there: on the 13th of December he instructed Granville to remind the

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1. FO 27 578. Palmerston to Granville, December 10, 1839.
  2. Bulwer, The life of Viscount Palmerston, III, p. 310. (Palmerston to Granville, April 16, 1840).
  3. Swain, p. 121.
  4. Flournay, pp. 58-62.

French government "in a friendly and inoffensive manner" of "the pledges given" by them with regard to Tunis and Morocco."<sup>1</sup> And later, on March 16, 1840, without any precise cause for alarm, save that the time was now approaching "when the French government is said to be likely to commence some military operations in Africa", Palmerston recalled that the French government "has distinctly and more than once engaged itself towards the Government of Great Britain that France will not encroach in any manner whatever upon Tunis and Morocco."<sup>2</sup>

Palmerston felt so uneasy about Tunis, when he looked at the course of events in the Near East and the ambitions which he attributed to the French, that he thought of enlisting Austria in the action he contemplated in case Tunis and Morocco would be threatened by France. In February 1840 he sent the correspondance relating to the French engagements to Vienna; and on the 12th of March, summing up the state of oriental affairs for Lord Beauvale, Palmerston reported opinions expressed in Paris "that the Mediterranean ought to be a French lake, that Mehemet Ali should be made the sovereign of Egypt, Syria and Arabia, and should become

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1. FO 27 578. Palmerston to Granville. December 13, 1837.
  2. FO 27 598. Palmerston to Granville, March 16, 1840.

the protected ally of France, and that thus with Algiers, Egypt and Syria, and with Tunis and Tripoli which would of course be swallowed up by France and her Egyptian ally, France would virtually command the whole shore of the Mediterranean."<sup>1</sup> Lord Beauvale drew Metternich's attention to "the principle that the extension of French occupation in the North of Africa is an European instead of an exclusively English question" and to the connexion existing between Mohammed Ali's action and "the project which appears to be entertained by France of extending her domination on the African coast". To Palmerston's entire satisfaction, Metternich replied that he was ready in case of need to enter into discussion with Great Britain about that question.<sup>2</sup>

With that background of fear and distrust, Britain was inevitably to look upon any alleged French move towards Tunis with more suspicion than ever, and she was to counteract it with all the vigour she could display. She was also more interested than ever in seizing any favourable occasion of putting on a satisfactory footing the relations between Tunis and the

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1. FO 7 290. Palmerston to Lord Beauvale. March 12, 1840.
  2. FO 7 290. Beauvale to Palmerston, April 15, 1840.

Porte in order to reinforce the Sultan's authority and check French encroachments or the Bey's desire for independence. But in that endeavour Britain had once more to reckon with Ahmed Bey's own reactions about Eastern Affairs.

11. In December 1838 the Foreign Office had already contemplated asking the Bey to apply the Commercial Treaty signed at Balta Liman in 1838; but the question had been put aside in order not to hinder Reade's efforts to restore his good relations with the Bey. The Bey's hostility to that extension of the Treaty was based upon financial considerations (the Treaty stipulated the abolition of monopolies which were the source of many abuses but which provided the Treasury with badly needed resources) and political motives: an automatic extension of the Treaty to Tunis would have given a concrete example of the Bey's dependency on the Porte and would have created a feeling that he was giving up his right to conclude separate treaties which his predecessors had exercised for nearly 150 years. This second reason was undoubtedly the most important in the Bey's mind; but it was precisely that aspect of the question which was likely to induce the Foreign Office to demand the application of the treaty

and thus to consolidate the Sultan's suzerainty in Tunis.<sup>1</sup>

The original cause of the British intervention was quite unimportant: in January 1840 the Bey had decided to farm out tobacco; the Franco-Tunisian treaty of 1830 and the Anglo Turk treaty of 1838 prohibited the creation of monopolies; but, taking into consideration the weakness of the tobacco trade and the Bey's financial difficulties, Reade did not deem it necessary to interfere in the matter.<sup>2</sup> Some weeks later, a Chaouch brought the Hatti Sherif of Gulkhane to Tunis, but Reade remarked that he had no instruction about the treaty, and decided to wait for the Porte's official notification of the treaty before embarking on any negotiation on this subject.<sup>3</sup> Reade was obviously reluctant to deal with so delicate a question. But the Foreign Office had reasons of its own to refuse to postpone its intervention any longer. On March 14 1840 Palmerston instructed Reade to "require that this

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1. Serres, p. 252. It is worth noticing in this connection that the Foreign Office did not attempt seriously to obtain from the Bey the application to the Regency of the Hatti Sherif of Gulkhane; this makes it quite clear that the diplomatic problem of the relations between Tunis and the Porte, not the purely interior question of reforms, seemed then to be the more important.

2. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, January 1840.

3. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, March 16, 1840.

monopoly shall be immediately revoked as it is a violation of the Convention between Great Britain and the Porte."<sup>1</sup> Some days before Palmerston had informed Ponsonby of his decision and asked him to call the attention of the Porte to the question and to obtain from it the sending of imperative instructions to the Bey.<sup>2</sup> The Porte readily complied with so agreeable a request and on the 18th of April the Grand Vizir sent to the Bey a letter in a rather comminatory vein: "Les procédés dont il s'agit étant ... contraires au traité de commerce, il est clair et évident que la Sublime Porte ne saurait les tolérer. Il faut par conséquent que vous employez vos soins à ce que le monopole des tabacs cesse."<sup>3</sup>

Reade's first approaches provoked a dismay which could have been easily foreseen: Ahmed Bey asked for a respite and decided to send an Ambassador to the Porte in order to suggest modifications "au sujet des articles dont l'introduction ou l'exportation dans la Régence nous endommagerait"; but Ahmed Bey took care not to show any basic opposition to the principle and assured Reade of his readiness to enforce the Turkish

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1. FO 102 8. Palmerston to Reade. March 14, 1840.
  2. FO 78 389. Palmerston to Ponsonby, March 11, 1840.
  3. FO 78 393. Ponsonby to Palmerston, April 25, 1840.

treaties.<sup>1</sup> At the same time he requested the backing of the French Consul, and although the French merchants in Tunis expressed their approval for purely economic reasons of the extension of the treaty to Tunis, de Lagau promised the Bey the whole hearted support of his Government. Reade soon became irritated with the Bey's dilatory tactics: "It appears very clear to me to be the intention of this government to procrastinate .... the execution of the Convention as long as possible, he wrote on May 14, and I am persuaded that if imperative orders are not transmitted from the Ottoman Porte, the procrastination will be indefinite"<sup>2</sup>, and he made the charge, which was not unlikely, that the Bey's resistance was inspired by de Lagau's advice.

The arrival on June 2 of the Vizirial letter did not bring the question any closer to a solution: the Bey declared that he would not take any step before the Porte had answered the Tunisian envoys, and two days after he left Tunis with his army for the south of the Regency to repress the troubles which had been caused by the extortions of the government agents among some tribes of the region of Gabès. Reade gave

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1. FO 102 8. Reade to Palmerston, May 14, 1840.

2. Id.



up his hopes of a speedy conclusion: "I suspect very strongly, he wrote to Palmerston, [that] the Bey is encouraged in His proceedings.... by his expectation of being seconded in His views through the influence of the French government."<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, some days before, the Bey's Foreign advisor, Count Raffo, had left for Paris; though he had no apparent official mission, he was actually entrusted with the task of obtaining French support in the discussions which were going on with Great Britain, for the application of the treaty as well as for that of the Hatti Sherif.<sup>2</sup> Reade related the rather ominous words assumed to have been said by Thiers "that the Bey had a perfect right not only to establish such regulations as he might deem proper upon the importation or exportation of tobacco, but of any other article."<sup>3</sup> They were confirmed by a question asked of Granville by Thiers on June 12 with regard to the alleged sending of British vessels to Tunis "to enforce a demand for the abolition of the monopoly;" Thiers considered that such "measures of hostility could not be viewed with indifference by the French government."<sup>4</sup>

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1. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, June 6, 1840.
  2. Serres, p. 253.
  3. FO 102 7 Reade to Palmerston, June 22, 1840.
  4. FO 27 603. Granville to Palmerston, June 12, 1840.

12. This unexpected reversal of the annual practice since 1836 made Palmerston's long accumulated anger explode. The tension with France was then reaching a climax: At that very moment, threatened with the final success of Mohammed Ali and despairing of getting French co-operation, Palmerston was holding with Brunnow, Neumann and Bulow the interviews which were to bring about the Four Powers Agreement (July 15 1840)<sup>1</sup>. The answer the Foreign Secretary made to Thiers's martial note took a very decided line: Granville would explain "the state of the case" but at the same time "declare... distinctly that Great Britain can acknowledge no right of Protectorship on the part of France over the Regency of Tunis, which is a part of the Ottoman Empire and not a dependency of France".<sup>2</sup> It did not appear that Paris was much impressed by this vigorous language: Palmerston poured his irritation in a note hastily worded on the 27th of July: "It seems clear... that the French government wish to pursue the same policy with respect to Tunis as with respect to Egypt and Syria, and that their wish is to separate Tunis from the Turkish Empire in order to

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1. Seton-Watson, p.205.

2. FO 27 599. Palmerston to Granville, June 26, 1840.

connect it with France."<sup>1</sup> And a few days later Palmerston wrote to Melbourne a letter typical of his state of mind during all that summer of crisis: "If the French attempt to bully and intimidate us as they have done, the one way of meeting their menaces is by quietly telling them that we are not afraid."<sup>2</sup>

In Tunis the Franco-English relations were scarcely less strained: a French squadron had arrived before the Goletta on July 17, but Reade was unable to obtain reliable information with regard to its real designs (which may have been to support the Bey in the question of the treaty against a possible Turkish intervention); the mystery was still complete when the Fleet left in August. Reade felt rather uneasy about the closeness of the relations between the Bey and the French Consul and discovered everywhere evidences of French intrigues: in the coming of six Soeurs de Charité who, he thought, would try to develop French influence among the Roman Catholics (and especially among the Maltese) as well as in the building of the Chapel of Carthage: this monument was supposed to commemorate the death of St Louis, but Reade thought that it looked

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1. FO 102.7.

2. Swain p.121: Palmerston to Melbourne, August 18, 1840.

"more like a fortress than a monument"<sup>1</sup> and could have been used as a landing base (Palmerston was so impressed by that prospect that he later asked Guizot to acquaint him "with the object of those preparations"<sup>2</sup>). When the Bey came back to Tunis the discussions were resumed about the question of the Treaty, but Ahmed did not yield: The French "are doing everything in their power to create if possible a bad understanding between the Bey's Government and myself" Reade concluded.<sup>3</sup>

Reade failed to understand that the news from the East was not such as to induce the Bey and his advisors to favour British positions in Tunis and he expressed his surprise: "I fear that [they are] viewed by the Bey and his Government with dissatisfaction... There is no doubt that they [are] desirous that Mohammed Ali should succeed in His views to the fullest extent."<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Bey could not fail to be impressed by the Turkish success which had been secured by British support, and to fear that the Porte should be thus encouraged to a similar intervention in Tunis.

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1. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, Tunis, August 20, 1840.
  2. FO 27 613. Palmerston to Guizot, September 15, 1840.
  3. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, September 7, 1840.
  4. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, August 20, 1840.

Threatened with that gloomy prospect, he naturally turned towards France: when in September 1840 a Turkish envoy came to Tunis and after having given notice of the alliance between the Sultan and the Four Powers renewed the demand for an annual Tribute, Ahmed Bey at once applied to France for help, without Reade's knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In order to win a decisive advantage Reade suggested in case the Egyptian coasts should be blockaded that the Sultan should ask the Bey to send some of his ships to the East under Sir Robert Stopford's command.<sup>2</sup> But, perhaps to evade such a request the Bey put his ships out of commission; and only Reade's intervention could dissuade the Bey from allowing the departure of 500 pilgrims "all stout young men (who) would ... could they proceed to Alexandria, join Mohammed Ali's forces".<sup>3</sup> In November Reade still considered that "by far the greater part of the inhabitants do not hesitate to express their sentiments openly in favour of Mohammed Ali" and it was only after the end of the war in Syria (in December), that the Bey lost heart. Reade had long expected that the event would result in a weakening of French

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1. Serres, p. 254-255. Ben Dhiab, p. 44-45.
  2. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, September 21, 1840.
  3. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston, October 14, 1840.

prestige and a development of his own influence, but the consequences of the Egyptian crisis were, as it was natural, more complex: having witnessed Mohammed Ali's significant failure the Bey could be induced to give up his pretensions to independence and to look for an agreement with the Porte. But the oriental events were more likely to strengthen his fear lest the Porte should seize the first opportunity of reducing him to obedience as she had done with the Pasha of Tripoli and the Viceroy of Egypt: in that contingency he would have to turn to France in the last resort.

13. With the autumn the relations between France and Great Britain were put on to a better footing again: in November, with Guizot as Prime Minister in France and the success of the operations in Syria, Palmerston could expect that France would soon join the European concert: "The British Cabinet, he wrote, cannot sufficiently deplore that it has been for a moment separated from France."<sup>1</sup> The situation subsequently improved in Tunis: the Bey's fierce resistance was at last rewarded. A second Vizierial letter had asked for the cancellation of the decree on the tobacco

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1. Temperley, p.140.

monopoly (in September); but as we have seen the Bey had decided to wait for the return of his envoy to Constantinople<sup>1</sup> who did not bring back in November any "positive instructions in regard to the treaty".<sup>2</sup> And although Palmerston had refused to yield to the arguments laid before him by Count Raffo ("Her Majesty's government, he replied, have no choice but to claim for British subjects residing in Tunis, all the advantages which they are entitled to under the treaty of 1838")<sup>3</sup> his action was actually paralysed by the unexplainable inaction of the Porte (unless it be supposed that it was largely due to the great number of gifts which the Bey had sent to Constantinople). But the Bey had largely contributed to that political success by his tenacity and by his skilfulness in his dealings with Great Britain; by basing his opposition on the economic and financial consequences which he dreaded for the Regency, he avoided the strong British reaction which an open hostility to the very principle of the application of the Treaty would have been very likely to raise against him. Finally the Foreign Office, which had raised the question in March

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1. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston. September 21, 1840.
  2. FO 102 7. Reade to Palmerston. November 29, 1840.
  3. FO 102 9. Palmerston to the Bey October 22, 1840.

1840 for obvious political motives in relation to the oriental crisis, no longer had the same imperative reasons for pushing it to a favourable issue. The matter was allowed to drop, and many years elapsed before it was raised again. All the same that acceptance though tacit of the Tunisian and French theory could be construed as a retreat of British policy, and it could not fail to encourage the Bey in case of need to renew a resistance which had been so successful.

The Turkish attempt of 1841.

14. New difficulties were put in the way of the British policy in Tunis by a fresh attempt of the Porte to recover its authority in the Regency. It was obviously encouraged to do so by the events of 1840, but political conditions had now changed on account of the 'rapprochement' between France and Great Britain, and of the increasing impatience which the Turkish exigencies were arousing in Great Britain as they delayed the peaceful settlement in the East.<sup>1</sup>

The abrupt manner in which the Porte, with Ponsonby's support, was dealing with Mohammed Ali, had

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1. Temperley, p.137 passim.



enabled the "French party" to create "a very strong sensation" in Tunis. As a confirmation of the Sultan's bad feelings towards his vassal, it was rumoured in March that English, Austrian and Turkish warships were to be sent for a demonstration against the Regency where a new Pasha would be established with the backing of Turkish troops.<sup>1</sup> The project was rather improbable, but Ahmed Bey at once turned towards France for help;<sup>2</sup> at the same time for safety's sake he applied to Palmerston, declaring to Reade that "in fact the French were the greatest thorn in his side" and that "he threw himself entirely upon the good offices and protection of England"; as a manifestation of his sincerity and goodwill he reverted to the question of the Commercial Treaty and promised to abide by the decision of the Porte: "If the answer were not favourable, notwithstanding it would be the ruin of his Finances, He would not hesitate any further in carrying the Treaty into effect." Reade tried of course to allay his fears with regard to the Ottoman policy and to arouse his suspicions about French intrigues;<sup>3</sup> in the same way Palmerston absolutely

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1. FO 102 10. Reade to Palmerston, March 9, 1841.
  2. Serres, p. 257.
  3. FO 102 10 Reade to Palmerston. March 18 1841.

contradicted the rumours of combined naval intervention which, he added, "has evidently been invented and propagated by the French for the purpose of alarming the Bey, and in order to drive him through fear to throw himself into dependence of France."<sup>1</sup> Ahmed Bey, playing a very clever double game, intended to secure for himself the simultaneous support of Britain (by her diplomatic pressure on the Porte) and of France (by the presence of her fleet in the Gulf of Tunis) whenever he should require it.

The Bey's apprehensions were confirmed however by the arrival of a Vizierial letter embodying the most extensive demands ever expressed by the Porte (May 1841); payment of an annual tribute - Ottoman control on the Finances and the Interior administration of the Regency - previous assent of the Porte for the Bey's relations with the Powers. The Bey showed marks of an understandable emotion; no historical precedent could be brought forward to justify demands which would have reduced him "to the simple Governorship of a Province". Reade himself was struck with dismay at a step which threatened to ruin British influence in Tunis completely, and even to throw the Regency into

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1. FO 102 10. Palmerston to Reade, April 7, 1841.

confusion and disorder: "The Moors and Arabs would, I am convinced, never submit to Turkish rule". He wholeheartedly supported the Bey's appeal to the Foreign Office and his suggestion of an immediate intervention at Constantinople. The Consul even went so far as to suggest to Palmerston the expediency of giving Admiral Stopford instructions "which may enable him to ward off the attempt, should it be made suddenly and without the knowledge of the British Government."<sup>1</sup> The clumsiness and dissimulation of the Turks thus induced the British Consul to advise his government to adopt a policy which closely resembled the French policy since 1836. The French Cabinet, warned by the Bey, was already dispatching two warships to Tunis and making strong representations in Constantinople.

15. Palmerston acted in conformity with Reade's suggestion and thus accentuated the evolution of British Policy along its new lines. In fact the Turkish demands arrived at a very awkward moment: In June and July the British were just trying to obtain French acquiescence for the Straits Convention which was to be signed only on the 13th of July, three days after the Quadruple Agreement which brought the

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1. FO 102 10. Reade to Palmerston. May 31, 1841.

Egyptian crisis to its conclusion.<sup>1</sup> It would have been very clumsy, under these circumstances to embark on a new discussion with the Paris Government about Tunis. On the other hand, as it had been noticed by Reade, the very foundations of British policy in Tunis were threatened by the Turkish initiative: as the Bey would obviously resist, any attack would only strengthen French influence there and perhaps create the conditions for a French protectorate, unless Great Britain were decided eventually to accept a war on behalf of Tunisian independence. This being so, Palmerston's main efforts were directed towards the Ottoman Government.

To the Bey Palmerston sent assurances which were in accordance with the traditional doctrine of the Foreign Office: "You will always find this government anxious to assist you in any way in which it can do so consistently with the rights of the Porte"; but he added the promise of an intervention in Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> In Paris, but rather for form's sake, Palmerston referred once more to the pledges previously given, and received in return the already classical assurances

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1. Serres, p. 260.

.. Temperley, pp. 141-143.

2. FO 335 77/4. Palmerston to the Bey, July 15, 1841.

of French disinterestedness in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> But as Louis Philippe intimated openly to Bulwer that France would not tolerate any Turkish action against the Bey the British Ambassador seemed to be satisfied with the good conduct certificate which he conferred on the Ottoman Government: "(I) simply repeated that I did not, for my own part believe that the Turkish Government had at this time the intentions which His Majesty seemed disposed to give it." And Bulwer added: "I did not feel it necessary to discuss with His Majesty the right which the French might have to interfere... between the Porte and the Dey, though certainly it was a fair field for argument."<sup>2</sup> He did not seem to realize that his attitude was tantamount to accepting that right of interference which the Foreign Office had so vigorously contested during the previous years, or at least to submitting to it.

Palmerston's irritation fell heavily on the Porte. The Bey considered the Sultan's demands inconsistent with the status quo, he wrote to Ponsonby, and amounting to his reduction to the condition of a mere governor of a Turkish Province. Ponsonby would warn the porte "that it would not be wise at the present

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1. FO 27 621. Palmerston to Bulwer, July 22, 1841.  
2. FO 27 626. Bulwer to Palmerston, July 12, 1841.

moment to attempt to make any change in the Relations which have hitherto subsisted between the Beys of Tunis and the Sultan." The Porte had too pressing tasks to carry out in the Sultan's direct Dominions to immobilize "for many years to come the employment of all his money, of all his troops and of all his naval forces" in an enterprize the success of which was doubtful: "The Turkish government should also recollect that the French in Algiers are near at hand to assist the Tunisians against any expedition which the Sultan might send." A French intervention would result for the Turks in the loss of "all power and authority whatever over Tunis." And in such a case the European Powers would likely give up opposing to a change brought about by "the imprudent steps on the part of the Sultan". Palmerston concluded by "strongly advising the Sultan to leave matters between himself and the Bey of Tunis on the same footing on which they have stood between his predecessors and the former Beys" and, with that object in view to send to Tunis "friendly and reassuring communications".<sup>1</sup>

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1. FO 78 429. Palmerston to Ponsonby, July 15, 1841.

16. Shortly after that decisive dispatch the Melbourne Cabinet was replaced by Peel's government: although one could have argued that this change would bring a new line in Foreign policy the spirit of the liberal administration was still to prevail for some time in the handling of Tunisian affairs.<sup>1</sup> During the summer French vessels remained near Tunis which, it was persistently rumoured, was still threatened by a Turkish attack: as on August 13 Palmerston had suggested to the Admiralty the expediency of sending some British vessels to "watch the proceedings of French ships,"<sup>2</sup> the two fleets were gathered at the Goletta and the antagonism between the French and British Consuls went on, more violent than ever, both of them endeavouring to frighten the Bey in order to prevent him from joining the opposite party. In September, however, with the return to Constantinople of the Capitan Pasha's Fleet after a cruize in the Egean, there was no longer any excuse for the presence of French ships in Tunis; and in October the squadrons left the Goletta.

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1. See Bailey, p. 209, about Aberdeen's instructions to Canning's: they had been written in September but "from the content one might guess they were from Palmerston's own hand."
  2. FO 102 12. Palmerston to Admiralty, August 13, 1841.

In the meantime the two Governments had been in continual communication about Tunis. In September the French Ambassador in London explained the French views with reference to the Regency: his government considered that the Beys, though they were the Sultan's vassals, had exercised specific rights for a hundred and fifty years, and would not be deprived of them whatever the pretensions of the Porte may be.<sup>1</sup> In answer Aberdeen gave indications about a policy which for the time being was roughly in conformity with Palmerston's conceptions: reminding the French government of their suspicions about Turkish policy, Aberdeen affirmed that the "unremitting efforts" of the British Ambassador "to persuade the Turkish government to abandon the project of a hostile expedition against Tunis, if it ever were seriously entertained" had been answered by repeated assurances the sincerity of which seemed to be unquestionable. Aberdeen added that the measures the French government had thought it proper to take to prevent the carrying out of these alleged intentions appeared to be "scarcely consistent with the real independence of the Ottoman Empire". The Foreign Secretary emphasized that relations of

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1. Serres, p. 263.



"Lord Paramount and Vassal" continued to exist between the Bey and the Sultan (but he unhappily brought forward the payment of a tribute by the Bey as a proof of these relations, an assertion which indicated a rather vague knowledge of the status of the Regency). Aberdeen evinced some surprise with regard to French interference in the difficulties between Tunis and Turkey whatever their origin might have been and he seemed to propose a kind of friendly mediation in order to bring nearer the positions of the Bey and the Sultan. Like France, he said, Great Britain desired "nothing but the maintenance of those relations between the Sultan and the Bey of Tunis"; and he concluded that from the identity of French and English views he was induced to hope that their common aim could be reached "without the occurrence of measures violent in their character and dangerous in their consequences"<sup>1</sup>. On the whole Aberdeen's argumentation continued to fit into the general framework of policy initiated by Palmerston; but a greater moderation in Aberdeen's tone and his open desire for a better understanding with France showed that British policy was reaching a turning point and was likely to be gradually altered in the near future.

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1. FO 27 624. Aberdeen to Cowley, December 31, 1841.

17. The most striking feature of British policy towards Tunis during these six years is the increasing discrepancy between the policy originally planned by the Foreign Office and what it was actually able to do, owing to the difficulties which it met with on the spot. Palmerston had defined the general outline of an "ideal" British policy: without aiming at an exclusive influence in Tunis, the Foreign Office desired that British interests should be efficiently protected. With that object in view the Bey's autonomy had to be maintained and British policy was incompatible with the predominance of another Power in Tunis: France was specially suspected of entertaining such aspirations since the occupation of Algiers. Thus a fundamental distrust of French policy in North Africa was the second foundation of British policy towards Tunis. Trying to prevent France from jeopardizing Tunisian autonomy, the Foreign Office thought it could do it most efficiently by making use of the Porte's desire to settle its relations with Tunis. Such a policy offered the further advantage of being in agreement with the support Britain was generally giving to the Porte and its efforts of regeneration. The action contemplated for the furtherance of these three objects was of a strictly diplomatic character:

remonstrances in Paris to discourage French intervention in Tunisian affairs; advice given to the Porte in order to ensure the realization of its plans; indefatigable exertions to convince the Bey that his interests lay with the Sultan and to awaken him to the proximity of the French danger.

At the very outset there were serious difficulties to overcome and the situation actually worsened. The French, though they were not yet thinking of a protectorate, obviously aimed at establishing their moral preponderance in Tunis: they strongly objected to the strengthening of the Turkish rule in Tunis which could have been a nuisance for their action in Algiers and at least would have checked their progress in Tunis. That policy was adopted from the start and was unflinchingly carried on afterwards: the French Government thus gradually assumed a kind of right of protection upon the Beys, under the cover of an alleged defence of Tunis against the Turks. The French attitude was given some colour of likeliness by the Bey's reluctance to submit to the Turkish exigencies: the Beys considered that if they were legally dependent upon the Porte, they actually exercised all the powers of independent sovereigns: France by giving her support to their conception acquired very naturally

a strong influence in Tunis, particularly after Ahmed Bey's accession, as he was even more eager than his predecessor to assert his independence, and more suspicious with regard to Turkish policy which he deemed more dangerous than the designs of France. Ahmed Bey made full use of French assistance, but took care not to neglect the support Britain could afford him by softening the Turks and by neutralizing the risks which could arise from a too exclusive French "protection". Last but not least the Turks were not wholly reliable allies; they were inclined to use British support for a policy of their own and their initiatives put difficulties in the way of the Foreign Office more than once.

Strictly speaking these difficulties were inherent from the beginning in the principles of British policy, but it was made clearer later on that the Foreign Office was unable to convince the Bey that his interest was to side with the Sultan, that the Porte was not ready to submit its policy to British approval, and that the efforts made for strengthening Turkish suzerainty in Tunis could end in bringing about the very French domination which Britain wanted to prevent. There is no doubt that the difficulties were increased by the lack of a precise conception of the relations between Tunis and the Porte; neither Palmerston (in 1838)

nor Aberdeen (in 1841) appeared to know that the Bey did not pay tribute to the Sultan. Consequently British policy wavered between the French and Turkish conceptions of the Tunisian status: the first attempt to define that status did not occur until 1853; meanwhile British policy was bound to assume the character of a yearly improvisation in answer to yearly concrete situations.

Reade, whose point of view was limited to the Tunisian scene, understood very early the basic difficulties of British policy; but the Foreign Office had to take into account the main trends of its European policy, and particularly its desire to be in close relationship with the Porte. In the long run British policy could not avoid giving ground; the position adopted in 1836 and 1837 (support given to the Porte in Tunis and strong diplomatic action against French intervention) could not be maintained because a threat of war would have been the only way of preventing French naval action. Obviously the Foreign Office did not intend to go so far; it was therefore gradually obliged, although it continued to proclaim the validity of Turkish suzerainty in Tunis, to advise the Porte against trying to exercise it actually (at least for the time being); and although it denied that the French

had any ground for interference, it was obliged to endure it. Henceforward British policy would have to be content with a more limited target, that of avoiding an incident between France and Turkey in that region of the Mediterranean; this meant intervening in Constantinople as well as in Paris as it clearly happened in 1841. The first result was that the Porte was now debarred from thinking of a military action in Tunis as had been the case in Tripoli; it was no longer possible to envisage the development of Ottoman influence in the Regency, as Palmerston seems to have thought in 1836; the main problem was to find a modus vivendi acceptable to Turkey in order to preserve at least the existing state of things and check French advances in the Regency.

III. Aberdeen and the policy of the status quo (1842-1846)

1. The change of administration, and Aberdeen's appointment as Foreign Secretary affected British policy in Tunis in so far as British policy as a whole was modified. That change was of course gradual and we have remarked that Aberdeen's despatch of December 1841 kept a 'Palmerstonian' spirit, although the emphasis laid on the desire for an Anglo-French entente indicated a new orientation which was to become clearer afterwards. If Palmerston had felt the obligation to partly revise his attitude towards the Tunisian question, the principles of his policy (distrust of France and support of Turkey) had not been deeply affected. Aberdeen questioned Palmerston's views on basic problems, and as the British Tunisian policy depended very much on the view the Foreign Office took of its relations with France and Turkey, any change in those relations could not fail to be felt in Tunis.

Long before the formation of Peel's Cabinet, Aberdeen and Peel had showed some uneasiness at the bad relations which existed between France and England at the end of the liberal administration. In January 1841,

after the King's speech, Aberdeen wrote to Princess Lieven: "I cannot help expressing my astonishment and strong disapprobation of the absence of all conciliatory expressions towards the French government".<sup>1</sup>

And Aberdeen had hardly entered upon his duties when he expressed to the same correspondant the confidence he placed in Guizot: "difficulties of course we shall have ... but if we are fully agreed in the main object we have in view, these will disappear."<sup>2</sup> Aberdeen's anxiety to understand the French instead of bullying them, and to improve the relations between the two countries, lasted throughout his five years of office. The second matter in which Aberdeen's opinion radically differed from Palmerston's was his attitude towards Turkey: since the time when he wrote "independently of all foreign or hostile impulse this clumsy fabric of barbarous power will speedily crumble to pieces from its own inherent causes of decay" and defined the aim of British policy as "rather to find the means of supplying its place in a manner the most beneficial

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1. Lady Frances Balfour, The Life of Aberdeen, II, p. 112 (Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, January 28, 1841). And for Peel's own attitude, Parker, Peel, II, p. 454.
  2. Lady Francis Balfour, II, p.122. Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, September 7, 1841.



in the interests of civilisation and peace"<sup>1</sup> his opinion about the Turks ("the poor devils") had not been greatly modified: "The stupidity, corruption and tyranny of the Turks are scarcely to be credited" he wrote in 1842.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Aberdeen should have been rather reluctant to interfere with the Home Policy of the Porte as his predecessor had done, and to give full support to Stratford Canning's Reform policy: indeed the situation of the Reform after 1841 was not such as to induce Aberdeen to show any confidence in the possible improvement of Turkey; the failure of the effort of modernisation between 1841 and 1845 seemed entirely to justify Aberdeen's pessimistic views, and he would not fail to listen willingly to Nicholas' radical conceptions in the matter.

The combination of these two new factors created favourable conditions for an improvement of the relations between France and England in North Africa. It does not appear that Aberdeen felt much interest in those countries, at least at the beginning of his tenure of office: "I do not know, he wrote in March

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1. Lady Frances Balfour, I. pp.239-240. Aberdeen to Sir Robert Gordon, November 30, 1828.
  2. Ibid. II, p.139. Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, March 25, 1842.

1842, that it could signify much to us whether the French choose to occupy themselves with the Arabs and Moors in Africa."<sup>1</sup> In actual fact the Cabinet at last recognized French rule in Algiers and strongly advised the Sultan to hold aloof from the conflict between Abd el Kader and the French.<sup>2</sup> In Tunis the Foreign Office endeavoured to look upon French policy with less distrust and to show a more friendly spirit towards French conceptions. As, at the same time, Aberdeen treated the Turks rather coolly and was less prone than Palmerston to rely upon them in his Mediterranean policy, a tendency grew up to intervene at the Porte rather than in Paris when difficulties arose in Tunis as had happened already in 1841.

The French policy towards Tunis, during these years, as Guizot later summed it up in his Memoirs, left no other alternative than this attitude of resignation, with an occasional tinge of bitterness, if Aberdeen was decided to avoid as far as possible any controversy with Paris: "Chaque fois qu'une escadre turque approchait ou menaçait d'approcher de Tunis, Guizot wrote, nos vaisseaux se portaient vers cette

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1. Ibid. II. p.139. Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, March 25, 1842.
  2. Fournay, pp. 71-73.

côte, avec ordre de protéger le Bey contre toute entreprise des Turcs .... A chaque mouvement que nous faisons dans ce sens, le cabinet anglais s'inquiétait ... nous adressait des observations, des questions; il faisait valoir les droits de souveraineté de la Porte sur Tunis - Nous déclarions notre intention de les respecter ... pourvu que la Porte ne tentât plus de changer a Tunis [l']ancien état de choses."<sup>1</sup> The best Aberdeen could do in these conditions, was obviously to seize upon that desire, officially expressed by the French, of maintaining the existing situation in Tunis, and to make the "status quo" the basis of his own Tunisian policy. But the Foreign Secretary had to take into account the attitude of the local Representatives of the Powers who perpetuated the tradition of Anglo French Rivalry, in spite of the desire expressed by their Governments to put an end to that rivalry.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the very notion of "status quo" did not provide a solution for the problem: what could be the meaning and use of an agreement in theory on a "status quo" which had a different meaning for each of the parties concerned?

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1. Guizot, Mémoires, Vol.6. p.269.

2. See Lady Frances Balfour II, pp.105 and 135.

The Porte is officially converted to the status quo (1842)

2. Towards the end of 1841 it was again rumoured that Turkey was fitting out a squadron which was to be directed against Tunis; Guizot then decided to intervene at the Porte and to express the strong hostility of the French government to any such attempt and their resolution to uphold the status quo in the Regency. In the meantime very strong representations were made to Reshid Pasha, who had just arrived in Paris as a Turkish Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> With reference to these steps Aberdeen indicated in December 1841 that while he agreed with a policy aiming at maintaining the status quo, he could not but make reserves with regard to the manner in which that policy was being carried out by France. De Bourqueney nevertheless informed the Sultan and the Reis Effendi that his government would oppose any enterprise aiming at "interfering" in the affairs of the Pasha of Tunis, disturbing the status quo in that province and sending for that purpose a Naval force". The Porte at first expressed some displeasure at what it considered interference in its relations with a province which was "a part of the Ottoman Empire"; but as the French Ambassador pressed for a favourable

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1. Serres, pp. 269-272.

answer, Sarim Pasha at last sent a note to Bourqueney (and later communicated it to the British Embassy). That note embodied the formal assurance that the Porte had not "the least intention of altering the status quo in Tunis either with respect to the present Governor or with the administration of the Province". The Porte merely desired "to ensure tranquillity in every part of the Empire"; the Regency had no reason to take alarm at the Ottoman intentions "as long as the Mushir (acted) faithfully towards the Porte."<sup>1</sup> (The note which had been handed over to Bourqueney stated more precisely: "tant que S. E. Ahmed Pasha, gouverneur de Tunis, remplira bien les devoirs qui lui sont imposés et payera le tribut de son pachalik").<sup>2</sup> The French government warmly welcomed what they interpreted as a diplomatic success; in actual fact the reserve added by the Turks in the French Note with regard to the Tribute (the Bey and the French had persistently denied that the tribute was an obligation) greatly limited the bearing of the engagement; but it was convenient for both parties to welcome favourably a settlement which was wholly ambiguous.

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1. FO 78 475. Bankhead to Aberdeen, January 12, 1842

2. Serres, p. 274.

At least the Turkish note of January 7, 1842 gave the impression that there had been a lasting improvement: The Foreign Office was highly gratified to learn that the French government regarded the Turkish answer as "perfectly satisfactory". In Tunis Reade, acting upon Aberdeen's formal instructions, advised the Bey to avoid "affording any real cause for the Ottoman Porte to complain of Him"; the Bey apparently soothed by the recent manifestation of Turkish conciliatory dispositions, decided to send presents to Constantinople as a token of good will. Reade remarked with satisfaction that Ahmed "had actually thrown himself into the arms of England", a fact which he explained by the equal apprehensions the Bey entertained with regard to French and Ottoman policy. But Reade defined the limits of that attitude when adding for Stratford Canning's use: "I should regret myself extremely to see any hostile movement on the part of the Ottoman Porte against this Regency.... I feel convinced that any Turkish force sent here would meet with the most determined resistance from the whole moorish population."<sup>1</sup>

3. The Bey's emissary had hardly reached Constantinople when the Turks opened fresh discussions about the

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1. FO 102 15. Reade to Stratford Canning, March 23, 1842.

problems of the Bey's paying an annual tribute, applying the Tanzimat in the Regency and accepting limitations to his internal autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Early in June 1842 the Bey was informed by a Vizirial letter that a Firman was to be sent to him, directing him for the future "not to nominate officers ... without submitting their names to the Ottoman Porte," and adding that "The amount of an annual Tribute would be fixed... No flag but the Turkish one should be hoisted in the future." Immediately acquainted with the matter, Reade could not but remark that these demands seriously encroached upon the Beys' administrative autonomy and expressed again to Aberdeen his own conviction that any Turkish attempt against Tunis would create "anarchy and confusion"<sup>2</sup>; that first impression was quickly strengthened by the threatening tone which the Turkish envoy assumed in Tunis.

That situation involved the serious possibility of a grave crisis in Tunis: the French Fleet had already been ordered to be ready in case the Turkish forces would make an attempt against the Regency. Aberdeen acted immediately in accordance with the new trends of

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 54-59. Ben Dhiaf was with Mohammed Khairuddin (not to be confused with Khairuddin Pasha) the Bey's envoy to the Porte.
  2. FO 102 15. Reade to Aberdeen, June 15, 1842.

British policy: a reassuring letter was sent to the Bey announcing that representations would be made in Constantinople, and concluding with the usual exhortation to "maintain in his present difficulties the character of a faithful vassal" and to be careful not to be seduced by the advices and promises he received from the French. ("The assistance which he may obtain from any foreign Power may give that Power such a hold upon him, as may lead to the destruction of his authority in Tunis as effectually as any mandates issued by the Porte.")<sup>1</sup> But the main effort of the Foreign Office aimed at calming the impatience of the Porte. The Turkish demands, Aberdeen wrote to Stratford Canning, "would entirely change the position in which the Bey has for many years been placed, and would reduce him to the rank of an ordinary Pasha". The Porte's intervention could only be justified if the Bey's "disobedience or misconduct" was clearly proved: but the Pasha had continuously professed "the most implicit submission and deference" towards the Sultan. It was not to the Sultan's interest to create difficulties in Tunis, at the very frontiers of Algiers: "The Porte need scarcely be reminded that... no change

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1. FO 102 15. Aberdeen to Reade, July 14, 1842.



can take place in the conditions of this Regency which may not lead to a corresponding change in the policy of France." In case a conflict broke out in the Mediterranean, Great Britain would be obliged to interfere in consequence of "the obstinacy and indiscretion of the Porte"; should it happen, the Porte could not reasonably expect that Great Britain would "feel it incumbent on itself to limit its interference to the maintenance of the Dominion of the Porte". On the other hand a French intervention was likely to occur, as France would remind the Porte of the pledges taken in January 1842, an engagement which, Aberdeen considered, was "equally binding on the Porte as regards this country". The British Government had been amply satisfied by these assurances as a "pledge of wisdom and moderation on the part of the Porte". Any hostile move against Tunis would constitute a breach of these assurances, and, by the confusion which it would create, could not but "alienate entirely the province of Tunis from the paramount dominion of the Sultan." Aberdeen hoped in conclusion that the Porte would give up its alleged intentions and keep its relations with the Bey "on the same footing as heretofore", and that "it would not place the British Government under the painful necessity of adopting a course of conduct

which .... may in some degree interfere with that close friendship and alliance which it is its anxious desire to maintain with Turkey."<sup>1</sup>

4. Pressed as they were on the other side by very severe French representations, the Turks could not but give careful consideration to the threat which was implied by Aberdeen's despatch; although Stratford Canning thought that the Porte had undoubtedly intended to make in Tunis, the kind of changes which had been effected in Tripoli, without ever consulting him, he was convinced that after Aberdeen's severe instructions the renewed promises made by the Turks not to attempt such an operation could be regarded as sincere. The Turks nevertheless continued to assert that the tribute was an obligation which the Bey himself had acknowledged after his accession to the throne (Ahmed Bey vigorously denied that assertion)<sup>2</sup>. It is on that limited ground that the Porte was to re-open the question with, this time, the support of the Foreign Office. The Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out to Stratford Canning that the Porte, by giving up two of the demands presented in June, had proved its good will, and was

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1. FO 78 474 Aberdeen to Stratford Canning, July 14, 1842.  
2. FO 335 77. Stratford Canning to Reade, August 17, 1842.

then entitled to insist upon the question of the tribute. Canning was accordingly informed in September 1842 that the Bey would be invited "to pay an annual tribute .... according to what he had paid in the first year of his government"; the amount of the tribute did not really matter "as the object was not to secure a certain amount, but to maintain a principle already established."<sup>1</sup>

Stratford Canning did not find the demand unreasonable and he wrote to Reade that it would perhaps "be most consistent with the real interest of the Bey to enter on this occasion into some definitive and satisfactory arrangement with the Porte"; the payment of a purely nominal tribute would be beneficial to the Bey himself as "the danger of an apparent yet not legitimate independence with respect to the encroachment of any Christian power, as well as towards the Porte itself, under other circumstances might be thereby considerably diminished."<sup>2</sup> Aberdeen showed some interest in the project. But it was rather optimistic to suppose that Ahmed Bey, after the successful conclusion of the summer crisis, would readily submit to

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1. FO 78 480 Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, September 14, 1842.
  2. FO 335 112. Stratford Canning to Reade, October 2, 1842.

even a moderate demand which, he moreover asserted, had no precedent and had never been accepted by him at any time. Reade was well aware of these difficulties and he took care not to insist upon such a delicate question: "I cannot conclude without again taking the liberty of recommending in the strongest manner possible the Bey's situation to Your Excellency's favorable notice" he answered to Stratford Canning.<sup>1</sup> That short lived attempt at least indicated to what extent British policy remained wavering and vaguely informed of the real situation in Tunis. The Foreign Office had in 1842 pronounced in favour of the policy of the "status quo"; the "status quo" had thus met with the general approval of the Powers interested in Tunisian affairs; the difficulties began when the Porte endeavoured to exercise the rights it found in its own definition of the status quo, and which both France and the Bey asserted did not exist. Great Britain officially asserted that Turkey had suzerain rights in Tunis, without defining them; but her diplomatic action prevented Turkey from making use of them, without however disregarding the serious risks to which her quasi independence would eventually expose Tunis.

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1. FO 102 15. Reade to Aberdeen. October 28, 1842.

Anglo-French rivalry in Tunis (1843).

5. Although he sincerely desired to avoid any discussion which was likely to impair seriously the good understanding with France, Aberdeen could not but recognize how seriously the independence of Tunis was threatened by the development of French influence. It was precisely in order to strengthen the British position in Tunis and to counteract French activity that the Foreign Office had been induced to restrain Turkish demands. As the Porte during the year 1843 temporarily relinquished its plans with regard to the Regency, the rivalry between France and England became more acute and was revealed by a series of unimportant incidents. Each of the consuls endeavoured to check the enterprises of his rival, de Lagau generally taking the initiative, and Reade struggling as well as he could to maintain his influence over the Bey. These consular quarrels were unavoidable in regions where the isolation of the Europeans brought them to an almost permanent state of disagreement. A Swiss traveller remarked in 1842 that opinions in Tunis were so different about Reade "qu'il m'a été impossible de m'assurer s'il est effectivement un diplomate aussi distingué, un si parfait gentleman, un si grand homme en un mot que le dépeignent ses partisans, ou si, comme le prétendent ses antagonistes

il n'est qu'un intrigant avare et mechant". The French had a further reason for hating Reade: he had been in Saint Helena, under Hudson Lowe, one of Napoleon's gaolers.<sup>1</sup>

6. It was very important for Reade to keep the Catholic Mission under strict supervision as the British residents in Tunis were mainly of Maltese origin, and therefore belonged to the Roman Catholic Church; in 1842 France had scored a first success when Padre Emmanuele "a person entirely devoted to British interests"<sup>1</sup> had been gradually eliminated from the Mission. Reade had of course endeavoured to induce the government of Malta to press upon the Padre Provinciale, the importance of keeping Padre Emmanuele in Tunis. But intervention in affairs which involved the Roman Catholic Church was of course a delicate matter for British officials, and in that field of action France had better and more efficient means at her disposal - Padre Emmanuele was actually sent back to Malta. One year afterwards, the Mission ceased to be under the supervision of the Padre Provinciale in Malta, and was directly connected with the Apostolic Vicarate. Reade

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1. Une promenade a Tunis en 1842, p. 176.

2. FO 102 15. Reade to Aberdeen, January 4, 1842.

sorrily concluded that "the Mission therefore may henceforward be considered as entirely French" and he suggested to the Foreign Office the expediency of embarking on a new religious policy in Tunis, by creating "a church expressly for the use of the Maltese and governed by their own Priests".<sup>1</sup> Rather than grapple with the intricate problems which were involved in that proposal, the Foreign Office preferred to hand over the Maltese flock of Tunis to the bad Shepherd.

7. Since the French occupation of Constantine the *difficulties* had not ceased on the Algero-Tunisian frontiers because of the vagueness of the limits and the insubordination of the Arab tribes (Algerian as well as Tunisian) who lived in these remote and difficult regions. The incident which occurred in July 1843 was specially serious: a French column, while pursuing a rebel Algerian tribe, entered Tunisian territory, clashed with the Tunisian mountaineers and finally retired, after having inflicted considerable losses on the Tunisians. The Bey immediately sought Reade's advice: the Consul, while strongly advocating a prudent attitude towards France, in order to avoid giving her an opportunity to intervene; assured the Bey that Great Britain

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1. FO 102 17. Reade to Aberdeen. May 22, 1843.

would support him in case of need. Meanwhile two French men of war had arrived in the Goletta: their official mission was to protect the Regency against the Turkish Fleet which was due to leave Constantinople for its usual summer cruise; but as nothing indicated that it was intended to go to Tunis, the sending of the French vessels was rather hasty. It was specially ill-timed as it came just after the border difficulties with the Bey.

Aberdeen immediately expressed his uneasiness. Writing to Cowley, he emphasised his own desire to solve the difficulties between the two governments "in a friendly and temperate manner" and to avoid taking any steps which would reveal "an appearance of jealous vigilance and suspicions"; but he firmly reminded the French government of their previous engagements and suggested that instructions should be sent to Algeria for recalling the troops. As for the men of war which had been sent to Tunis "apparently on the supposition that a Turkish squadron had proceeded or was destined to proceed to that place", Aberdeen put forward information which contradicted these rumours; he accordingly suggested the calling back of the squadron, as otherwise the British Command in the Mediterranean "would naturally and properly consider in his duty to detach a squadron



in the same quarter."<sup>1</sup> Guizot answered that the frontier question was about to be settled; as on the other hand it appeared that the destination of the Turkish Fleet was not Tunis, the French men of war would be called back. It is worth remarking that, even when protesting against French intervention, Aberdeen seemed to accept a kind of right on the part of the French government to protect Tunis against Ottoman designs.

8. Convinced as he was that France entertained hostile intentions towards the Regency, Reade could not but think that there was some relation between these designs and the reopening of the affair of the Saint Louis Chapel. That ambiguous building (people only agreed about its ugliness) had continued to be the cause of various suppositions since 1840: practical jokers had even spread the rumour that when the Chapel had been built, the British had threatened to erect "en faveur d'Annibal un joli petit monument, élégamment orné de tours et de bastions .... probablement sur le point culminant du Cap Carthage".<sup>2</sup> In July 1843 de Lagau asked the Bey for an authorization to build new rooms around the Chapel; Reade immediately connected that

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1. FO 27 664. Aberdeen to Cowley, August 18, 1843.

2. Un promenade à Tunis, pp. 120-122.

demand with the boundary question, the coming of the French men of war, and the alleged activity of Algerian agents in the Regency. His conclusion was that a plan existed which could not "be viewed without a certain degree of suspicion".<sup>1</sup> He advised the Bey to play for time and referred the matter to the Foreign Office. Aberdeen took it very seriously and informed Cowley of his uneasiness: "a suspicion naturally arises that... a system of vexatious and overbearing interference is deliberately adopted by French towards the Bey which... justifies a jealous vigilance on our part."<sup>2</sup> Some weeks later Admiral Owen sent to Tunis a frigate to obtain an account of the situation; after having carefully examined the Chapel, Captain Grey made a reassuring report; although its situation was militarily excellent, he said, "had I not been warned beforehand, I cannot say that any part of the building or enclosure would have struck me as being too solid for what it professes, or as having any other character than a religious one."<sup>3</sup> The question of the Chapel was thus definitely dropped by the Foreign Office.

By the end of the year a violent incident occurred

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1. FO 102 17. Reade to Aberdeen, August 25, 1843.
  2. FO 27 654 Aberdeen to Cowley, August 18, 1843.
  3. FO 102 17. Grey to Owen, September 26, 1843.

between the Bey and the French Consul which, coming after the long series of difficulties already mentioned, seemed to give some weight to Reade's suspicions, but it is also very likely that, because there had been no Turkish attempt, the French penetration had only been more conspicuous than when it had the pretext of the defence of Tunis. These incidents greatly contributed to strengthen Reade's position, as Britain had constantly supported the Bey in his difficulties with France. On the other hand they showed that Aberdeen could not escape being drawn into difficulties which the mutual antagonism of the Consuls greatly embittered. Captain Grey, who was an unprejudiced observer, remarked with regard to that hostility that Reade was "on intimate (terms) with none of his colleagues, and as it is notorious that the Bey consults him on any occasion, his influence excites the jealousy of the French who find in him the principal check to their intrigues... This continual struggle for supremacy must naturally give some bias to his opinions."<sup>1</sup> Reade on the other hand had good reasons for accusing de Lagau of continually trying "to draw the Bey into a discussion on some important point in order to put Him off his guard and

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1. FO 102 17. Grey to Owen, September 26, 1843.

construe some act of His into a direct insult."<sup>1</sup>

9. The incident between Tunis and Sardinia (1843-1844).

The real problems which affected Tunis were unexpectedly put in the shade by a conflict between the Bey and Sardinia; its origins were unimportant enough, but its consequences could have been disastrous owing to French and Turkish endeavours to share in its solution, if the Foreign Office had not succeeded in preventing it from giving rise to a Mediterranean problem.

During the summer of 1843, owing to the mediocrity of the crops, the Bey had issued a circular prohibiting from then on the exportation of corn; The Sardinian Consul complained that such a decision was contrary to the Tuniso-Sardinian treaty of 1832 (which provided that the Bey should give three month's notice) and asked for its cancellation. On the Bey's refusal, the Consul broke off his diplomatic relations and brought the case to the attention of his government (September 1843). That decision was obviously hurried and unwise; Reade remarked that it seemed inopportune to ask for the strict application of the treaties "when in opposition to such restrictions as the Bey may find himself under the necessity of imposing, as in the present instance, for the maintenance and preservation of the

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1. FO 102 17. Reade to Aberdeen, October 30, 1843.

inhabitants."<sup>1</sup> The Sardinian Government nevertheless firmly backed their consul, perhaps with political considerations in mind. But the Bey persisted in his refusal and began preparing to defend the country.

The incident was trifling at the outset; but it soon became clear that the whole problem of the relations of the Powers with Tunis would be involved in it. The Porte had been very uneasy with regard to the interruption of her relations with the Bey since 1842; in November 1843 it had thought of sending a vessel to Tunis with a friendly despatch from the Sultan. But Stratford Canning had been somewhat unfavourable to a step which "would only give umbrage without answering any effective purpose... and had advocated simpler and more unostentatious means for expressing the sympathy of the Porte".<sup>2</sup> The incident of 1843 very opportunely provided the Porte with reasonable pretext for sending a Commission "pour s'informer en apparence du différend Sardo Tunisien, mais au fond pour voir ce que le Pacha fait et quelle est sa position envers la Porte."<sup>3</sup> At the end of January 1844 the Porte informed Stratford Canning of the impending departure of Omar Effendi

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1. FO 102 17. Reade to Aberdeen, September 18, 1843.
  2. FO 78 523. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, December 1, 1843.
  3. FO 335 82. Stratford Canning to Reade, December 27, 1843.

on a mission of enquiry: it added that in case hostilities broke out "la Sublime Porte se trouverait dans la nécessité ... de défendre le pays ... Une flotte ottomane [serait] envoyée pour protéger la province de Tunis, qui fait partie des États de Sa Hautesse."<sup>1</sup> Omar Effendi had further instructions for clearing up the suspicions and imaginary apprehensions of the Bey and for pressing upon him the necessity of regularly writing to the Porte, in the future, in order to inform it about the administration of the Province.<sup>2</sup>

10. The initiative of the Porte was fraught with far reaching consequences: The Sardinian government were of course irritated by the threatening tone of the Turkish note and accordingly stiffened their position; on the other hand the Bey feared lest the Sultan's Envoy should try "to intermeddle with things of more importance than prudence would allow His Highness to pass unnoticed." But the main danger was of course that France should seize the opportunity to exercise her "moral protectorate" over Tunis; it was at least quite clear that she would strongly oppose any Turkish action in the Regency. Stratford Canning and Aberdeen

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1. FO 78 554. Rifaat Pasha's note to Stratford Canning January 31, 1844.
  2. FO 78 554 Omar Effendi's instructions communicated in January 1844.

appreciated the danger in very similar words, at the beginning of February 1844: "The object of the Porte in sending a Commissioner to Tunis, Stratford Canning reported, and asserting her right to interfere authoritatively between the Bey and his antagonist is that which never ceases to occupy her attention, the recovery or acquisition of every inch of ground to which she can lay claim with any degree of plausibility. But she can hardly avail herself of the present opportunity without alarming the Bey and encountering the opposition of France. I have no doubt that M. de Bourqueney will remonstrate against the Porte's eventual intention of sending a squadron to Tunis, and on different grounds it may be presumed that Her Majesty's Government would equally deprecate the adoption of such measures without necessity."<sup>1</sup> Aberdeen could not but view the situation in the same light.

The only course open to Aberdeen was obviously to propose and to have adopted as quickly as possible a British mediation in order to anticipate Turkish and French interventions and the dangers which they involved. As early as the 3rd of February Aberdeen suggested to the Bey the expediency of indemnifying

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1. FO 78 554 Canning to Aberdeen. February 1, 1844.

the Sardinian merchants for the losses they might have suffered; though he admitted the fairness of the Bey's case, Aberdeen pointed out to him the difficulties to which he would be exposed should he show too much obstinacy. The Bey was too well aware of the double danger which threatened him, to refuse an amicable settlement and he answered that he would abide by Aberdeen's decision (February 22, 1844).<sup>1</sup> The legal ground for British intervention was opportunely provided by the very stipulations of the Treaty of 1832 between Tunis and Sardinia (Great Britain had mediated that agreement; and it entitled her to act as an intermediary in difficulties which were liable to occur between the two countries) Aberdeen then sent hastily his proposals for a settlement to Turin and Tunis, and pressed the urgency of a satisfactory answer upon both Courts.

11. Stratford Canning had not waited for Aberdeen's instructions and had strongly remonstrated to the Porte against the sending of Turkish men of war to Tunis. His main argument ("that the departure of a Turkish squadron for that port would be infallibly followed, if not preceded, by the reappearance of a French naval

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1. FO 102 22. Ahmed Bey to Aberdeen, February 22, 1844.



force in the same waters") could not but impress the Turks and induce them to adopt a prudent course of policy.<sup>1</sup> Aberdeen wholly approved Stratford Canning's attitude; any attempt to take advantage of the Bey's difficulties and to assert Ottoman suzerainty in Tunis could not fail to bring about insoluble complications: Great Britain remained "anxious ... that the ties by which Tunis is united to the Ottoman Empire should not be severed" but any hasty action would infallibly arouse the Bey's resistance "even at the sacrifice of his own freedom of action by invoking the interposition of an European Power".<sup>2</sup> The Porte understood the allusion and merely sent a Commissioner who was prudent enough to maintain an attitude of reserve in Tunis until he went back to Constantinople.

The Foreign Office expected that the main difficulties would be encountered in Paris: as soon as Bourqueney had heard of the warlike declarations of the Porte, he had sharply disputed its right to interfere with the Tuniso Sardinian conflict. There is no doubt that the French Government then thought of putting forward an offer of mediation: at the beginning of March

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1. Stratford Canning to Reade, FO 335 87, February 7, 1844.  
2. FO 78 552 Aberdeen to Stratford Canning, March 16, 1844.

Abercromby reported from Turin that the French chargé d'affaires had been informed by Guizot that the French and British consuls were to "co-operate" in furthering a settlement. Several offers of unofficial interference were made by Louis Philippe but refused by Sardinia and a further attempt by de Mareuil met with no more success.<sup>1</sup> In Tunis de Lagau made the same offer; but the Bey rejected it on the ground that he had already placed the matter in Aberdeen's hands.<sup>2</sup> At least the Paris Cabinet clearly indicated that it had decided to defend the Regency if it was threatened; Louis Philippe and Guizot informed the Sardinian Ambassador that France would "oppose even by force any hostile attack upon the Bey of Tunis"<sup>3</sup> and Cowley was warned by the King that France "could not suffer" the intervention of a Turkish Force in Tunis; Louis Philippe added (and put thereby a peculiar construction on the negotiations in progress for an agreement) that he would be "very glad if Her Majesty's Government could be induced to assist in that good work".<sup>4</sup> In order to soften the disappointment which the French Cabinet could have met

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1. FO 67 127 Abercromby to Aberdeen. March 4, 1844.
  2. FO 102 19 Reade to Aberdeen, March 23, 1844.
  3. FO 67 127 Abercromby to Aberdeen, March 13, 1844.
  4. FO 27 694 Cowley to Aberdeen March 8, 1844.

with on account of its being kept out of the settlement, Aberdeen tried to vindicate British interference in the matter on the ground that it was the mere consequence of her mediation in the Tuniso Sardinian treaty. He nevertheless added that "under these circumstances Her Majesty's Government conceived that any further foreign interference would be unnecessary and might rather tend to obstruct than to accelerate the work of pacification already so happily commenced."<sup>1</sup> Nothing remained for Guizot but to wish the Foreign Office a happy negotiation and to assure Cowley that "the mediation of Great Britain... could not but be acceptable to the French Government. All he hoped was that it would be successful." The French added some days later a promise that pending the negotiations "France would remain perfectly quiet and would not send any naval force to Tunis."<sup>2</sup>

The extension of the conflict having been thus prevented, the difficulty itself was quickly and easily solved after Aberdeen's arbitration was accepted by the Bey (on April 6) and the Sardinian government (April 12). De Lagau showed some jealousy over this brilliant success of British diplomacy and the prestige it gave

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1. FO 27 689 Aberdeen to Cowley March 15, 1844.
  2. FO 27 694 Cowley to Aberdeen March 18 and 22, 1844.

to Reade.<sup>1</sup> The Turks expressed a formal satisfaction, but informed Stratford Canning that since the Bey "neither pays tribute, nor sends the customary naval contingent to join the Turkish squadron in its annual cruise, he should at least be careful not to allow a third year to pass without presenting to the Sultan, as heretofore, some valuable testimony of his respect and duty." Aberdeen advised the Bey to comply with the Porte's desire and to act towards the Sultan so as to "obviate the possibility of any just complaint being alleged against him by the Porte".<sup>2</sup> Stratford Canning renewed the request in September and advised the Bey to "keep up a more frequent correspondance with the Grand Vizir on matters connected with the welfare and prosperity of his territory" so that the Porte might be encouraged to persist in its good intentions towards him.<sup>3</sup> But the Bey merely answered that none of the Porte's demands were in accordance with the precedents, and Reade had to be satisfied with an assurance that he would do his best to manifest his submission to the Sultan.

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1. Serres, pp. 313-314.

2. FO 102 19. Aberdeen to Reade, May 31, 1844.

3. FO 335 87 Stratford Canning to Reade, September 27, 1844.

12. While the negotiations were going on to settle the differences between the Bey and Sardinia, the hostility between Reade and the French Consul, once more reached a climax. The occasion was provided by the trial of the Maltese Xuereb; having assassinated a Tunisian, he had been handed over to the Tunisian judges, at the Bey's request, and in conformity with the Treaties, and had been sentenced to death. The event was nearly unparalleled in a Moslem Country and it gave rise to unfavourable comments in European quarters. The Consuls, very probably at de Lagau's instigation (he had to take revenge for British success in the Tuniso Sardinian affair), intervened and asked that the case should be referred to a British Court. In the meantime violent posters called upon the "Fratelli Maltese" to protest: "I maomettani Nemice della Croce non devono imbrattare le loro sacrileghe mani nel sangue dei Cristiani ... Riunitavi tutti sotto il sacro vessillo della croce."<sup>1</sup> On the very day of the sentence the Consuls again protested and threatened the Bey with the action of their governments.<sup>2</sup> Reade called upon Aberdeen's help and sharply criticized

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1. FO 102 20 Reade to Aberdeen, March 28, 1844.  
2. Ibid, April 20 1844.

the French Consul for the prominent part he took in the intrigues which were directed against him. The Foreign Office backed the Consul and authorized the execution of the sentence. The day Xuereb was executed, the French Vice-Consul in the Goletta expressed the European discontent in a rather ostentatious way : "Le navire à vapeur Français "Le Caméléon", he later wrote to his colleagues, s'est éloigné de la rade pour que le pavillon français n'y flottât pas au moment de l'exécution d'un chrétien."<sup>1</sup>

Aberdeen thought it was high time to try to lessen the tension between the French and English Consuls in Tunis. Bidwell (Superintendent of the Consular Service) sent to Reade a confidential despatch which severely criticized the Consul's propensity to see at every turn proofs of French intrigue and advised him to adopt a more friendly attitude towards his colleague: "Why should not you and the French Consul unite and be on good terms? The two governments are on the best terms. Therefore the inference is that the agents of the two governments at Foreign Places should also be on good terms." Bidwell also asked Reade to be less lavish in his "reflexions and insinuations

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1. Ibid. June 8, 1844.

against the French and the other Consuls" in his correspondance.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, far from making in Paris the strong representations Reade had expected and actually suggested, Aberdeen was satisfied with reminding the French that his conduct in the Xuereb case was in strict conformity with the treaties; he added that, although they were convinced that the Consuls' duty would have been to "abstain from all further opposition on the spot", H.M.'s Government had "no intention to profer any formal complaint to the French Government."<sup>2</sup> In the House of Lords, in answer to Lord Beaumont's vehement protestations against the attitude of the Foreign Consuls, Aberdeen evinced the same restraint and the same anxiety to avoid any acrimonious discussion; while he admitted that the conduct of the Consuls had been "improper" he considered that "as to a 'reparation' he had no reparation to demand." Some Powers had already disapproved of the conduct of their Representatives; France had not yet found it advisable to do so: "Perhaps he might with a little ingenuity - if he had nothing better to do - get up a discussion to show the French government

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1. FO 102 21. Bidwell to Reade, May 15, 1844.

2. FO 27 690 Aberdeen to Cowley, May 21, 1844.

how much our Consul was in the right and how much their Consul was in the wrong, but as such a proceeding could lead to no useful result... he had been satisfied with expressing the opinion of Her Majesty's government upon the transaction" (August 3, 1844).<sup>1</sup>

Aberdeen's moderation was all the more noteworthy as relations with France were just undergoing a very serious crisis over the Pritchard case, and the Moroccan and Greek difficulties. If Palmerston's opinion (the government have been for nearly three years "almost licking the dust before their French ally, and now... in spite of all this France becomes every day more encroaching, more overbearing, more insulting and more hostile"),<sup>2</sup> can be ascribed to his anti-French bias, Peel's own<sup>dis</sup> satisfaction revealed the difficulties which Aberdeen found in his way: "Now ... Morocco and Tunis are threatened; and unless we hold very decisive language to France and are prepared to act upon it with regard to Tunis and Morocco, they, or so much of them as suits the purposes of France, will follow the fate of Algiers."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the French

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1. Hansard Third Series LXXVI 1844. Lords August 3, 1844, col. 1670-1672.
  2. Bulwer III, p.149. Palmerston, August 29, 1844.
  3. Parker, Peel III, p.395. Peel to Aberdeen August 12, 1844.



government did not make a friendly policy easier for Aberdeen; during the summer of 1844 as the Turkish Fleet was being prepared for its usual cruise in the Archipelago, in spite of Rifaat Pasha's assurances and although it had no well-grounded reason to believe that the Capitan Pasha would try to go to Tunis<sup>1</sup> the Paris Cabinet again resorted to the now classic sending of a naval division to the Goletta (August to November 1844). Aberdeen nevertheless refrained from protesting in Paris, but his attitude, while it avoided in Tunis the conflicts which occurred everywhere else, gradually and deeply affected the very principles of British policy towards Tunis.

13. Attempt at mediation between Tunis and the Porte (1845)

Aberdeen had not completely given up the idea of a 'rapprochement' between the Bey and the Sultan: the advice he had given to the Bey after the happy conclusion of his difficulty with Sardinia, clearly indicated that in spite of a succession of disappointments this rapprochement was still one of the basic principles of British diplomacy in Tunis. After the Bey's answer the prospect looked rather disheartening: but that very reluctance on the Tunisian side could not but arouse

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1. Serres, p. 312 and 313.

the irritation of the Porte and its fear of French influence and incite it to renew its previous attempts at the risk of giving rise to fresh Mediterranean difficulties.

14. The French government missed no opportunity of asserting their influence in Tunis; Reade nevertheless noticed that after 1844 French action in the Regency was exercised in a rather more discreet, and more friendly way than before the Sardinian incident. The French seemed now less desirous to frighten the Bey than to win his good will by flattering and reassuring marks of friendship. Even the traditional visit of the French Fleet, which found this time a shadow of justification in vague rumours of Turkish naval preparations and military reinforcements in Tripoli, assumed in 1845 a very amiable character: The Duke of Montpensier on his way to the Levant landed in Tunis (from the 20th to the 25th of June 1845) and his short sojourn provided an opportunity for a series of festivities, receptions and exchanges of decorations, wholly unprecedented in Tunis. Reade strictly abided by Aberdeen's instructions and tried to take part in the universal rejoicings. But one can guess that his personal feelings were in agreement with Admiral Owen's own impressions: freer

than the Consul to express his feelings frankly, Owen considered that, deprived of the excuses provided during the ten previous years by the movements of the Turkish Fleet, the French had nevertheless found a new means for justifying their naval visits at the Goletta: "I cannot but view them as part of a train of calculated mischief, which it is our duty to watch with care and be prepared to counteract if necessary" he concluded rather gloomily."<sup>1</sup>

The warmth of the Bey's reception was of course connected with the hostile designs which the Turks were persistently accused of harbouring against Tunis. At the beginning of July these rumours showed some foundations; 12000 Albanian soldiers were to arrive in Tripoli, and an expedition was being prepared against Djerba; it was added that a Turkish Fleet would take part in the operation, with British naval support. Reade did not attach much importance to that new variation on an ancient theme, but the Bey felt so uneasy about news which the French embroidered in threatening colours that he hastily despatched the presents which he had omitted to send the year before.<sup>2</sup> A more serious

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1. FO 102 23 Owen to Admiralty, July 20, 1845.
  2. FO 102 23. Reade to Aberdeen, July 23, 1845.

incident with the Turks confirmed soon afterwards the Bey's suspicions about the Porte's good will, the sincerity of which Aberdeen, Stratford Canning and Reade had not ceased to guarantee. Austria having decided in 1845 to have a Consul General in Tunis, M. de Köster arrived in August to take up his duties, with a Firman issued by the Porte and addressed to the "modèle des Kadys et des Juges .... le Kady de Tunis", instead of the usual letter from his government to the Bey. The Bey could not but consider that the Porte was thus trying indirectly to give weight to its pretensions in Tunis; he accordingly answered that the procedure was "contraire à nos anciens usages aux quels il nous était impossible d'apporter aucun changement ni altération"; he refused to give audience to Köster in so far as he assumed an official position as long as he would not be directly accredited to him.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon Köster left Tunis and the Bey applied to the French and English Consuls for support. The case was embarrassing and could be pregnant with serious consequences. Stratford Canning admitted that the question was very important for the Bey himself as it affected "the dependence or independence of his authority" and he

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1. FO 102 23 Circular to the Consuls, August 21, 1845.

accordingly regretted that the Porte should have mooted such a delicate problem. The Porte on the other hand considered that "the rejection of M. Koster was not to be tolerated and that measures should be taken to force the Bey into obedience". But Stratford Canning pointed out that the Bey would hardly be expected "to recognize an act destructive of his own claim."<sup>1</sup> The British Ambassador exerted himself to settle the problem and his efforts as well as Bourqueney's protestation finally induced the Porte to give up its claim before it received the scolding which Aberdeen had sent to Constantinople when he had heard of the whole affair: "Nothing indeed can be more impolitic on the part of the Porte than to seek to raise frivolous questions with the Bey of Tunis... The Turkish government must be well aware not only that the interest felt by the British government in the welfare of the Bey would deprive the Sultan of any advantages which he might expect at least from the tacit acquiescence of Great Britain in any attempt which His Highness might make to convert his nominal sovereignty over Tunis into a real one, but that the Porte would infallibly encounter in such an attempt the active opposition of France".

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1. FO 78 601. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, September 3, 1845.

Recent happenings proved that "even if the Sultan were unquestionably in the right" France would not tolerate the intervention of a Turkish Fleet against Tunis. The Porte would therefore act prudently in avoiding ill advised measures which could not fail to frighten the Bey and stiffen his resistance.<sup>1</sup>

15. It was apparently in order to obliterate the memory of the last incidents, and to allay the Bey's suspicions that by the middle of September 1845 the Sultan acquainted Stratford Canning with his intention of giving before long an evidence of his "most gracious intentions towards the Bey of Tunis."<sup>2</sup> Some weeks later, the Porte actually submitted to Canning a Firman which aimed at rewarding the Bey for his "loyalty" and his "useful services": the Bey was granted a confirmation for life of his Pashalik while the Sultan gave up the demand for a tribute.<sup>3</sup> Stratford Canning whole-heartedly supported what he believed to be "a manifest proof of the wise and benevolent line of policy which the Imperial Government has now at length adopted." He had carefully impressed upon the Porte the expediency of avoiding in

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1. FO 78 593, Aberdeen to Stratford Canning, October 6, 1845.
  2. FO 78 601. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, September 16, 1845.
  3. FO 102 23 The Grand Vizir to the Bey (beginning of October 1845).

the Firman "every remnant of pretension which might give umbrage to the Bey of Tunis", and he therefore hoped that "the Bey's allegiance as a faithful vassal to his sovereign [would] be duly displayed on every suitable occasion". Canning nevertheless perceived dimly that the confirmation for life was such as to create uneasiness in the Bey's mind, but he laid the emphasis on the advantages which the Bey would draw from a concession which, he thought, was the limit of what the Porte could do, and in short he hoped that Reade could convince the Bey to accept it."<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Office was not less gratified with the Sultan's endeavour to conciliate instead of indisposing the Bey, and expressed much satisfaction at finding that the Porte had "at length decided upon acting towards the Bey in a manner so well calculated to secure his devotion to the Sultan and to prevent any disagreeable questions connected with the Regency of Tunis arising between France and Turkey."<sup>2</sup>

Events soon proved that optimism to be wholly unfounded. The Bey was stricken with dismay at the receipt of the Firman: Stratford Canning's letters

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1. FO 78 602. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen October 31, 1845. FO 102 23. Stratford Canning to Reade, October 21 and 27.
  2. FO 78 593. Aberdeen to Stratford Canning, November 20, 1845.

(which Reade had transmitted to him in order to counteract the alarming rumours which prevailed in Tunis), had indeed induced him to hope that "whatever measure should be taken, coming through [Stratford Canning's] kind offices could never be prejudicial to His interests or detrimental to His Rights". He immediately took the view that the Firman was a backward step and held that he could not accept a text which seemed to be at variance with the hereditary character of the Husseini government in Tunis. Reade nevertheless advised him to accept the Firman, but the French Consul convincingly impressed upon the Bey the prudence of avoiding giving an answer which could prove detrimental to his successors' rights.<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Envoy was accordingly given a very deferential reception, but the Firman was not read publicly and after having consulted his Ministers the Bey sent an answer which, with due regards for the Sultan's authority, clearly explained the Husseini claim for hereditary succession: "Tout ce qu'il désire, he said, est d'être traité comme l'ont été ses prédécesseurs.... [Notre] point de vue... est de voir la dynastie husseinite marcher sur les traces de nos pères et aïeux dans sa conduite vis à vis du gouvernement

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1. FO 102 23. Reade to Stratford Canning November 15, 1845



Ottoman." (November 23, 1845)<sup>1</sup> It only remained for Reade to ask Stratford Canning to intervene at the Porte on behalf of the Bey.<sup>2</sup> The Ambassador did not feel sanguine about resuming negotiations with the Ottomans: they were obviously reluctant to accept the extinctive prescription of the Sultan's rights of suzerainty. Stratford Canning was reminded that the customary sending of annual Firmans of confirmation to the Pashas, although it was "a mere formality" for the Bey, nevertheless remained binding upon him; it was quite true that those Firmans had not been sent to Tunis for eight years, but in theory the Sultan retained his rights; the grant of a confirmation for life ought therefore to be considered by the Bey as a real favour. Canning, while refusing to lose hope, concluded in a disillusioned mood: "there is much occasional danger in placing implicit reliance on the assurances of any oriental government."<sup>3</sup>

In all fairness Stratford Canning would have been more justified to ascribe his recent failure to the policy of his own government: the last incident had

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 82-84.
  2. FO 102 23, Reade to Stratford Canning, November 17, 1845.
  3. FO 78 630, Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, December 2, 1845.

given a new evidence of the improvisation of British policy and of the inadequate knowledge of the Foreign Office, with regard to the international situation of the Regency. It was obvious for anybody knew it (Reade for instance) that the Bey could not accept the confirmation "for life" in as much as he did not acknowledge the right of the Porte to interfere in the hereditary succession within the Husseini dynasty. But if British policy in Tunis suffered from its being ill defined, it was further hindered by the irreducible opposition of Tunisian and Turkish views on the matter. When it defended its rights (should they be out of date) the Porte showed a stubbornness which found some justification in "a natural desire to guard the principles of sovereignty."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the Bey, strong in France's constant support, persistently refused to give up any right he had received from his predecessors, and he even rejected any fictitious demonstration which would have been in contradiction with what he held to be the status quo of the Regency. At the beginning of 1846 Reade defined his attitude as follows: "Nothing could be more agreeable to His Highness than that His relations with the Porte should continue to remain as

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1. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, FO 78 630, December 2, 1845.

they formerly were. I cannot think that His Highness will ever consent on any consideration whatever to alter his situation with regard to the Porte, even should he find eventual advantages which He would not otherwise obtain."<sup>1</sup>

Aberdeen's policy falls into line with French action in Constantinople (1846)

16. The 1845 failure was all the more important as the Foreign Office, during the 20 following years, was to avoid intervening directly for the settlement of the differences between the Bey and the Sultan, an attitude tantamount to acknowledging the partial failure of Palmerston's policy. Obviously British policy had come to a deadlock. The very implementing of the status quo came up against a deeper problem, which had been long left in obedience: the significance of the status quo. The new French policy was obtaining such successes in Tunis that de Lagau was able to assert in December 1845 that "nous avons maintenant dans cette partie de l'Afrique, presque tous les avantages de la possession, sans en avoir les inconvénients."<sup>2</sup>

The seasonal rumours relating to military

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1. FO 195 213 Reade to Stratford Canning, March 2, 1846
  2. Serres, p. 331.

preparations in Tripoli, and to a visit of the Capitan Pasha to Malta, revived the Bey's apprehensions. The French government took advantage of his fears, although they did not appear to be well founded<sup>1</sup>, to renew the princely visit of 1845. The Mediterranean Squadron, placed under Prince de Joinville's command, anchored before the Goletta on the 28th of June; some days later the Duc d'Aumale rejoined his brother, and the presence of the two Royal guests was the pretext for an exchange of attentions of all kinds which to be sure could not completely delude the Bey; but two years' continual French exertions to win his favours could not but impress him and induce him to lean towards France, the more so as they contrasted sharply with the apparent indifference of the British Government which showed too often their interest in his behalf by severely admonishing him to adopt a policy which he secretly disliked. It was not politically unimportant that in their endeavours "to gain the spirit of everyman possessing any, the least influence at the Bey's court" the French should have "in some instances succeeded".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Serres, p. 340.

2. FO 102 25 Reade to Palmerston. August 20, 1846.

17. Aberdeen nevertheless spared no pains to support the Bey's case at the Porte when needed. Scarcely had he been informed of Ahmed Bey's uneasiness about the alleged hostility of the Turks - in spite of constant efforts to allay it "by mildness, by submission and by very considerable pecuniary sacrifice"<sup>1</sup> - than Aberdeen assured the Bey that the necessary steps would be taken to verify whether his fears had some foundation "and in case of necessity to remonstrate in the strongest manner against any attempt being made to molest Tunis."<sup>2</sup>

Aberdeen did not actually wait for a confirmation of these rumours, although the experience of the ten previous years was such as to justify some scepticism: on the very day he had replied to the Bey, he informed Stratford Canning that "after the repeated declarations of France that any attempt by the Porte to interfere with the Independence of the Bey would be resisted by a French Force, and after the repeated warnings on the part of England that Turkey must look for no support or countenance from an English Force in any such ill judged attempt" it seemed "hardly credible" that Turkey should contemplate seriously any act of aggression upon

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1. FO 102 25 Reade to Aberdeen, May 26, 1846.

2. FO 102 25 Aberdeen to Reade, June 25, 1846.

Tunis. However the evidence was "apparently so strong" that Aberdeen considered it as his duty to ask from the Porte without further delay a distinct explanation of its intentions in this respect. The British Government he added, were entitled to demand this explanation on account of their friendly relations with the Porte, and "of the high estimation in which they hold the Bey of Tunis, whose conduct, both with reference to the Sultan and to the powers of Europe in general, appears to them always to be highly meritorious", but "more especially on account of the interest which England has in the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the southern parts of the Mediterranean sea". Should it prove correct that the Porte really harboured hostile feelings against the Bey, Stratford Canning should "remonstrate in the strongest terms against such a proceeding"; in case the Porte should deny such intentions, the Ambassador should impress upon the Ottoman government the expediency of "taking immediate measures for tranquillizing the fears of the Bey"; and suggest an inquiry about the behaviour of the Pasha of Tripoli and if necessary a severe reprimand. "At all events, he concluded, the Porte must understand that H.M.'s government deprecate no less the employment of intrigue for the purpose of disquieting the

Bey of Tunis, than they do that of open force for his expulsion from the Regency."<sup>1</sup>

The French government had not been more vigorous in their own defence of the Bey at the Porte: the only (and of course major) difference between the attitudes of the two Powers had been that France had sent Prince de Joinville's squadron before Tunis as a material support for Bourquenev's remonstrances. But at the diplomatic level the reactions and argumentations were nearly similar and the very expression "Independence of the Bey" was written down for the first time in an official despatch of the Foreign Office. Under these conditions it is not likely that Stratford Canning's own doubts about the Sultan's alleged intentions, and Reschid's reiterated assurances would have convinced Aberdeen of Turkish sincerity, had not Peel's cabinet been overthrown in the meantime. Palmerston, back in the Foreign Office, was more prone than Aberdeen to make allowance in the rumours concerning Tripoli for the intrigues "which the agents of France employ so much zeal to foment and to propagate."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 78 635 Aberdeen to Stratford Canning, June 25, 1846.
  2. FO 78 641. Stratford Canning to Aberdeen, July 4, 1846.

18. Before the first effects of the ministerial change could be felt, the British policy in Constantinople went on along Aberdeen's lines. Wellesley, left in charge of the Embassy by Stratford Canning's departure on leave, came to a complete agreement with de Bourqueney about the expediency of obtaining from the Porte the recalling of Ahmed Pasha, then military commander in Tripoli. His comments were very significant of the final tendencies of Aberdeen's policy: "I think it of such importance to remove all cause of French umbrage in that quarter that I propose ... to advise Reschid Pasha to comply with the French Ambassador's wishes."<sup>1</sup> A few days later Reschid Pasha entered into negotiations with Bourqueney in order that the Turkish Fleet during its annual cruise should be spared the humiliation of being watched by a French man of war (as had been the case during the last years). Bourqueney, by way of preliminary, had asked for a written assurance that the Fleet should not be directed against Tunis, a formal renunciation to any operation against Tunis, and the calling back of Ahmed Pasha. The French Ambassador then suggested "lest however this demand should give any umbrage to the Sultan" that the Turkish declaration

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1. FO 78 642. Wellesley to Palmerston, August 1, 1846.



should be made also to the British Ambassador. Bourquenev was thus making a bold attempt to secure England's participation in French policy in Constantinople. But Wellesley did not appear to see any difficulty in his being a party to an agreement which entitled France to a kind of "droit de regard" upon the movements of the Turkish Fleet. As for the recalling of Ahmed Pasha "I have ventured to advise the Ottoman Government to comply with the French Ambassador's request" he concluded.<sup>1</sup>

19. The results of the status quo policy.

Wellesley's last steps in Constantinople were the legacy of the Aberdeenanian period, just as Palmerston was resuming the functions of Foreign Secretary: in some respects they exaggerated the main features of Aberdeen's policy, but one can find therein an image of the ultimate consequences of the "status quo" policy. At the outset, in 1841, that policy involved a clear recognition of Turkish rights of suzerainty over the Regency; but through growing suspicions about Turkey and her attempts to take advantage of the status quo to reassert her suzerainty over Tunis, British policy gradually proceeded towards a co-operation with France on the very bases of French policy. With a view to

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1. FO 78 642. Wellesley to Palmerston, August 14, 1846.

defend "Tunis' independence" Great Britain finally assumed at the Porte a diplomatic action roughly similar to France's (but France strengthened it by the action of her Fleet before Tunis.).

One of the main features which accounted for that evolution had been the Bey's attitude: determined as he was to save the autonomy of the Regency, and if possible to strengthen it, he had not ceased to stiffen his resistance to any compromise which could result in forcing upon him decayed forms which were in contradiction to the actual situation of Tunis with regard to the Porte. While acknowledging the principle of Turkish Suzerainty he had cleverly neutralized its effects by combining French naval support with British diplomatic help. The Turkish lack of political realism had contributed to worsen the original difficulties of British policy. It was clear enough, in 1846, that the diplomatic game about Tunis had come to a deadlock: the Turkish pretensions, as expressed by Reschid Pasha in a memorandum which he had handed over to Stratford Canning, were wholly unacceptable for the Bey, since they had been successively rejected by Ahmed Bey (annual tribute, limitations to internal and external autonomy).<sup>1</sup>

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1. FO 102 25. That memorandum is dated 1846 without any other precision.

It is but true to add that the Porte had not made British action easier, and that too often she had resorted to ill-timed steps without previously consulting the Foreign Office; but one should remark that the Turks could reasonably feel some uneasiness about the existence of rights which they were prevented from exercising from considerations of Mediterranean policy. As for the French government, they had persistently followed a policy which openly aimed at protecting the Bey, but tended more and more to create in Tunis a moral protectorate; French action had been characterized after 1844 by an effort to win the Bey's good will rather than to frighten him, as before, by the display of French military strength.

The British policy was partly paralysed by Aberdeen's constant desire to keep friendly relations with Paris in spite of the Anglo-French antagonism in Tunis: Aberdeen had for that reason given up the quasi permanent pressure which Palmerston had brought to bear upon the Quai d'Orsay, and had concentrated his efforts on the Porte which was likely to be more amenable to British representations; in Tunis the advice Reade gave to the Bey ran counter to his desire for independence. The Foreign Office experienced greater difficulties in putting forward a solution harmonizing the conflicting

exigencies of the Bey and the Sultan, as its own conceptions about the status quo remained very vaguely formulated, a fact which had clearly appeared in 1842, 1844 and 1845. Aberdeen was more anxious to avert possible dangers than to bring about a lasting solution: the last attempt at rapprochement had been a complete failure (1845). Despairing of bringing about a rapprochement which it was nearly impossible to manage peacefully, the Foreign Office could only advocate a "minimum policy" of mediation which aimed at avoiding a Mediterranean incident and the immediate loss of Tunisian independence; the success of the British mediation in 1844 was the triumph of that rather negative policy.

By a continual improvisation the Foreign Office had been able successfully to cope with the danger of a French seizure of the Regency, but its policy involved serious dangers for the future in so far as it kept the same diplomatic formulas, without trying to prepare a different diplomatic course, better suited to the situation. The mere assertion of abstract Turkish rights could not by itself prevent their gradual extinction if the Porte was not allowed to exercise them; French policy was then bound to succeed and the French conception of the status quo to prevail over the rather vague British

position. The Bey was thus placed in an isolation which Palmerston had rightly deemed very dangerous but which had become worse since 1841.

#### IV. Tunis under French influence (1846 - 1855)

1. Palmerston's resumption of British Foreign Affairs could not but bring about a new change in British policy towards Tunis. The partial success met with by Aberdeen in his endeavour to avoid difficulties with France about Tunis was largely due to his conciliatory spirit, and forbearance. Palmerston however considered such patience to be the indication of a weak policy towards France: "I am afraid," he wrote shortly after his return to office, "that Aberdeen's system of making himself Under Secretary to Guizot has been injurious to British interests all over the world."<sup>1</sup> And as early as September 1846 he defined the main trends of a policy of strenuous resistance to French expansion: "We have been defeated by our timidity, hesitation, and delay.... So it is and always will be with France: if others are firm they stop or recede; if others recede or falter they advance and rush on... We have

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1. Gooch, The Later Correspondance of Lord John Russell, I, p. 131. Palmerston to Russell, December 8, 1846.

all been too much afraid of France."<sup>1</sup> The first fruits of that pugnacious policy were the successive Mediterranean crises to which the Spanish affair served only as a prelude; but in September 1846 Peel already remarked that "maintenant que la bonne entente est détruite la guerre peut survenir à tout moment."<sup>2</sup> The new spirit was also felt in Morocco where Anglo-French relations became suddenly more strained at the end of 1846. In Tunis Palmerston obviously considered that the course British policy had lately taken called for a realignment of, if not a departure from, Aberdeen's policy. But Palmerston was soon to discover that the situation in 1846 no longer allowed him to aim at the same objectives as he had in view ten years before: the events of November and December 1845 revealed the deep changes which had occurred in Tunis and accordingly obliged Palmerston to set himself more limited objectives than he had first thought of doing.

2. Attempted correction of British policy (1846).

As soon as Palmerston had resumed his functions, he gave clear indications about the new orientation of British policy. With regard to the alleged Turkish

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1. *ibid.* (I) pp. 117. 118. Palmerston to Russell, September 10, 1846.  
2. Guyot, p. 292.

threatening activity in Tripoli, Palmerston showed from the outset a scepticism which contrasted strongly with Aberdeen's anxiety. Palmerston was convinced that French agents were mainly responsible for the propagation of these rumours, and relied upon the assurances given by the Porte; he decided that the best course to take was to make enquiries on the spot, and two officers were accordingly sent to Tripoli "to examine into and to ascertain the state of affairs in that Pashalik with reference to the supposed designs on Tunis."<sup>1</sup> The report which was forwarded to the Foreign Office in October 1845 positively asserted that there were no preparations in Tripoli which could justify the Bey's apprehensions.

On the other hand, Palmerston severely criticized the negotiation into which Reschid Pasha had entered with Bourqueney in August and in which Wellesley had played a rather unexpected part: "It would have been more prudent," Palmerston wrote on September 7, "not to have made the communication which was made to M. Bourqueney... There is no disguising the fact that the application made to the French Ambassador that as a favour he would abstain from sending a ship of war to watch the Turkish Fleet, and the consent to make stipulations as the

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1. FO 78 635. Palmerston to Wellesley, September 7, 1846.



condition on which such a favour was to be granted, was derogatory to the dignity and independence of the Porte." While approving of the Porte's assertion that it did not entertain hostile intentions against Tunis, Palmerston regretted that such a declaration should have been the result of a humiliating bargaining.<sup>1</sup> As far as it could, the Foreign Office obviously aimed at strengthening the Turkish position and at questioning the French diplomatic success.

3. At this juncture the Bey suddenly announced that he had decided to go to Paris and London, a decision which was to create some confusion in British policy and to reveal the degree of independence the Regency had reached with French support. As soon as Reade was apprised of the Bey's unexpected decision (September 28, 1846) he foresaw all the difficulties which that journey was likely to create; he immediately suspected (and his bias inspired him with justified suspicions in this particular case) that the French Party had, if not prompted, at least encouraged the Bey to take such a step; the Bey's journey could not but provide France with an opportunity to manifest the support she gave to Ahmed Bey's pretensions and on the other hand place

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1. Ibid. Palmerston to Wellesley, September 21, 1846.

Great Britain in an embarrassing situation should these pretensions bring about a conflict between the Bey and the Sultan. But Reade's exertions to induce the Bey at least to delay his departure, so that his government should be informed and could try to clear up the problems involved, proved useless. Ahmed Bey was eager to leave Tunis and to receive the flattering reception which he had been promised by de Lagau. The Government of the Regency during his absence was quickly organised, and on November 5, the Bey went aboard his Steamship bound for Marseilles.<sup>1</sup>

While the Bey was travelling in France Palmerston made the necessary arrangements for the Bey's reception in England: Reade was called back to London, and the Foreign Office asked the Army to select an officer who was to escort the Bey and, it was added, who "for obvious reasons should be intelligent."<sup>2</sup> In the meanwhile Palmerston defined his attitude about the etiquette of the Bey's reception: the problem was just beginning to trouble the Turkish Ambassador in Paris who had had an inkling of Guizot's intention to give the Bey "the honors due to an independent Sovereign".<sup>3</sup> As for

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1. FO 102 25. Reade to Palmerston, October 24, 1846.
  2. *ibid.* Foreign Office to Lord Fitzroy, November 30, 1846.
  3. FO 27 757 Normanby to Palmerston, November 20, 1846.

Palmerston, there was no room for doubt: "The Bey of Tunis", he wrote to Normanby, "is decidedly not a sovereign and independent prince and ought not to be treated as such." He was entitled in Paris to the same reception as Ibrahim Pasha "that is to say that they will have him presented by the Turkish Ambassador."<sup>1</sup> And accordingly a few days later the Foreign Secretary explained that "considering the relation in which the Bey stands towards the Sultan, it will devolve upon the Representatives of the Porte in this country to present His Highness to her Majesty."<sup>2</sup>

4. Soliman Pasha's fears were thoroughly justified by Guizot's final attitude: in spite of Ibrahim Pasha's precedent, Guizot apprised Normanby of the French intention to receive the Bey "plutôt en souverain".<sup>3</sup> In actual fact Ahmed Bey when arriving in Paris was presented directly to the King and no attention was paid to Soliman Pasha's rights.<sup>4</sup> Guizot was at great pains

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1. Bulwer (III) p. 319. Palmerston to Normanby, November 15, 1846.
  2. FO 27 747 Palmerston to Normanby, November 27, 1846
  3. FO 27 757, Normanby to Palmerston, November 27, 1846.
  4. A de Latour Voyage de S.A.R. le duc de Montpensier pp. 227-228.

to vindicate a decision which had an obvious political bearing: by treating the Bey as an independent sovereign France strengthened her moral influence over him, while she got the British into serious trouble.<sup>1</sup> As soon as Normanby had discovered the French intentions he had informed the Ambassadors of the Powers who had decided to abstain from attending the official ceremonies where the Bey was to be present. And when Raffo came to the Embassy, Normanby made it clear that whatever regard the Bey would be shown in England "it would be expected there that he should be presented by the Ambassador from the Porte."<sup>2</sup> The Bey, apparently, was not prepared for such news and he was greatly perplexed: he had not foreseen such difficulties, Raffo reported; he did not aspire to an independent position, but on the other hand his dignity prevented him from accepting in England a procedure of reception so inferior to the French one, the more so as it would be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the rightness of British reservations about the etiquette adopted in Paris. Normanby

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1. It is worth remarking that at about the same time Palmerston refused, rather abruptly, Guizot's offer for a common attitude about the annexation of Cracovie by Austria (Thureau Dangin VII, pp.273-275).
  2. FO 27 757. Normanby to Palmerston, November 27, 1846.

supposed that the Bey had fallen under the influence of the French who wanted "not even so much to flatter his vanity as to make his visit to England impossible by accompanying it with pretensions which neither our own consistency nor our alliance with the Porte could allow us to admit."<sup>1</sup>

Palmerston had nearly no choice in the matter: his desire to strengthen the friendly relations with the Porte, his deep distrust of the aims and methods of French policy made him adopt a firm position on a question which involved, beside problems of mere etiquette, very serious consequences regarding the international situation of the Regency. If the Bey and France were to triumph on this occasion, the prestige of the Porte and what it still retained of its rights in Tunis would be so impaired that there was no room for hesitation; the Foreign Office was bound to abide by British traditional policy in Tunis, even if, as was likely, the relations with the Bey were to be affected by that decision. Palmerston thus confirmed in his answer to Normanby that the duties and obligations of his government towards their ally the Sultan "could not be forgotten or overlooked.... The Bey does

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1. FO 27 757. Normanby to Palmerston, November 30, 1846.

not profess to be an independent Sovereign and cannot therefore expect to be treated as such." Palmerston nevertheless strongly encouraged the Bey to persevere in his intention of visiting England and concluded with a very serious warning: "If His Highness reflects calmly upon all the circumstances of His position political and geographical, he will probably be of opinion that his political connection with the Sultan is a valuable security against dangers to which his geographical situation would tend to expose him."<sup>1</sup>

The Bey however turned a deaf ear to the allusion and Normanby could not make him change his mind. Ahmed Bey nevertheless sincerely regretted the estrangement between him and Great Britain and knew the dangers which he would incur by an exclusive reliance on French support; he was fully aware of these impending difficulties, and his uneasiness may be the explanation of his wistful answer to his biographer and minister Ben Dhiaf who was speaking highly of the marvels of Parisian life: "Il me tarde d'entrer à Tunis par la Porte de Bab Alaoui et de respirer l'odeur de friture du marchand de beignets qui s'y trouve."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the tone of

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1. FO 27 747. Palmerston to Normanby, December 1, 1846.  
2. Ben Dhiaf, p. 114.

Palmerston's communications was becoming more and more irritated against the Bey's stubbornness: "He must judge for himself... and if he changes his original intention and goes back to Africa without visiting England, he will be the greatest loser by such a determination and the fault will not lie with Her Majesty's government."<sup>1</sup>

Ahmed Bey at last decided to put an end to a fruitless discussion and announced that he had given up his original idea and would go back directly to Tunis:

"M. l'Ambassadeur de votre gouvernement," he wrote to the Queen, "nous a prévenu d'une forme de réception dont nous n'avions point connaissance à notre départ. Cette circonstance a entravé l'accomplissement de notre désir, à cause du fardeau qui pèse sur nous dans l'administration de notre famille et de notre pays et que nous ne pouvons pas prendre sur nous de détruire."<sup>2</sup>

A few days later (on December 15, 1845), the Bey left France and returned to Tunis.

5. Palmerston was of course deeply dissatisfied with the Bey's decision: he answered with an ominous coldness, merely acknowledging receipt of Ahmed Bey's letter and of its content. Reade (who had received

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1. FO 27 747. Palmerston to Normanby, December 4, 1845.  
2. FO 102 27. The Bey to Palmerston, December 11, 1846.

in the meanwhile a despatch cancelling his recall to England) was instructed to deliver it "without comment"; in case the Bey "should propose to offer any explanation of the step which he has taken" Reade was to answer simply and solely that he had "received no instructions from [his] government to enter upon that subject."<sup>1</sup> As for the French Government, Palmerston contented himself with mercilessly refuting the arguments which Guizot had drawn up in an endeavour to justify the reception given to the Bey. But it does not seem exaggerated to think that the Tunisian difficulties had also something to do with Palmerston's exasperated feelings against France in December 1845, when he wrote his memorandum "On our National Defence" and seriously contemplated the possibility of a conflict with France: "The two countries have in every part of the globe interests, commercial and political, which are constantly clashing, and the conflict between which may at anytime on a sudden give rise to some discussion of the most serious and embarrassing nature."<sup>2</sup>

But however vigorous his personal feelings may have been, Palmerston could not overlook the complications

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1. FO 102 25. Palmerston to Reade, December 13, 1846.  
2. Bulwer III, p. 390.



which could not but arise from a precipitate Turkish move. The indignation of the Porte burst out, as one could have expected beforehand, in passionate indictments against French policy in Tunis: Soliman Pasha took the first opportunity to sound Normanby upon the attitude Great Britain would adopt should the Sultan decide to punish the Bey and to vindicate his authority in Tunis by making use of "his just right to withdraw in cases of misconduct the power which was derived from him", and should France consequently interfere and take steps to protect the Bey. From the very beginning Normanby made no secret of the seriousness of the problem and insisted upon the prudence of previously consulting the Powers.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston wholly approved of Normanby's reserve and made it clear that the British government "would strongly dissuade the Sultan from taking any such step ... because such a measure ... might drive the Bey of Tunis to declare himself independent, and to throw himself on France for support; and in that case the Porte could not be strong enough single-handed to reduce the Bey of Tunis to subjection; and the other Powers of Europe might not feel disposed to take up arms on an occasion which would appear to have been

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1. FO 27 757. Normanby to Palmerston, December 10, 1846.

needlessly created by a voluntary act of the Turkish Government."<sup>1</sup> That warning was not very different from some of Aberdeen's considerations; at least there could be no mistake about the British desire to ward off a possible crisis, and about the probable isolation of the Porte if it resorted to harsh measures against the Bey. Soliman Pasha showed some disappointment, but the Porte had to be content with exchanging notes with Bourqueney; while it reasserted its rights in the Regency and dwelt on "the painful impression" which had been created in Constantinople by the Bey's visit to Paris and its consequences, the French Ambassador put the French case not very convincingly. (The Regency, he stated, "existait et continue d'exister comme état relevant, à quelques égards, de la suzeraineté de la Porte, mais non comme sujette de celle-ci"<sup>2</sup>). Had it been free to act as it wished the Porte would readily have taken up a more abrupt attitude: it had contemplated rejecting Guizot's explanatory note, but in Constantinople as in Paris British moderating influence was felt and Wellesley advised the Ottoman government to put an end to the discussion with the assertion that

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1. FO 27 747. Palmerston to Normanby, December 15, 1846.  
2. Serres, pp. 356, 357.

"en acceptant ce qui s'appelle status quo, la Sublime Porte a en même temps établi le principe qu'elle maintient à l'heure qu'il est, le principe du droit de souveraineté sur cette province."<sup>1</sup>

One could also ascribe to Palmerston's desire to limit the effects of the Bey's visit, Bloomfield's move at Saint Petersburg in January 1847: The British Ambassador acquainted Nesselrode with British views regarding the incident the Bey's visit had created in Paris, and he also informed the Chancellor of the advice given to the Porte to abstain "from committing itself to any line of action with regard to the Bey which might unnecessarily affect its friendly relations with France." Thereupon Nesselrode assured that "no advice could be wiser or better imagined to prevent any bad effects resulting from this business at Constantinople." By ascertaining Nesselrode's approbation Palmerston obviously aimed at preventing a Russian interference which could not have failed to muddle the question and to worsen the difference between France and the Porte.<sup>2</sup> Like Aberdeen before him, Palmerston was led to take into account the deep changes which the

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1. FO 78 677. Wellesley to Palmerston, January 18, 1847.  
2. FO 55 333. Bloomfield to Palmerston, January 5, 1847.

Tunisian situation had undergone, and although Turkish rights were more and more threatened by the initiatives taken by the Bey and France, he had to resign himself to upholding a policy which aimed at avoiding a Mediterranean conflict more than at giving to the Tunisian problem a "Turkish solution".

6. Great Britain and French predominance in Tunis.

Ahmed Bey's visit to Paris showed the improbability of a speedy settlement of his differences with the Porte, and indicated the beginning of a new phase of British policy in Tunis: whatever intentions Palmerston had nourished when he had resumed his Ministerial functions, he had now to retreat to a policy of waiting in the Regency, where French influence was reaching a climax. But while they temporarily limited their ambitions to the mere maintenance of the political and diplomatic conditions then prevailing, the British Government gave up none of the positions which they had theoretically upheld for ten years with regard to Tunisian dependence vis a vis the Porte; all could be saved in the future provided Tunis could avoid any crisis which was likely to imperil her existence and bring foreign domination upon her.

7. After his return to Tunis, the Bey had tried to discuss with Reade and to explain the difficulties he had met with during his visit in France; but the Consul, strictly abiding by Palmerston's instructions, had persistently declined entering into any argument on that subject. Ahmed Bey's anxiety and regrets were undoubtedly sincere; his leaning towards Great Britain was based upon his conviction that she was not looking for any political advantage in Tunis; if on the other hand he was deprived of British good will, his whole diplomatic system would fall to pieces; faced with a still threatening Turkey, he could no longer rely upon British support, but would have to put himself entirely in French hands, a situation which involved serious dangers. It is not surprising therefore that the Bey should have multiplied his advances for a reconciliation with Palmerston. At the beginning of February 1847 one of his familiars expressed his concern at Reade's reserved attitude; his coldness had created "a painful impression"; the Court was now convinced that France had advised the Bey to go to France in order to "ruin the Bey's relations with the Sultan and compromise Him with England." The Bey admitted "that the voyage had more than failed in its object; that had he foreseen the difficulties which have since arisen,

He would never have undertaken it."<sup>1</sup>

Palmerston considered that the ground was now sure for resuming friendly relations with the Bey and that further rigour was only likely to throw him back under French influence. He accordingly instructed Reade to intimate privately to the Bey that "a suitable expression of regret at what has happened, made personally by His Highness to you, would be accepted by Her Majesty's government as satisfactory for the want of respect shown by the Bey to the British government."<sup>2</sup> The Bey responded to Palmerston's offer with a readiness which, Reade wrote, "surpass all my expectations". He sent to Palmerston a letter in which he apologized for his having given up his visit to England "We trust, he concluded, that the Queen's Great and Illustrious Majesty will accept our excuses ... we anxiously add to Your Lordship that our not having proceeded to England has caused us both grief and regret... our friendship and respect towards Your great government are unalterable."<sup>3</sup> The incident being thus happily ended, Palmerston assured the Bey of the friendly feelings of the British Government and promised him "to support by amicable representations

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1. FO 102 27. Reade to Stanley, February 9, 1847.
  2. *ibid.* Palmerston to Reade, March 8, 1847.
  3. *ibid.* The Bey to Palmerston, March 29, 1847.

at Constantinople [his] just pretensions in regard to any matters in which [he] may be interested" with this reservation that the Bey should evince "due consideration and respect for the person and authority of the Sultan",<sup>1</sup> a formula which was vague enough to save Turkish rights in Tunis without committing the Foreign Office to any precise policy.

8. The relations between the Bey and the Sultan, as matters stood in 1847, did not allow more than remote hopes of a satisfactory solution. The Bey had too many occasions for verifying the soundness of his apprehensions regarding unfavourable Turkish dispositions towards him; news coming from Constantinople encouraged that state of mind, and there were, of course, in Tunis many people who were interested in strengthening his fears with regard to the alleged hostile intentions of the Pasha of Tripoli. Palmerston endeavoured to allay these fears, endlessly renewed, and noticed that "this notion of a design on the part of the Sultan to attack Tunis has no other foundation whatever than in the desire of the French government to gain credit with him for protecting him from an attack which nobody intends to make."<sup>2</sup> There was some foundation in that

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1. *ibid.* Palmerston to the Bey, May 1, 1847.

2. FO 102 27. Palmerston to Reade, June 4, 1847.

statement but the apprehensions nevertheless existed, and gave rise to open demonstrations of Franco Tunisian friendship and a political intimacy which made Reade uneasy.

As a last resource the Consul contemplated once more establishing a stricter connection between the Bey and the Sultan. It would be, he wrote, the "only practical remedy against French intrigues in this country." Let mutual confidence be created between the Suzerain and his vassal and the "very insignificant" difficulties which divided them could be solved. The only serious difference between them was related to the problem of the nomination for life (but it was a fundamental one). It was to the interest of the Porte, Reade added with optimism, to grant the Bey's wishes which would merely amount to confirming the status quo; such a concession was the condition of the settlement of the Tunisian question.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston forwarded that incomplete approach to the problem to Cowley, for the information of the Ottoman Government, but Cowley (to whom Reade had written directly) had already got into touch with Reschid Pasha and Aali Effendi on that matter.

The result of his conversations, as it was communicated

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1. Ibid. Reade to Palmerston, August 4, 1847.



in September 1847 to Palmerston and Reade, was not in the least encouraging. The Porte was deeply dissatisfied with the situation of the Regency and apparently "nothing but the certainty of Foreign intervention in the Bey's favour [prevented] the Sultan from vindicating his claims on Tunis by all the means at his disposal." Raschid Pasha, however, sincerely wished for an agreement and suggested that the status of the Regency be assimilated to that of the Pashalik of Egypt: the Porte would have recognized the hereditary right of succession in the Husseini dynasty, in return for which the Beys would have paid an annual tribute and would have accepted some restrictions to their autonomy in their diplomacy and administration. The Bey's interest, Cowley thought, was to make some sacrifices in return for the security which he would gain by the agreement: his concessions regarding the tribute and his external and internal autonomy would be largely counter-balanced by the support Tunis would receive from the Porte, which would free the Bey from French protection and tutelage.<sup>1</sup> That offer was no improvement indeed if compared with Raschid Pasha's memorandum of 1846: the Porte did not show more understanding

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1. FO 102 27. Lord Cowley to Reade, September 27, 1847.

than before and was but too prone to compare her "granting" a right which the Beys had actually exercised for nearly 150 years with her demanding serious concessions which Ahmed Bey had persistently shrunk from accepting. Palmerston realized that such conditions were not likely to bring about a fruitful discussion and he abstained from mentioning Cowley's memorandum in his correspondence with Reade; the Consul himself maintained the same attitude of reserve in his relations with the Bey.<sup>1</sup>

9. French influence in Tunis was stronger than it had ever been before. It is very likely that the Bey never relied upon French policy with full confidence, but France was the only power to indulge his vanity as well as to give him strong political support. Around him the "French party" prevailed over any other influence which was partly due to the ascendancy de Lagau exercised over the omnipotent minister Mahmud Ben Ayad who had absolute control over the Bey's finances. The celebration of the feast of Saint Philippe by gun salute as

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1. Palmerston's reserve did not however prevent him from advising the Porte to be careful in a possible arrangement with Tunis "how far it goes in giving the Bey permission to conclude Treaties with Foreign Powers, because the right of making Treaties is generally considered as a test of independent Sovereignty." (FO 78 676. Palmerston to Cowley, November 3, 1847.)

well as the creation of a bank in Tunis was looked upon by Reade as the visible signs of the French penetration against which he would have readily advocated a more active British policy: as far as he was concerned he never missed any opportunity of counteracting what he considered as French intrigues, and the rivalry between the Consuls of France and Great Britain appeared in the very family conflicts of the Ben Ayads, the father being a supporter of British policy while the son sided (as we have seen) with the French. Palmerston, however, did not show himself eager to be involved in the imbroglio of home affairs in Tunis and refrained from interfering when British interests were not directly threatened. So much so that when Reade suggested strengthening Mohamed ben Ayad's personal position in the Bey's council, in order to check the disastrous influence of Mahmud ben Ayad and of his French advisers to whose influence he attributed the speedy deterioration of Tunisian finances and economy, Palmerston appeared rather reluctant and evinced scepticism about the possibility of bringing about a deep change in the Bey's policy: "You should endeavour to induce the Bey of Tunis to see the elder Ben Ayad, but you should not make this request a matter of importance, because after all it is not likely that a

single conversation with that person would counteract the other influences which are daily brought to bear upon the Bey."<sup>1</sup>

The revolution of February 1848 seemed to justify Palmerston's cautious policy as the change of regime in France very naturally created some disturbance in French foreign policy and in Franco-Tunisian relations: the Bey was induced to entertain doubts about the continuity of French support, while the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères was hesitating as to what it was to do in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> De Lagau's recall seemed to indicate a desire to end the twenty years' old struggle for influence in Tunis. Feeling his isolation and fearing that in case fresh difficulties arose with the Porte he would be deprived of the usual French military support, the Bey followed more readily the suggestions he received from British quarters, and the authority of Reade (whose personal prestige had remained high) was of course strengthened. At the beginning of 1849 the Bey at last decided to send to Constantinople the customary presents, a course which Reade had strongly and more than once advised him to adopt; Reade was

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1. FO 102 27. Palmerston to Reade, November 10, 1847.
  2. See Flournoy, pp. 129-133 for a similar decline of French influence in Morocco after 1848.

much gratified by the Bey's return "towards the policy constantly recommended by Her Majesty's Government."<sup>1</sup> But that belated manifestation of good will may be attributed principally to rather obscure manoeuvres which were taking place at Constantinople and satisfactorily explained Ahmed Bey's propitiatory gesture and recourse to British help. On several occasions the Bey had been pressed by the Pasha of Tripoli and Abbas Pasha of Egypt to make a visit to the Sultan in Constantinople in order to settle definitely his relations with the Porte; the travel and the meeting of "two such men as Sultan Abd el Mejid and Ahmed Pasha of Tunis" were described to him in bright and attractive colours; but the Bey was obviously not eager to fall into the Sultan's hands, specially after the cold welcome which had just been given to his Envoy and his presents.<sup>2</sup>

Stratford Canning echoed the Porte's attempts to persuade "the Bey of Tunis to give up his pretensions to independence and to place his government more completely under the authority of the Sultan", and reported that Reshid Pasha had sounded him about British

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1. FO 102 34. Reade to Palmerston, June 18, 1849.
  2. Ibid. Ferrière to Palmerston, October 21, 1849.

dispositions "to countenance and favour such an attempt with the view principally of withdrawing Tunis from the immediate operation of French influence". The Porte may have thought of uniting the Pashaliks of Tripoli and Tunis "as an inducement for the Bey of Tunis to comply with the Sultan's well known desire to bring him more avowedly under his direct authority."<sup>1</sup> Palmerston's answer was however discouraging: he strongly advised the Porte to "accept with cordiality the Bey's professions of loyalty" and to refrain from any scheme which was likely in the long run to strengthen French influence in North Africa and lessen the Sultan's own authority without making the Bey "independent of French influence, or able to cope with French intrigue <sup>or</sup> more disposed than hitherto to cling to the Sultan." "The close neighbourhood of the superior French power in Algeria must inevitably enable the French government to exercise considerable influence upon the person who is placed at the head of the Tunisian Regency."<sup>2</sup>

#### 10. New trends in British Policy (1849-1851).

Palmerston thus admitted the existence in Tunis of a paramount French influence. It was at this juncture

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1. FO 78 777. Stratford Canning to Palmerston, July 4 and 19, 1849.
  2. FO 78 770. Palmerston to Stratford Canning, August 20, 1849.

that Reade died in Tunis (August 1849) after having devoted more than twenty years of his life to a tenacious struggle against the expansion of French influence; British policy had not been completely successful, but his personal position, was unrivalled in the Regency, and the regrets the Bey expressed as well as the uncommon honours he paid to Reade's remains proved that British prestige at least had not diminished. The arrival of a new Consul less involved in the local imbroglio and conflict with the French representative, provided an opportunity for taking a fresh view of Tunisian problems.

11. The instructions which were given to the new Consul, Sir Edward Baynes, emphasized the traditional themes of British policy in Tunis. The Bey, though enjoying a large share of independence in the administration and Foreign Relations, was a vassal of the Sultan and could not be considered as a sovereign prince: Baynes was not therefore accredited to him by a letter from the Queen (as had been done for Reade "from inadvertance or misconception" of the Bey's international situation) but only by a letter from Palmerston. The Bey had formed apprehensions about the aims of French and above all Ottoman policy: For that situation the French were largely responsible and they had forced upon him

protection "against dangers which had no real existence". Baynes' duty would be to allay those fears and to convince Ahmed Bey that "Tunis is more likely to continue to enjoy its present state of existence by remaining an integral part of the Turkish empire than if the Bey were to throw off his nominal allegiance to the Sultan." The Porte's intentions towards him were friendly and in case of need the Bey could rely upon the good offices of Great Britain. As for his attitude towards France, the Bey should evince prudence but should be ready to resist unjust demands. These instructions as a whole brought no new element into British policy, which had not fundamentally changed since French activity had compelled the Foreign Office to give up any immediate prospect of a "Turkish solution".

The innovations began when Palmerston, scrutinizing the problem of Tunisian administration, advocated the introduction of such internal improvements as the situation of the Regency required; "The Bey would do well, he said, by impartially administering the government to remove from His people all occasions for having recourse to foreign protection and He should discountenance and prevent acts of harshness or extortion on the part of his local governors or subordinate authority by which the people are oppressed and made discontented."



The problem of reform was thus tackled indirectly as an additional means of preserving the Regency from succumbing to external pressure. But in 1850 that "new policy" was only sketched: Baynes was to show much restraint; he was not to try to dictate nor to obtrude his advice if the Bey did not evince the disposition to seek it. In any case British policy towards Tunis was "open and straight forward": Great Britain did not aspire "to bid against others for influence" and she looked for "no selfish interests of her own." The main object she had in view in Tunis was to contribute "as far as she is allowed by the Tunisian government to do so, towards maintaining that government in its present state of political existence." Those considerations can be accepted as a fair and genuine description of the ways and aims of British Policy in Tunis at that time.<sup>1</sup>

12. As it was easy to foresee, Baynes, from the very beginning, had to deal with the external problems which were the most urgent in Tunis. The new Consul happened to find in the Archives of the Consulate the memorandum which Cowley had drawn up in 1847: still rather unexperienced in Tunisian questions, Baynes thought that

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1. FO 102 37. Palmerston to Baynes, February 11, 1850.

those proposals, which had not been acted upon by Reade at the time, could be used for bringing about "an amicable and definitive settlement" of the relations between the Bey and the Sultan.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston knew the question too well to entertain illusions about the chances of Baynes succeeding in his enterprise: he accordingly authorized Baynes to investigate the matter but advised him to exert the utmost prudence in order not to "excite apprehensions in the mind of the Bey."<sup>2</sup> In actual fact, a few months later, Baynes recognised that "from local as well as external causes there exists at present no reasonable prospect of His Highness' voluntary concurrence in an arrangement of the character described by Lord Cowley."<sup>3</sup> The only workable policy remained the "minimum policy" which Palmerston had defined in 1850. The confusion which continued to surround the relations between the Bey and the Sultan was to revive for a time the naval and diplomatic demonstrations which had occurred annually during the July Monarchy.

In July 1850 the tradition of the French naval visits was resumed: the rumoured presence of an Ottoman

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1. FO 102 37. Baynes to Addington, May 18, 1850.
  2. Ibid. Palmerston to Baynes, June 12, 1850.
  3. FO 102 40. Baynes to Palmerston, January 31, 1851.

fleet in the Egean sea and its alleged instructions to come to Tunis were once more the official reasons for that demonstration. The Bey did not evince much surprise and Baynes was convinced that he had been informed of and had approved beforehand that protecting measure.<sup>1</sup> Faced with this resumption by the Second Republic of Louis Philippe's policy, Palmerston resorted to the usual representations in Paris: "This report, he wrote to Normanby, seems to be a revival of the annual invention by means of which the French Government used for several years to frighten the Bey of Tunis with an unfounded report of hostile designs towards Him on the part of the Turkish Government."<sup>2</sup> The French Fleet left Tunis in September 1850. The French explanations did not appear to convince the Foreign Office better than those which had been given from 1835 to 1847 in similar circumstances; but the British were more interested by the account which Theis, the French Consul in Tunis, gave to Baynes in October 1850 of French policy in the Regency: from what he said it clearly emerged that France after two years of hesitation had taken up again her traditional policy: "France considered the

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1. FO 102 37. Baynes to Palmerston, July 26, 1850.

2. FO 27 865. Palmerston to Normanby, August 3, 1850.

Suzerainty of the Porte as nominal and the obligations of the Bey towards the Sultan as confined to occasional complimentary presents. So much indeed that were the Turkish government to attempt enforcing more, the Ottoman armaments would be met by those of France."<sup>1</sup>

In the following year the "Turkish threat" seemed to have more weight; vexatious measures (of a fiscal nature) taken against Tunisians in Tripoli seemed to indicate a renewal of bad feelings and were viewed in Tunis as the prelude to stronger action, an interpretation which was strengthened by the usual rumours about military preparations.<sup>2</sup> Although he felt assured that this news was "no doubt as devoid of foundation as similar reports in past years have been" Palmerston sent to Stratford Canning a despatch the acrimony of which may be partly ascribed to the deceptions which had been met with during the previous years in the policy of reforming the Ottoman Empire. Canning was instructed "to represent to the Turkish ministers how much more it would be for the interest of the Sultan if the Turkish Government would direct their earnest endeavours to developing to the utmost

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1. FO 102 37. Baynes to Addington, October 24, 1850.

2. FO 102 40. Baynes to Palmerston, November 12, 1851.

the resources of the vast regions which are subject to the direct rule of the Sultan, instead of raising in the dependencies of the Turkish Empire needless questions as to controverted matters, the discussion of which can lead to no good but on the contrary must tend to impair rather than to confirm the authority of the Sultan in the countries to which such questions relate." And Palmerston concluded rather ironically that "if by internal improvements the Turkish government was strong at home, it would more effectually deal with the questions on the remote confines of the Empire."<sup>1</sup> The renewed assurances given by the Porte did not succeed in allaying the uneasiness of the Foreign Office, and Granville in January 1852 again asked Canning to "urge the Porte not only to abstain from any proceedings calculated to cause disquietude to the Bey... but to go further and encourage the Bey, by the most friendly assurances to look to the Sultan.... rather than to Foreign Powers for the security of his position at Tunis."<sup>2</sup> Granville at the same time did not fail to urge the Bey to give up any thought of independence and to strengthen his relations with the Porte;<sup>3</sup> but

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1. FO 78 851. Palmerston to Stratford Canning, November 13, 1851.
  2. FO 78 888. Granville to Stratford Canning January 12, 1852.
  3. FO 102 42. Granville to Baynes. January 12, 1852.

these encouragements, as well as the Bey's promises had little actual effect on the relations between the Bey and the Sultan.

13. Perhaps more important, at least for their future bearing, than these traditional diplomatic steps, were the first interventions which aimed at stopping the economic ruin and the internal decay which, as early as 1850, threatened the very existence of the Regency. That new aspect of British policy happened to be a part of the struggle against French influence as the chief minister Ben Ayad whom Reade and after him Baynes regarded as the cause of the evil was generally held to be a supporter of French policy in Tunis. Ahmed Bey's Military efforts had proved to be too heavy for Tunisian resources which had not stopped shrinking since the beginning of the century for economical and political reasons. The subsequent over taxation of the country which an obsolete and inadequate financial system made even more unbearable, was therefore at the root of the difficulties: the mismanagement of the finances, the malversations of the administrators (and specially of Ben Ayad who had a large share of responsibilities, and profits in the embezzlements) soon brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. Reade as early as 1847 had exposed the danger, very likely

because his fear of French influence had awakened him to the shortcomings of Ben Ayad's administration. His unsuccessful opposition to a projected Tunisian Bank (which was on the contrary supported by Ben Ayad and the French) arose from his political suspicions. But in 1850 the threat of Tunisian bankruptcy became serious enough to show the expediency of advising the Bey to make some urgent internal reforms: administrative improvements became one of the basic conditions for the maintenance of Tunisian autonomy. In this respect Palmerston's request that the Governor of Sfax should receive for the future a fixed salary in order to put an end to his exactions, was the first indication of the new trends which were later to guide British policy (March 1850): Palmerston's move, it must be added, largely originated in his desire to protect British traders against the arbitrary proceedings on the part of the local authorities in Sfax.<sup>1</sup>

A few months later Baynes firmly opposed the plan for a loan: money was to be provided by Eugene Pastre an important business man of Marseilles, and here again Baynes' attitude was governed by a twofold consideration:

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1. FO 102 37. Palmerston to Baynes, March 22, 1850. The archives give no further indication about that affair.

he was genuinely convinced that it was in the Bey's interest to abandon a very onerous transaction; but as a British Consul he could not but desire the failure of a scheme which would have given the French an actual predominance in Tunisian external trade to the detriment of British interests (the projected loan of 15,000,000 was to be repaid in 5 years; the Bey granted as a guarantee permits for the exportation of Tunisian oil, which amounted to giving the French the complete monopoly of the oil trade).<sup>1</sup> As the discussion went on, Baynes was lead to bring up the Commercial Convention of 1838 with Turkey as an obstacle to the projected transaction. The Bey preferred to give up the negotiations rather than tackle again that delicate question. But once more the problem of extending the Convention to the Regency claimed the attention of the Foreign Office: Baynes wondered "whether the time had not arrived for insisting on the abolition of all monopolies and permits of exportation... contrary to the provisions of the Convention of Balta Liman."<sup>2</sup>

Although it could appear as a mere renewal of Palmerston's demand in 1840, the manoeuvre had a very

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1. Ibid, Baynes to Palmerston, October 3, 1850.
  2. FO 102 37. Baynes, October 3, 1850.



different meaning: in 1840 Palmerston's move had a purely political bearing and aimed at asserting Turkish sovereignty over Tunis. In 1850 Baynes and Palmerston thought more of the economic side of the question: they wanted to protect British commercial interests which monopolies and excessive taxation threatened to impair, and they were convinced that free trade would benefit the economic progress of the Regency.<sup>1</sup> That material strengthening, Palmerston and Baynes thought, would check French influence and prevent dangerous projects like the loan of 1850, from being carried out. But the Bey once more offered resistance: the more so as the French government were giving him their support and denying that the Treaty of 1838 could be automatically enforced in Tunis. Baynes' pressure however was so strong that Ahmed Bey had to propose a solution which spared him a political humiliation: instead of enforcing the Anglo Turkish Treaty ("if the British Government should insist on my accepting the Convention .... I am a lost man, it is a question of life or death with me") he proposed to revise the existing Anglo-Tunisian treaties in order to lighten the custom

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1. Ibid. Palmerston to Baynes, November 2 and December 6, 1850.

duties and suppress some of the monopolies.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston assured that he was ready "to leave in abeyance those political questions the agitation of which seems to be so disagreeable to the Bey" and accepted the negotiation as it was proposed by Ahmed Bey.<sup>2</sup> Ahmed Bey then promised that he would propose a project for the reform of finances and custom duties which would meet British demands: but in spite of renewed representations during the year 1851, nothing was done. The Tunisian government needed money so much that they could not give up any of their financial resources. In the end the Bey's dilatory tactics were again successful: his illness in 1852, and the political difficulties it created, the financial disaster which followed Ben Ayad's flight to France, and the worsening of Oriental affairs in 1852, induced the Foreign Office to postpone further discussions on the commercial and economic problems.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless British policy was later to give more and more attention to these questions. After 1851 the Foreign Office emphasised at every possible opportunity the need for redress and reform in the

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1. FO 102 40. Baynes to Palmerston, February 28, 1851.
  2. Ibid. Palmerston to Baynes, March 31, 1851.
  3. FO 102 44. Malmesbury to Baynes, January 6, 1853.

administration. When Baynes reported the disturbances which had occurred in the Djerid after fiscal extor- tions: these events answered Palmerston, "ought to be looked upon by the Bey as practical proofs of the impolicy of permitting misgovernment in the Regency."<sup>1</sup> When the Consul alluded to the emigration of some tribes to Algeria or Tripoli; these evils and incon- veniences "are the natural and necessary fruits of a bad and vexatious administration."<sup>2</sup> When trouble arose with France after incidents caused by unruly frontier tribes: the Bey ought to "put a stop to these outrages within the limits of the territory which he claims as belonging to Tunis, as otherwise he furnishes the French with an excuse for encroachment on that territory."<sup>3</sup>

The question of the succession to the <sup>Regent</sup> Bey and of Tunisian intervention in Crimean war (1852-1855)

14. A sudden illness which, for a time, appeared seriously to endanger the Bey's life, unexpectedly brought to the fore the problem of the succession to the <sup>Regent</sup> Bey: the Powers were accordingly obliged to re- consider the international position of the Regency,

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1. Ibid. Palmerston to Baynes, April 9, 1851.
  2. Ibid. July 5, 1851.
  3. Ibid. October 27, 1851.

no longer from a theoretical point of view, but in a very precise connection. The difficulty had scarcely been overcome when the outbreak of the Turco-Russian war revived the controversy over the conditions and limits of the Bey's dependency.

In July 1852 the Bey had a stroke of apoplexy; as a consequence he was partly paralyzed and on the verge of death for nearly one year. The successor to the throne was Sidi Mohammed Bey, Ahmed Bey's cousin who held the title of Bey du Camp. Baynes was nevertheless afraid lest troubles should occur in the Regency and attempts should be made to seat Mohammed el Amin, the Bey's young brother, on the Throne.<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Office considered that precautionary measures were obviously needed and asked for assurances from those two governments which might be likely to take advantage of succession difficulties. In August 1852 Malmesbury took the necessary steps in Paris and Constantinople: in both places he suggested a declaration that the status quo would be maintained in Tunis and that no interference was contemplated "with the ordinary succession in the Regency."<sup>2</sup> The answers were

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1. FO 102 42. Baynes to Malmesbury, August 31, 1852.
  2. FO 78 889. Malmesbury to Rose, August 26, 1852.

wholly satisfactory, with the customary reservations both in Paris ("provided the Porte makes no attempt to resume its direct authority")<sup>1</sup> and Constantinople ("The Porte would observe the status quo... but... she could not shut her eyes to her rights there")<sup>2</sup>; as a further measure of precaution the Foreign Office asked the Admiralty to keep an eye on Tunisian affairs.

In the meantime Baynes discreetly sounded Mohammed Bey, the heir apparent, about his political feelings; he soon discovered that he was inclined towards an agreement with the Porte, on condition that the Porte would recognize the hereditary rights of the Husseinis and the privileges they had enjoyed for nearly 150 years. Baynes suggested that the Foreign Office should take the opportunity to resume negotiations with the Porte on the basis of the Cowley memorandum.<sup>3</sup> Malmesbury agreed to the proposal and instructed Rose to try and ascertain the conditions on which the Porte might be willing to effect an understanding with the successor to the present Bey of Tunis.<sup>4</sup> Unhappily the Porte had already decided to send a Commissary to Tunis "with

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1. FO 102 42. Malmesbury to Baynes, September 26, 1852.
  2. FO 78 894 Rose to Malmesbury, September 13, 1852.
  3. FO 102 42 Baynes to Malmesbury, October 10, 1852.
  4. FO 78 889. Malmesbury to Rose November 26, 1852.

instructions to provide for the succession to the government of that country taking place in the regular line."<sup>1</sup> Rose who was just reporting the Sultan's "hankering after Sovereignty instead of Suzerainty in Tunis" did not feel sanguine about a step which was bound to bring about French reactions: La Valette indeed made immediate representations at the Porte and Paris spoke of sending a Fleet into Tunisian waters.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of December 1852 the Turkish envoy left Constantinople, rather suddenly: there had been rumours (which proved false) that the Bey had died and obviously the Porte wished to cut the discussion short. The mission, however, was a complete failure: the Bey took good care to guard the envoy at sight, and he was even unable to come into contact with Baynes before he sailed back to Constantinople.<sup>3</sup>

15. The three Powers had so far agreed that they intended to maintain the status quo in case Ahmed Bey died in Tunis. But as soon as they tried to proceed further and to explain what they meant by "status quo" the basic disagreements between French and Ottoman conceptions appeared. The Porte contended that formulas

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1. FO 78 895. Rose to Malmesbury November 17, 1852.
  2. Ibid, November 25, 1852.
  3. FO 102 42. Baynes to Malmesbury, December 26, 1852.

which after 150 years of Tunisian autonomy were empty of meaning retained their full value and meant precise obligations for the Bey. The French government inferred from his actual autonomy and from ~~Tunisian~~ and Turkish failures since 1836 that the Bey, in spite of an antiquated etiquette, was really an independent sovereign. La Valette laid bare the root of the problem when he artlessly remarked that the new Bey was essentially "elected" by the "Notables de Tunis" (he meant the Divan which in 1850 no longer played an effective part in the designation): thus implying that the Sultan's firman of investiture was a mere matter of form.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary the Ottoman Government, taking advantage of the investiture the Sultan granted to the newly "elected Bey", asserted that the Sultan held an absolute right of veto and could withhold his consent from any "candidate" whom he thought "a bad subject and unfit for the government."<sup>2</sup> The French Government could not tolerate that theory (which was thoroughly contradicted by the precedents): their answer was the sending of two war ships to Tunis. Rose himself remarked that Turkish pretensions were "of course departures from the

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1. FO 78 895. Rose to Malmesbury, November 25, 1852.

2. FO 78 895. Rose to Malmesbury, December 18, 1852.

status quo", and Russell at the same time called them obsolete and useless.<sup>1</sup> But in all fairness the Ottoman government could have rightly answered that if they were given only the right to approve a choice made in Tunis without their concurrence, their "suzerainty" was reduced to nearly nothing. There was no way of escape from the difficulty: but the Foreign Office felt less prepared than ever to allow the Porte a free hand, as Anglo French co-operation was essential to meet the Oriental Crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Confronted with that diplomatic imbroglio Rose came to a logical conclusion, which the Foreign Office had been apparently unable to draw itself since the beginning of the Tunisian difficulties in 1835: "The difficulty as to Tunis... is the number of status quos there. The Porte has one and that is that her sovereignty although dormant remains unimpaired... Then there is the French status quo which... is that the notables of Tunis have the right to nominate the Bey... and that the Sultan must confirm that nomination. Then there is another status quo and that is the pure hereditary succession." And Rose added that no lasting solution

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1. FO 78 924. Russell to Rose, January 8, 1853.
  2. See in Flournoy, pp. 147-148, the Anglo French co-operation for amicably settling the Moroccan question in 1852 and 1853.



could ever be found for Tunis "till the real status quo be settled and known."<sup>1</sup> Baynes tried to answer Rose's preoccupations and to give a full account of the international position of the Regency: it was the first attempt of the kind, on the British side, since 1835. At the end of his very important report Baynes concluded that "the real status quo of Tunis is a virtual independence" and that consequently "it may be reasonably doubted that any effort of British diplomacy could bring about an amicable arrangement by which the political condition of the virtually independent Beylek of Tunis could be assimilated to that of other great vassals of the Porte." With that object in view Baynes hoped against hope that the Porte would "desist from pretensions which, even were they clearly incontestible, she is manifestly unable to enforce" and "accept frankly and definitively a suzerainty which would leave to the vassal state the full power of self government which it now exercises."<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Bey seemed ready to accept an agreement concluded on these conditions: but would the Porte agree to them? And if it did could it be expected that,

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1. FO 78 928. Rose to Malmesbury, January 4, 1853.
  2. FO 102 44. Baynes to Clarendon, April 20, 1853.

invested with such a shadowy suzerainty, it could afford efficiently to support the Regency? The very definition of the status quo did not by itself provide a solution for the Tunisian problem which arose from the irreconcilable opposition of French, Turkish and English views, and not from the obscurity of the status quo. But it is true that by awakening to consciousness of the problem, the Foreign Office had at least an opportunity to change a policy which it had adhered to for twenty years in spite of the contradictions it involved.

16. Oriental affairs created a sudden diversion which was nevertheless to lead back to the same problem, considered from another angle. During the spring of 1853 the Porte expressed its surprise that the Bey had made no offer of assistance to the Sultan with reference to the possibility of Turkey being forced into hostilities with Russia. The Bey answered that he was ready to send warships and also troops if required, in case war occurred; obviously he was not averse to making conciliatory gestures as long as his autonomy was not questioned.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to estimate how sincere was the Bey's personal friendliness towards the

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1. Ibid, May 30, 1853.

Porte; the military preparations proceeded rather slowly<sup>1</sup> but the Government could argue serious financial difficulties as Ben Ayad had just fled to France with a handsome part of the budget; Ben Ayad had scarcely reached Paris when he asked for and obtained French nationality; he thought that this step would secure him against subsequent Tunisian reprisals and was partly justified in the event. Pending a decision of the imperial government concerning the money stolen by Ben Ayad, the Tunisian contingent was being built up at a slow pace, and the French government did not miss the opportunity to evince their hostility to any kind of Tunisian intervention in a possible Russo Turkish war.

The French intervention at this juncture was characterized by a mixture of the confusion and lack of candour which was to be the special feature of Imperial diplomacy in the Tunisian question; As was to happen more than once, the policy officially advocated by the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères was somewhat different from the policy the French Consul adopted on

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1. Baynes entertained doubts about the Bey's straightforwardness; but Ben Dhiab thinks that the Bey sincerely desired to help the Sultan and sorely regretted his previous policy as regards his relations with the Porte.

the spot, which suited more closely the traditional policy of French preponderance in Tunis. At the beginning of July 1853 the French Chargé d'Affaires showed his dislike for the contemplated project: Clarendon instructed Cowley to make Representations to Drouyn de Lhuys; the Minister admitted that the Consul had "displayed too much zeal and... given too much importance to a trifling affair"; he nevertheless added that "if His Highness wished to assist the Sultan, he had better send him a sum of money than a crazy old ship, which would probably never reach Constantinople."<sup>1</sup> In actual fact French policy in Tunis followed a course very different from the soothing assurances given in Paris: Beclard's system of intimidation went on; he warned the Bey against a step which "would be an acknowledgement of vassalage" destructive of all that France had affected during the last fourteen years towards establishing for the Beylek of Tunis a political condition separate from the Porte.<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Office renewed its representations and tried to ascertain what were the views of the French government with respect to the Bey of Tunis and his relations with the

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1. FO 27 972. Cowley to Clarendon, August 18, 1853.  
2. FO 102 44. Baynes to Clarendon, August 18, 1853.

the Porte. Drouyn's answer was satisfactory on the face of it: France desired the maintenance of the status quo in Tunis; the Bey had acquired certain independent rights, but he had at the same time certain duties to perform towards the Sultan; the French government "did not approve" Beclard's conduct in the matter of the assistance offered by the Bey to the Sultan. But when Cowley urged him to define more accurately the relations between the Bey and the Sultan, Drouyn maintained a disturbing reserve: He professed "ignorance of the relative positions of the Sultan and the Bey but he said that whatever that position might be, he wished it to be maintained." And his conclusion that the Bey's assistance was "rather a mark of friendship than an act of homage" revealed much regarding the true bent of French policy.

It is difficult to account for the indifference the Foreign Office showed with regard to the Bey's letter of August 1853 in which he had asked for advice: that silence made Beclard's action easier, and it needed a second demand to remind Clarendon of the first one. The Bey was then informed that the British Government thought "that (he) ought to comply with the requisition of the Sultan" (January 12, 1854)<sup>1</sup> -

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1. FO 102 46. Clarendon to Baynes, January 12, 1854.

Ahmed Bey had postponed his decision and was waiting for an answer: when he had it he proclaimed that he would send to the Sultan an assistance which would consist of ships and soldiers.<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Office was thoroughly pleased by the decision; the *Quai d'Orray* published in the *Moniteur* an article which gave a rather peculiar account of the events: the decision, it was alleged, had been taken after taking counsel with the French government. Indeed Drouyn could hardly offer an open opposition to the Bey's decision, as France did not officially acknowledge the Bey's independence, and was then embarking upon a policy of intervention in favour of the Ottoman Empire, in which she endeavoured to gain British support<sup>2</sup>; at any rate the Minister tried to announce the decision in such a way as to manifest the extent of French influence in Tunis.

British policy had scored an obvious success but its significance was limited, because the Bey's decision had not the political bearing the Foreign Office anticipated, and did not bring any lasting improvement into the relations between vassal and suzerain. On the

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1. Ibid. The Bey to Baynes, May 10, 1854.  
2. See Temperley, pp. 352-354, and 376-377.

contrary the internal consequences were rather unfortunate: 14,000 Tunisians were sent to Turkey and spent the war period in obscure garrison life in Batum where they were decimated by epidemics; for that result the Bey's government exhausted their last resources and had to resort to financial expedients which were to hasten the ruin of the country, and ultimately bring about foreign intervention.<sup>1</sup> From that point of view the outlook was rather menacing when Ahmed Bey died (May 30, 1855), a few months before Baynes himself (July 23 1855). Mohammed Bey's accession to the throne and Consul Wood's appointment occurred at the very moment when the liquidation of the Crimean war was most likely deeply to affect the relations between the great Powers themselves, and their attitude with regard to the Oriental question. New individuals and new problems promised the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Tunisian question.

Conclusion.

17. From 1830 to 1855 the Tunisian question had been for the Foreign Office essentially a diplomatic question, affecting its Mediterranean policy and its relations

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1. P.H.X. gives an illuminating account of the Tunisian consequences of that Crimean expedition, but he is of course inclined to darken the picture and to exaggerate the Turkish (and English) responsibilities for the ruin of the Regency.

with France and Turkey; the internal problems did not at that stage deeply concern British policy, as moreover British interests were on the whole rather limited, and in no way threatened by the local government - That comparative indifference partly accounts for some misunderstandings with regard to the policy of the Beys or their relations with the Sultans.

In the shaping of British policy, party considerations did play some part, at least during the first ten years: when Aberdeen, and after him Palmerston came into office, the views the Tories or the Liberals took of British policy towards France and the Porte had a direct effect upon their attitude to Tunisian affairs. But gradually the Foreign Office worked out a policy, which was to remain but slightly altered until 1878, and was to be received as the traditional policy by all parties: Palmerston must be given the main credit for this result. British policy aimed at upholding and preserving the existence of the Regency which was seriously threatened by the French settlement in Algiers and the Turkish occupation of Tripoli: with this object the Foreign Office tried simultaneously to prevent a French seizure of the Beylek and to encourage an amicable adjustment of Tuniso-Turkish difficulties.



In its positive action British policy met with an utter failure; the main reasons for this were the Bey's personal policy, his longing for independence and his deeply rooted distrust of Turkish policy (in which he was not completely mistaken), the use France made of these fears to strengthen her influence on Tunis, the stubbornness and stiffness of Turkish policy. But the Foreign Office by leaving the matter in the utmost confusion and clinging to unworkable formulas, must bear a large part of the responsibility. As early as 1835 it was obvious that the "Turkish solution" could not be forced upon the Bey and the French government without risking a Franco Turkish clash, in which Britain was likely to be ultimately involved; but Palmerston himself recoiled from that eventuality, because he did not deem that the importance of the problem in itself justified him running such a risk; the Tunisian problem merged into and in no way determined, British policy towards France and Turkey.

The Foreign Office had accordingly to be content with the negative side of its Tunisian policy. Aberdeen's holding of office only quickened that process. To save the Bey from an Algerian fate was none the less a complex matter: it involved unceasing interventions in Paris against the alleged French encroachments upon

Tunis, and an unremitting mediation to avert the development of Mediterranean difficulties. We have seen how that diplomatic action was gradually moved from Paris to Constantinople. The result of twenty years' discussion was the constitution of a Tunisian status which, in 1855, was not much different from a real independence. As a matter of fact the Bey's international position had suffered few changes since 1830, but in 1855 the Great Powers more or less recognized a state of things which France had been the first to assert in 1835. It was obvious in 1855 that neither England nor Turkey could any longer contemplate resorting to force or even diplomatic pressure to introduce such changes into Tunis as had occurred in Tripoli. Moreover the range of action was so limited that it was doubtful whether so emasculated a Turkish sovereignty, if it was even possible to proclaim it in Tunis, would prove useful for protecting the Regency of Tunis against the ambitions of the Great Powers.

At any rate the Regency had suffered twenty years of diplomatic storm without collapsing. It is true that the indecision of French policy after 1848 had been a help for Great Britain. But in spite of French predominance, Britain kept her prestige in Tunis: the assumption that she did not look for exclusive political

domination there accounted for that unique moral situation, and explained Ben Dhiaf's flattering remarks: "De leur nature les Anglais s'inclinent devant tout ce qui est vrai, tout ce qui est juste ... Ils n'ont pas d'autre ambition que de tirer profit de leurs relations et de leurs rapports commerciaux. Ils n'ont aucune autre visée."<sup>1</sup> It was however becoming progressively more clear not only that Tunis was threatened by the French desire for expansion, but that the gradual deterioration of her own internal affairs was at least equally dangerous to her existence. The Foreign Office had begun to take some interest in the problem; it was at that juncture that the end of the Crimean war revived the already long-standing problem of the reform of the Ottoman Empire, with which the Franco-British entente in the east seemed about to grapple successfully.

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1. Ben Dhiaf, Sadok Bey, p. 92.

II. A Policy of Reform (1856 - 1867)

"Certains gouvernements européens ont cherché et cherchent encore à soulever les sujets de quelques Etats musulmans contre l'acceptation des institutions politiques et administratives que leurs souverains voudraient octroyer."

( - Khaireddin 1867)

V. Wood and the policy of reforms in Tunis (1856-1860)

The new political situation in Tunis.

1. As we have already remarked the Foreign Office had become aware of the importance of internal reforms long before 1856; but it was only then that the question came to the forefront - The Crimean war had brought together France and England in the Mediterranean and had induced them to make further efforts with a view to reach a lasting understanding in the East. The most conspicuous problem there was the new attempt to reform the Ottoman Empire. The pressure which the Powers had brought to bear upon the Porte since the Vienna negotiations (February 1855), had given rise to new developments in Turkey; they culminated in the promulgation of the Hatti Humayun (21 February 1856).<sup>1</sup> The Hatti.Humayun only provided a framework of reforms: the Sultan's good will was of course necessary for their completion; but it was essential that the traditional Anglo-French rivalry in the Near East should not hinder the process of modernisation - A Circular to this effect was sent by the Foreign Office to the

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1. Engelhardt: La Turquie et le Tanzimat, I, pp.123-139.

British Agents in the Ottoman Empire (February 20, 1856); in the meantime the Quai d'Orsay gave very similar instructions to the French Representatives. The British circular expressed the confident hope that cordiality and cooperation would exist between the Agents of the two Powers in order to support a policy which aimed at "the general improvement of the social conditions of that Empire"; they should take care that the Sultan's good will should not be impeded either by apathy or indifference on the part of his subordinate authorities. That support, however, was to be unobtrusive, and the British Agents were to abstain from "undue interference" and to limit themselves to advice or suggestion: "They have no right to insist upon the adoption of any particular line of conduct or to carry their remonstrance to the length of menace".<sup>1</sup>

With regard to Tunis itself, Franco-British cooperation seemed all the more easy to bring about as the French policy was officially following a new line, which could be reconciled with the traditional attitude of the Foreign Office: during the Conference of Vienna (April 1855) Drouyn de Lhuys had gone so far as to assure Gortshakov that he was ready (il n'éprouvait

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1. FO 335 106 Circular FO, February 20, 1856.

"aucune difficulté") to extend to Tunis the French guarantee of the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire,<sup>1</sup> - Some years later Walewski told Cowley that there had been in point of fact a difference of opinion within the Imperial Government about Tunis in 1855, some ministers openly advising the Emperor "to recognize in an explicit manner the Sovereign rights of the Sultan over [the] Regency."<sup>2</sup> In the event the traditional policy prevailed in France, but French hesitations could have provided an opportunity for putting an end to the Anglo-French rivalry in Tunis. And this may be the origin of the rumour that after the conclusion of the Paris Treaty "Lord Palmerston, M. Gladstone, Lord Russell, M. Disraeli and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe all said that now the possibility of a further French advance on Tunis was removed for ever."<sup>3</sup>

2. While the diplomatic situation was undergoing these changes, the accession of a new Bey and the nomination of two new Consuls greatly strengthened the possibilities of reform in Tunis. Contrary to Ahmed

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1. Accounts and Papers 1854-1855, Volume LV (pp.81-145) Conference of the 26th of April 1855.
  2. FO 27 1260, Cowley to Malmesbury, October 6, 1858.
  3. Broadley, The last Punic war, II, 390.

Bey, who had endeavoured to imitate the European countries with eagerness, if not always with discrimination; Mohammed Bey (1855-1859) seemed to be more respectful of tradition, and his rule promised to be more strictly "arab" and "moslem". He was under the influence of the Ulema who wished to recover the influence they had lost under his predecessor.<sup>1</sup> The new Bey entertained suspicions about Ahmed Bey's innovations; Baynes had noticed as early as 1852 that he was reluctant to endorse Ahmed Bey's foreign policy, and inclined to accept an agreement with the Sultan; Mohammed Bey distrusted the European consuls and felt less confident than his predecessor that European influence would be beneficial to his country;<sup>2</sup> one of the first acts after his accession had been to instruct Khairaddin, then in Paris, to break off the negotiations for a loan.

From all these signs one might have expected a period of reaction against his predecessor's policy. Yet the new Bey felt that his country needed deep internal reforms, and was indeed ready to introduce them, on condition that these reforms would conform to the religious, social and political traditions of Tunis:

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1. FO 102 53, Wood to Clarendon, July 6, 1857.
  2. P. Daumas, Quatre ans a Tunis, p. 180.



he meant to maintain his absolute authority; and in no way shared the liberal aspirations of some of his advisers (for instance Ben Dhiaf who resented his autocratic character). He had never thought of adopting the Hatti Humayun lest it should weaken his external position, and because he did not like its liberal flavour. He rather intended to adopt a limited and practical programme of improvements aiming at re-establishing the former economic prosperity, encouraging agriculture and eliminating the most obvious injustices of the fiscal and administrative organisation. The first two years of his reign were marked by very promising results: alleviation of taxation, reform of the achour (tithe), creation of the poll tax - reduction of the military establishment, and a struggle against the extortions of the Governors. It looked as if the new Bey was to fulfil the programme he had set himself: "Assurer les vœux des peuples qui se groupent autour de lui et combattre le mal qui les menace".<sup>1</sup>

These noble aspirations could not but meet with a sympathetic response at a time when the newly appointed French and British Consuls shared a sincere enthusiasm

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1. Edict of Shawal 1272 (June-July 1856) quoted by "Lettre d'un Français à S.A. Mohammed el Sadok"  
p. 12.

for the cause of reform. Léon Roches had begun his career in Algeria where he had been in succession Abd el Kader's secretary (after he had gone over to Islam) and Bugeaud's confidential agent; there he had acquired a perfect knowledge of the Arabic language and Arab civilisation and a genuine sympathy with and understanding of the Islamic world and its problems. His personal inclinations fell in with the policy his government openly advocated: as soon as he had arrived in Tunis he had used his influence at Court to advise the Bey to follow the example of the Porte and grant similar reforms to his people. He had failed to persuade him to promulgate the Hatti Humayun, but the Bey could not but be deeply impressed by the advice Roches gave him "to show a disposition to follow the example of the Sultan by adopting at once such reforms as could be made here".<sup>1</sup>

The new British Consul, Richard Wood<sup>2</sup>, held similar

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1. FO 102 50. Ferriere, March 15, 1856.
  2. Born in 1811 (according to his own answer made to an official inquiry in 1879, and in 1806 according to the "Who's Who" of 1897: 1806 seems more likely) Wood had been first employed by the Levant Company (1824). In 1826 he was transferred to the Embassy of Constantinople and became Dragoman in 1834. He was Ponsonby's secret agent for several secret missions in Syria in 1831-1833 (to watch and report about, the movements of Egyptian armies) in 1835-1836 (in a mission of information which ended in Mesopotamia) in 1840 (he contributed to the organisation of the Syrian rising). In 1841 he was appointed Consul in Damascus where he remained until his appointment in Tunis (1855).

views: he had a long experience of Moslem countries as, in the course of his career begun in Constantinople nearly thirty years before, he had lived in various places in the Middle East, mainly in Syria. He had an outstanding knowledge of the Arab countries and of their problems. The influence of Stratford Canning who had long been his direct chief probably accounted for his lasting belief that the Ottoman Empire could be reformed. Twenty years later, in 1877, in spite of innumerable disappointments he still entertained the same confidence: "There is nothing in the letter and spirit of the Mohammedan religion to impede the introduction of reforms"; and he added that the Ottoman Empire "had actually given unmistakable proofs of a vitality, energy and unity of purpose which its best well-wishers did not imagine it to possess."<sup>1</sup> There was more in him than a mere conviction that reforms were possible: when a Consul in Syria, he had been given a hand in the development and working of the administrative improvements which European influence had induced the Porte to grant to that Province. Twenty years passed in the Levant had also involved him in the usual struggle for influence which went on between the French and

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1. FO 102 108. Wood to Derby, November 27, 1877.

English representatives: There was some exaggeration in the French statement that he had put up there a strenuous opposition to French policy<sup>1</sup>; but he was likely to resist any exclusive French influence in Tunis, should he think it could stand in the way of British political and economic interests.

Wood defines his Tunisian policy.

3. Wood's first impressions of Tunis were far from favourable: the recent financial improvements met with his approval, but he considered that reforms "of a more permanent and solid character "would have to accompany them; in the government he found "Ministers raised from the lowest ranks... who owe their elevation to caprice or vice and their fortunes to corruption and grasping rapacity".<sup>2</sup> The Bey himself did not show him enough consideration: "There appears to exist a fixed determination to pay little regard to the representations of this consulate".<sup>3</sup> Wood explained that coldness by the Bey's resentment at an alleged lack of consideration: Wood, like Baynes in 1850, had been accredited to him by the Foreign Secretary, not by the Queen; but the prime cause of the distrust and contempt

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1. Constant, p. 22.

2. FO 102 50. Wood to Stratford Canning, July 7, 1856.

3. Ibid, to Clarendon, July 15, 1856.

the Bey's government evinced towards the Foreign Representatives, was a religious fanaticism which he regarded as very dangerous.

Wood deemed it his duty to strengthen his position and humble the Bey's pride: he spent his first months in Tunis in skirmishes and recriminations with the Tunisian authorities; the matters for discussion were often unimportant; but having laid down as a principle that there was in Tunis a deliberate intention to ignore his rights, he fought over the summer residence of the Consulate (which the Beys had given to the British Consuls and which Mohammed Bey had just taken back) as if his prestige and authority depended on his getting it back. He did not hesitate when necessary to use a very strong language with the Bey, and after one of these stormy interviews he remarked with a hardly veiled satisfaction: "It is not often the lot of absolute Mahomedan Princes surrounded by their courtiers to hear wholesome truths, said in such unreserved yet courteous manner".<sup>1</sup>

4. Wood was not long in defining more precisely his views on the main defects of the Tunisian government: "Absence of any given principles for the guidance of

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1. FO 102 50. Wood to Clarendon, September 9, 1856.

the action of the government which is absolute in form... oppressive system of taxation... Abuses inseparable from the farming of the public revenues... absence of properly constituted Tribunals, Civil, Criminal and Commercial."<sup>1</sup> The reforms he suggested would aim at encouraging agriculture, facilitating trade and abolishing monopolies. The Bey's previous efforts had already yielded some results in that way; but these first steps had to be followed by the creation of a more liberal system of administration.<sup>2</sup> Here Wood expected serious resistance, and he thought that he could overcome it only if he was supported by the other Consuls, and above all by Roches. Roches was in no way averse to cooperating with his British colleague for a policy which was in complete conformity with the French and British circulars of February 1856, and Wood was very careful to support Roches in his difficulties with the Bey. He expected that the friendly relations he was thus establishing with Roches could be very useful when he found an opportunity to enter upon the great designs he had in view. Moreover, Wood thought that if the incidents between Roches and the Bey ended in a French naval demonstration, "the appearance of two

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1. Ibid. September 2, 1856.

2. Ibid. October 8, 1856.

or three frigates would rob (the Bey) in the course of four and twenty hours" of his illusions about his real strength; the Consuls would accordingly be placed "in a position to recommend the introduction of ameliorations imposed upon us by sentiments of Humanity, no less than by the Interests of trade".<sup>1</sup> At the end of August Wood and Roches had several discussions about the situation of the Regency; they reached complete agreement upon the need for reforms and progressive improvements; they suggested in much the same terms that their respective governments should take common steps towards "the substitution of a more humane and regular administration".<sup>2</sup> A few weeks later Wood gave more details about the means by which the Bey's resistance could be overcome: "an amicable naval demonstration"; then, if necessary, "a strong recommendation to the Bey...to imitate the more liberal system and the ameliorations and improvements in the administration adopted by the Sultan."<sup>3</sup>

As soon as Clarendon had received Wood's first reports on the situation in Tunis, he had tried to sound the French Government. The answer had been

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1. FO 102 50. Wood to Clarendon, August 25, 1856.
  2. Ibid. September 2, 1856.
  3. Ibid, September 23, 1856.

altogether discouraging: Walewski had denied the existence of these Franco-Tunisian difficulties to which Cowley had alluded and, Cowley reported, "he seemed disposed in general to blame M. Roches' conduct who he considered had been too hard upon the Tunisian government".<sup>1</sup> Clarendon thereupon instructed Wood to adopt "a conciliatory tone... towards the Bey." But new reports from Tunis soon induced Clarendon to renew his proposals: Cowley was instructed to inform Walewski that the British Government were "prepared to unite with the French government towards bringing about a better state of things" at Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Walewski answered with a refusal and, Cowley again reported, evinced some irritation at Roches' unconciliatory attitude.<sup>3</sup> Clarendon however, endeavoured a third time to secure France's participation in a common action in Tunis. This time his proposal was more precise and took its inspiration from Wood's last suggestion; "It may be necessary for H.M.'s government to take some measures to remedy the state of things described by M. Wood", he wrote on the 7th of October ; Cowley would "ask Count Walewski

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1. FO 29 1115. Clarendon to Cowley, September 4, and FO 27 1133 Cowley to Clarendon, September 8, 1856.
  2. FO 27 1116. Clarendon to Cowley, September 19, 1856
  3. FO 27 1122. Cowley to Clarendon, September 21, 1856.



whether the French Government have an intention to send a naval force".<sup>1</sup> Walewski merely replied that the Bey had settled all the pending questions to his satisfaction, and ignored Clarendon's suggestion. It was obvious that France was wholly reluctant to cooperate with Great Britain in Tunis: Wood came to the conclusion that France, far from desiring an improvement in the situation of Tunis, was waiting for her ruin the more easily to incorporate her with Algeria; without going so far one can assume that the Imperial Government were not ready even for the furtherance of reforms, to sacrifice or share their preponderance in Tunis for the sake of an association with Great Britain<sup>2</sup> and in this respect, Roches' readiness to support Wood's suggestion must have been looked upon in Paris as a threat to the French position in Tunis.<sup>3</sup> As far as British policy was

1. FO 27 1117. Clarendon to Cowley, October 7, 1856.
2. In the meantime the French attitude in Morocco was completely different and the Quai d'Orsay was taking a favourable view of a plan for a common naval demonstration against the piracy. But the struggle for influence was less strong in Morocco than in Tunis. (Flournoy, p. 163.)
3. At least one can assume that it was the view officially held by the Quai d'Orsay. Simultaneously Napoleon III had his own policy and in December 1856 and January 1857 the Emperor suggested to Cowley a vast Mediterranean scheme: the share of France would have been Morocco, Great Britain would have been given Egypt and Sardinia Tunis. Cowley, and the Foreign Office evinced of course the utmost caution and ignored the hint. (Cowley to Clarendon, December 28, 1856, and February 27, 1857).

concerned, the Foreign Office could only record the fact of France's refusal to join in bringing pressure to bear upon the Bey: nothing could be done under these conditions.

5. If Wood's reform projects thus ended in a complete failure, the Consul was more successful in other fields of action. His relations with Mohammed Bey were established on the footing he had looked for from the beginning: exposed as he was to strong pressure from the French side, threatened with unhappy developments if he did not give Wood the satisfaction he demanded, the Bey gave up the struggle; well pleased with the prestige he had thus acquired in Tunis, Wood proceeded with the realisation of his programme. The development of British interests in the country was one of his main preoccupations: Wood thought that the introduction of British undertakings would benefit the country by developing its untapped resources; British commercial and economic interests would of course derive advantages from that policy, and British influence would be made likewise "solid and permanent". In the long run the British government would have to devote more attention to Tunisian problems and the diplomatic position of the Bey would be thereby strengthened; last but not least, French ambitions in Tunis would be checked by the creation of strong British positions. The first

concessions which Wood obtained in November 1856 (for the creation of an Anglo-Tunisian bank and the setting up of an English Company for cotton cultivation) greatly increased his authority in the Bey's councils and he could write in November 1856 that in a near future he would be "better able to suggest alone and unaided since France refuses her cooperation other administrative and Financial reforms."<sup>1</sup>

6. With Wood's arrival in Tunis, a new opportunity offered itself to define afresh the policy of the Foreign Office with regard to the diplomatic situation of the Regency. Mohammed Bey had resented Wood's being accredited by Clarendon, and not, as had been the custom before Palmerston, by the Queen; the secret grudge he had nursed against the Foreign Office partly accounted for the cold reception Wood had first met with in Tunis. But Clarendon had replied to Wood's uneasy reports by a firm statement of the British position: Whatever the reasons behind France's treatment of the Bey as an independent ruler, it was "of great importance to England to maintain the dependent position which the Bey of Tunis occupied with regard to the Sultan."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 50. Wood to Clarendon, November 26, 1856.  
2. FO 102 50. Clarendon to Wood, August 13, 1856.

When the Bey had resumed his complaints, in October, Wood had acted in accordance with Clarendon's instructions. He had encouraged Mohammed Bey to rely on the Sultan's favourable dispositions and on British friendship and protection, and reminded him that as he was placed between "two fires", it was to his interest to make the Regency "a link in the chain which joins other Mohammedan states to Europe"; a situation which made him certain that the Regency would be covered by the guarantee which the Powers had given to the Ottoman Empire. However, Wood was not himself fully convinced by his own argument, and he remarked that the Bey's position could not be regarded as perfectly safe unless it would be "unreservedly consummated by some diplomatic act to which recourse might be had, in time of need or danger." Meanwhile Wood suggested that "some indulgence" should be shown for the Bey's wishes.<sup>1</sup>

Wood's suggestion placed the Foreign Office in an awkward position: was the immediate strengthening of British influence in Tunis worth a change in the policy which had been pursued for more than twenty years? Some hesitation was felt: Clarendon appeared at first disposed to comply with the Bey's request. In spite of

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1. Ibid, Wood to Clarendon, October 8, 1856.

the strong objections raised by the officials in the Foreign Office, in spite of the precedent of Baynes' accreditation in 1850, Clarendon decided that although the "principle" was "no doubt right", he was not sure that "British interests" might not be promoted by a different practice".<sup>1</sup> A draft was prepared for the Queen's signature, and laid before Palmerston in January 1857. The Prime Minister at once opposed the measure contemplated by Clarendon. The question which had been mooted by the Bey was not a mere question of etiquette ; French policy was openly aiming at severing the Bey's connection with the Sultan. "Our policy on the other hand has always been to maintain his dependency on the Sultan as a safeguard against his becoming a vassal of France." The Bey aspired to an independent position: "If your only object is to please [him] we ought to acknowledge him independent, but if we look to permanent interests we must maintain important principles even at the risk of displeasing him."<sup>2</sup> Palmerston's opinion, and tradition, prevailed over the desire for a change. Clarendon's answer to Wood was so carefully worded in accordance with the precedents that it seemed like a

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1. FO 102 50. Note, November 5, 1856.  
2. Ibid. Note, January 23, 1857.

selection of passages from the archives of the Foreign Office: "The Bey....must be satisfied that he is not strong enough to stand alone, and that the safety of his beylik depends on his continuing to form an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, and as such secured by the common guarantee of all the Powers of Europe."<sup>1</sup> These optimistic considerations barely veiled the deep uncertainty of the Bey's position which had moved Wood to act. He nevertheless remained bound to a policy which had proved ineffective, and which hindered his action in Tunis without guaranteeing the external security of the Regency.

#### The Fundamental Law (1857)

7. The prospects of political reform were uncertain in 1857: the Bey had refused to proclaim the Hatti Humayun, the French Government was reluctant to work with Great Britain in Tunis, and consequently the Foreign Office felt powerless to act alone. Wood was entirely dependent on himself and could do nothing but hope for circumstances which would allow him to force reform upon the Bey and upon the French and English governments. An opportunity suddenly occurred when a Tunisian Jew, Batto Sfez, accused of having insulted a Moslem and

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1. FO 102 53. Hammond to Wood, private, January 25, 1857.

cursed the Mahomedan religion while drunk, was hurriedly sentenced to death. Instead of judging the Jew himself the Bey yielded to popular excitement and gave the case to the religious Court (Sharia). Although Batto Sfez protested his innocence, the judges sentenced him to death. The Bey could have reconsidered the decision; but he did not dare to resist the pressure the **Blema** brought to bear upon him, and the threat of a collective resignation of the religious judges; and frightened by the possibility of disturbances should he annul the sentence of the Court, he ordered its immediate execution (June 25, 1857). The unusual severity of the Sharia as well as their relentlessness in obtaining the execution of their decision are not easily accounted for, except by excessive religious zeal and an obvious desire to regain their popularity by satisfying the fanaticism of public opinion. But the Bey had shown in this matter a political short-sightedness for which he was to pay dearly.<sup>1</sup>

The European quarters showed an emotion which was partly justified: the event seemed unparalleled as no such procedure had been recorded for the last forty

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, June 30 and July 6, 1857. Ben Dhiaf, Reign of Mohammed Bey, pp.41 to 43.

years; and, theoretically at least, all Christians could have been similarly treated.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps more than that example of a "barbarous fanaticism", they resented the Bey's stubbornness and his refusal to listen to the representations made by the Consuls. Roches and Wood had vainly impressed upon him the disastrous outcry which the execution would raise in Europe.<sup>2</sup> The impression was so strong in the European Communities of Tunis that the Consuls had no need to incite outbursts of indignation among their nationals. In the addresses of the French and British residents indignation over this manifestation of "fanatisme sous sa forme la plus hideuse" and demands for guarantees protecting " ]their] property but also [their] persons", were combined with more material considerations. They asked for a protection of their commercial interests, meaning the observation of the treaties and the suppression of the hindrances which the Tunisian government caused "daily to the free course of our commerce by its uncontrolled system of Monopolies". The two petitions concluded with a wish "to see such reforms

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1. It is only fair to remark that nothing of the kind had ever happened to Europeans in Tunis since 1815, and that for criminal affairs they were placed under the sole jurisdiction of their Consular Courts.
  2. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, June 30, 1857.



established in this Regency as may relieve us of all alarms."<sup>1</sup>

Wood had realised from the beginning that he had found the incident from which his reform plan could come into being. He had simply to take from the petition of the British residents the elements of the programme of action which he proposed to Clarendon's attention on the 6th of July: Was the Bey to "be abandoned to its [the Ulema] retrograde and fanatical action, or rescued from it and placed in a position, by the exercise of a moral pressure on the part of the Great Powers, to pursue a system of progressive improvement, civil and religious, administrative and commercial?" Britain, Wood pointed out, ought to avail herself of the opportunity to put pressure on the Bey in order "first that the concessions which the Sultan has made at various periods should be likewise conceded by the Bey of Tunis. Secondly that the Bey should give a Tanzimat to this country regulating the administration and establishing institutions which would ensure in a more positive manner the lives and property of his subjects. Thirdly that henceforward the Treaties...now infringed

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, July 6, 1857, with two enclosures: Address of the British residents (June 30) and Adresse des Résidents français (June 27).

and violated by local regulations and Government Monopolies shall be purely and fairly carried out for the better protection of trade."<sup>1</sup> The undertaking was this time promising as Roches wholly agreed with Wood and was proposing that his government should demand the promulgation of "a species of Hatti Homayun" in Tunis. The urgency of the problem as well as the favourable view of the French community seemed likely to bring the Quai d'Orsay to accept an Anglo-French action in Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

8. Wood's expectations were not fulfilled. From the very first overtures, Walewski showed an unexpected reticence: Cowley reported that although he approved Roches' conduct and sent "some general remonstrances to the Tunisian Government.... [Walewski] did not appear in any way inclined to do more." The French Minister seemed rather prone to excuse the Bey on the ground that he had been submitted to strong pressure from the Ulema.<sup>3</sup> In spite of these disheartening first steps, Clarendon decided to abide by Wood's plan for reform; on the 21st of July he instructed Cowley to express to Walewski "the readiness of Her Majesty's

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, July 6, N.24.

2. Ibid, N. 25.

3. FO 27 1200. Cowley to Clarendon, July 15, 1857.

government to co-operate with the Government of the Emperor in an endeavour to induce the Bey of Tunis to adopt such reforms in his administration as may develop the resources of the Regency and afford security for foreigners residing in it, and also to cause the Treaties with Foreign Powers to be religiously observed."<sup>1</sup> It would have been embarrassing for Walewski fully to turn down this offer; but the limited acquiescence which he gave to Clarendon's proposal meant that he actually shrank from the far reaching action which Clarendon had contemplated. He instructed Roches to demand "la création de tribunaux mixtes analogues à ceux qui ont été institués par la Porte Ottomane" and added a very moderate admonishment with regard to the execution of Batto Sflex; there was no mention whatsoever of political reforms in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Malaret communicated these instructions to Clarendon with a proposal for a joint action; Clarendon was then obliged to accept it and to restrict his own instructions to Wood to the obtaining of a mere judicial reform in Tunis. He added that, should Roches receive instructions "to urge the Tunisian Government to abolish ~~monopolies~~, abuses and

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1. FO 27 1180 Clarendon to Cowley, July 21, 1857.

2. FO 27 1217. Malaret to Clarendon, July 29, 1857.

local regulations detrimental to commerce with that country", Wood would have to concert his action with him. But after Walewski's manoeuvre the Foreign Office could entertain no illusions on that point.<sup>1</sup>

Support from both governments was therefore again failing at the very moment when in Tunis Wood was meeting very serious difficulties. The Bey had overcome the disarray which had followed Sfez's execution and was showing more and more reluctance to promulgate the far reaching reforms Wood suggested, the more so as the "Ecclesiastical Party" (the Ulema) were strongly opposed to these innovations. With eloquence and insistence Wood emphasized the necessity for the Bey to abide by the imperial decrees lest he should himself appear as a "Kufer" (infidel). Should the Bey model his conduct on the "bigotry and fanaticism" of the Ulema he would be prevented from introducing in the Regency "the improvements and reforms which the civilized world not only required from, but would sooner or later impose upon him" and which would provide for the removal of the grievances of the Merchants, civil and religious equality for his subjects, and the formation of mixed Tribunals. The Bey cast the blame

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1. FO 102 53. Clarendon to Wood, August 6 and 7, 1857.

for Batto's execution on the Ulema and answered that hasty reforms were likely to cause trouble among the population; "Whenever it is practicable," he concluded very vaguely, "I will do that which prudence and the welfare of my subjects require" (July 25 1857).<sup>1</sup> Wood's endeavours met with more response from the Prime Minister and Khaireddin. With the object of convincing them he painted a picture of the attitude of the Powers which although impressive was not in strict accordance with reality: "If France did contemplate taking stringent measures against the Tunisian Government England would join her in such a work of humanity and civilization."<sup>2</sup> But the Bey's last word in the matter was not encouraging: "Quant à l'établissement d'institutions, he wrote to Wood in August ... nous procéderons a ces réformes progressivement suivant ce qu'il sera possible de faire dans nos états .... On ne peut changer tout d'un coup, dans un pays des anciennes coutumes et institutions qui fonctionnent depuis une longue suite d'années."

In actual fact Roches and Wood's joint representations, on the basis of their limited instructions,

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, July 25, 1857.
  2. Ibid, August 4, 1857.

could not do more than obtain the creation of two Criminal and Commercial Courts. The Criminal Tribunal was to be composed of Moslem notables and judge all criminal cases; the Bey retained his powers of deciding ultimately and the Sharia kept their jurisdiction over religious questions.<sup>1</sup> As Wood remarked with consternation, the promised Commercial Tribunal was not even a Mixed Court; the future prospects of reform were more gloomy than ever.

9. The unexpected arrival before Tunis of a French naval squadron placed Wood in a position to force the reforms upon the Bey (August 31, 1857). The visit of the French Fleet did not mean any change in French policy. Admiral Trehouart) had been instructed to act "with prudence" in supporting Roches' representations; Roches was to demand the creation of Mixed Courts and the application of Commercial Treaties (by which Walewski meant the freedom of trade and the granting to foreigners of the right to own landed property in Tunis).<sup>2</sup> Walewski a few days afterwards confirmed to Cowley that "there was no question of making, much less

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon N 33, August 18, 1857. Ben Dhiaf, pp.43-44.
  2. Ben Dhiaf, pp.45-48 gives for these instructions the date of July 30: it is perhaps a mistake for 20 Juillet.

of enforcing, any demand on the Bey. On the contrary the French government was satisfied with the last assurances given by the Tunisian government."<sup>1</sup> It is also beyond doubt that the naval visit had been decided upon without consulting the Foreign Office, and that Walewski continued to ignore the British proposals of joint action. In his despatch of September 4, Cowley while reporting Walewski's explanations, bitterly commented that the French Government clung to their "policy of isolation with regard to this Regency" and regretted that by their keeping Great Britain in ignorance of their decision, the French Government should have deprived her" of the option of partaking in this demonstration." It so happened however, that the sending of the fleet immediately followed the Osborne meeting (August 1857): Napoleon III, Walewski and the British Cabinet had made no allusion to the Tunisian situation during their conversations,<sup>2</sup> but

1. FO 27 1203. Cowley to Clarendon, September 4, 1857.
2. With regard to Napoleon's visit to England and the Osborne conversations (which ran mainly upon the Rumanian question) see Marriott The Eastern Question (p. 298) and Seton-Watson (p. 365). Napoleon III had perhaps dwelt upon his grandiose Mediterranean schemes (E. Bourgeois Manuel historique III, p. 428 and Debidour Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe, I p. 173), but these schemes, while affecting Tunis as the other Mediterranean countries, were not to be followed with immediate decisions. With regard to Palmerston's refusal to consider such projects see Dilke Europe in 1887 (p. 78).

Wood was struck by the coincidence and he tried to make the best use of it. Although he had received neither instruction nor even information, he gave an interpretation of the events, partly imaginary and partly authentic which seemed plausible enough. The feelings of the Foreign Office about the necessity of issuing reforms were well known; the presence of the French Fleet could be interpreted as a decisive French move in pursuit of the same objects. Wood endeavoured to convince the Bey that the demonstration was the first joint action of the two Powers in favour of reforms in Tunis. Of course that game of bluff could not succeed if Roches did not support Wood<sup>1</sup>; his attitude since the beginning of the crisis indicated that he would not oppose using the presence of the Fleet for a policy which had his whole hearted agreement while much exceeding Walewski's intentions.

A few days after the arrival of the fleet, Wood went to the Palace and offered the Bey his friendly mediation; the sending of the Fleet, coming after the Osborne meetings, could not have been decided "without the concurrence" of Great Britain; France, Wood said,

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1. And of course it could not have succeeded if fast means of communication had existed between Tunis and Europe. The first telegraph line was established in 1860.



had grown wearied of the Bey's dilatory tactics and she had now decided "to compel Your Highness either by persuasion or coercion to yield the concessions demanded of you. In a work of Humanity and civilisation, of progress and reform, England cannot and will not remain behind, and I am therefore instructed to cooperate with my French colleague, and to unite our efforts in bringing about the accomplishment of the wishes of our respective governments." Should the Bey attempt to resist "we will interrupt our relations with you and if necessary we will blockade your ports."<sup>1</sup> Wood added that the two Powers could also ask the Sultan to issue a Firman enjoining the Bey to apply in Tunis the Ottoman Reforms. Tunis would then be in danger of undergoing "the transformation that Tripoli underwent". Wood sketched the broad outlines of the reforms which France and Great Britain were supposed to demand: Mixed Tribunals, execution of the Trade conventions (these two points were Walewski's genuine demands) and granting of "security of life and property" to the Bey's subjects (this was Wood's own programme and was to provide the

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1. Ben Dhiab asserts that Wood's threats had been even more precise: "Si vous voulez écouter mes conseils, hâtez vous de promulguer cette réglementation, car notre flotte est à Malte et n'attend que ma réponse que doit lui porter un vapeur prêt à appareiller." Mohammed Bey, p. 45.

basis for the "Ahd el Aman"). "England and France, Wood concluded, would no longer tolerate the present state of things in Tunis."<sup>1</sup>

The French Admiral's language to the Bey was of course less precise but strong enough to confirm Wood's assertion that France and Great Britain were acting in full agreement. The Tunisian opponents of the Reforms had to admit that it was impossible to resist such a coalition: on the contrary the influence of Ben Dhiaf, Khaireddin and all the officials who advocated liberal reforms was strengthened. The time had now come for Wood to explain what he meant by the "Organic Laws which should limit and regulate the prerogatives and rights of the Sovereign Prince, on the one side, and the duties of the subjects on the other". Putting aside the questions of the Mixed Tribunals and of the Commercial interests about which there was no serious disagreement, Wood suggested that the Bey should issue a Charter embodying five fundamental laws which were modelled upon the principles of the Hatti Sherif of Gulkane (1839) and the Hatti Humayun (1856): "1. Security for life and property, 2. Equal taxation. 3. Equality before the law, 4. Religious freedom, 5. Limitation

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, September 2, 1857.

of the period of military service."<sup>1</sup>

The Bey's last hope was to take advantage of a possible disagreement between Wood and Roches: he had perhaps noticed some discrepancy between the programmes which were put forward by Wood and the French. Anyhow he answered that he was ready to grant the reforms which Wood demanded if the two Consuls could reach an agreement in that matter.<sup>2</sup> Roches had received no further instruction from his government, but it had been agreed between the two Consuls that Wood would renew the negotiations with the Tunisian Government and that when they attained a certain stage Wood would "intimate to the Bey the urgent expediency of inviting the French Chargé d'Affaires to his counsels".<sup>3</sup> It was high time to put an end to the whole affair as the Fleet was to leave Tunis on the tenth of September. Without further delay Roches agreed with Wood that a memorandum embodying Wood's previous demands, should be prepared and handed over to the Bey. The memorandum recalled the Bey's promises with regard to: "1. Etablissement de tribunaux criminels où seront admis les israélites lors qu'un

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, September 4, 1857.
  2. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, September 4, 1857. Perhaps the Bey only wanted to take precautions against the eventual opposition of the French Government.
  3. FO 102 53. Ibid. September 15, 1857.

israélite sera en cause. 2. Etablissement de tribunaux commerciaux mixtes. 3. L'Egalité civile et religieuse de tous les sujets du Bey. 4. La liberté absolue du Commerce dans laquelle se trouve naturellement comprise l'abolition de toutes les fermes. 5. La liberté pour tous les Européens d'exercer toute espèce d'industries en se soumettant aux conditions qui pèseront sur l'industrie indigène. 6. La Faculté pour les mêmes Européens de posséder des immeubles en toute propriété en se soumettant aux charges qui pèseront sur les propriétaires indigènes." These 6 articles reproduced the stipulations of the Hatti Humayun. The memorandum then reproduced the demand Wood had laid before the Bey that the Reforms should rest on "des réformes organiques qui en seront la base et la garantie"; the five fundamental principles which Wood had proposed to the Bey a few days earlier were to be taken as bases of the "Constitution qui [assurera] désormais aux sujets tunisiens .... des droits et une liberté inconnue jusqu'ici et qui peuvent seuls vivifier le nouvel ordre de choses."<sup>1</sup>

10. It only remained for the Bey to give way: his Council was gathered and the ministers agreed that the reforms Wood and Roches suggested could not be evaded.

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, September 10, 1857.

The Bey accordingly entrusted his First Secretary, Ben Dhiaf, with the task of drafting the Fundamental Law (Ahd el Aman). The text was promulgated on September 10, 1857; Wood and Roches had been consulted beforehand and had expressed their agreement. Ben Dhiaf had closely followed Wood's successive statements; in actual fact, he had merely linked together the eleven points which Wood had submitted to the Bey's attention. A preamble had been added which established a connection between the Ahd el Aman and the reforms Mohammed Bey had accomplished during the first year of his reign; the preamble recalled the similar measures edicted in Turkey and concluded that "C'est une loi de la nature que l'homme ne puisse arriver a la prospérité qu'autant que sa liberté lui est entièrement garantie".<sup>1</sup> The Ahd el Aman was undoubtedly a personal success for Wood; it was the long delayed conclusion of a policy which the Consul had initiated in the very first days of his arrival in Tunis; he had very skilfully availed himself of the propitious circumstances and had overcome the numerous obstacles he had met in his way. Wood's satisfaction was therefore fully justified; fully justified too, were the felicitations Clarendon sent to the

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1. FO 102 53. Wood to Clarendon, September 15, 1857. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 48-49.

British Agent. The Bey had, however, acted under moral pressure and not without having been threatened by naval intervention; obviously the Reforms would have to be defended. Nevertheless the proclamation of the Ahd el Aman put an end to the Bey's procrastination; the movement of Reform began in Tunis

It remained to be seen whether the French government would endorse Roches' policy. Wood supposed that the Ahd el Aman was likely to embarrass, if not irritate the Quai d'Orsay which had never expected and even less wished for, such developments. A few years later, Drouyn de Lhuys reminded the French Consul in Tunis that "l'octroi de cette Constitution n'a pas été conseillé par le gouvernement français qui demandait seulement une réforme judiciaire."<sup>1</sup> The same Consul, M. de Beauval, openly admitted that if Wood had furthered the policy advocated by his government, Roches was to be blamed "for having allowed himself to be put forward by [Wood] to carry out British views and policy".<sup>2</sup> It is very likely that Walewski was scarcely satisfied with Roches' interpretation of his instructions: but it would have been difficult to call what had been done

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1. FO 27 1537. Drouyn to Beauval. May 11, 1864, in Cowley to Russell, December 20, 1864.
  2. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 30, 1864.

in question; on the other hand the French Minister would have uneasily explained why France deprecated reforms in Tunis when she strongly advocated them in Constantinople. Walewski made the best of what had happened in Tunis and he was one of the first Foreign Ministers to send his congratulations to the Bey.<sup>1</sup>

Mohammed Bey's further reforms (1857-1859).

11. The proclamation of the Ahd el Aman was only the beginning of the reform movement; it had to be completed and extended. While congratulating Wood upon the happy result of his efforts, Clarendon reminded him of "the wide difference which exists between the publication and the execution of decrees" and hoped that the Ahd would not remain a dead letter.<sup>2</sup> Wood was well aware of the problem, and while informing the British Agents in Tunis of the promulgation of the Ahd el Aman he added a warning that the extension of the reforms was "naturally the work of time" and that Foreigners would have to act with "prudence and circumspection... impartiality and justice" in order to help the Government in his task.<sup>3</sup> Wood's policy was made easier by the attitude of prudent reserve which the French

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1. FO 102 55. Wood to Clarendon, January 5, 1858.
  2. FO 102 53. Clarendon to Wood, October 3, 1857.
  3. FO 102 53. Wood to the British Agents, September 29, 1857.

Government was then maintaining with regard to Tunisian questions. On the spot Wood could rely on Roches' support; the two Consuls were on very friendly terms, a situation rather unusual in Tunis. Finally Wood was supported in the Bey's Council by Reformers, the most prominent of whom were Khaireddin and Ben Dhiaf: the reform movement was thus to become a Tunisian affair instead of being more or less forced upon the Bey from outside.

It is of course very difficult to give a precise account of Wood's share in the reforms which followed the Ahd el Aman; Wood himself gives rather scanty information and Ben Dhiaf while referring to the various reforms does not go deeply into details with regard to their elaboration. It is likely that Wood had a great influence over the Tunisian reformers. Ben Dhiaf writes that he was "l'un des hommes les plus éminents de son pays. Doué de sentiments nobles, éloquent, d'une intelligence pénétrante, homme juste d'un jugement droit."<sup>1</sup> We may suppose that Wood and Khaireddin had not only friendly relations but exchanged ideas about the political problems which confronted Tunis. In 1868 while sending to the Foreign

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1. Ben Dhiaf, Mohammed Bey, p. 44.



Office a copy of Khaireddin's "Réformes nécessaires aux Etats Musulmans", the Consul observed that Khaireddin had early acquainted him with his project and that Wood had "encouraged him to [his] utmost to carry it out."<sup>1</sup> a remark which bears witness to his influence on Khaireddin. However that may be, it was Wood who as early as September 1857 suggested the creation of a Commission which would "frame....laws and regulations conformable to the new state of things." Here again Wood found his inspiration in the Hatti Sherif of Gulkhane which provided for the creation of such a Commission.<sup>2</sup> The Commission was created by decree in November 1857: contrary to Wood's suggestion it was not a mixed body; its members were exclusively Tunisians, 6 ministers and 4 Ulema. Such a composition, it was hoped, would allay the apprehensions which were entertained by many devote Moslems with regard to the orthodoxy of the reforms. Unhappily it soon appeared that the Ulema were not ready to cooperate in developing the reforms.<sup>3</sup> But the Commission, with Khaireddin, Ben Dhiaf and General M'hamed, worked very efficiently on the whole. In accordance to Wood's suggestion in

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1. FO 102 82. Wood to Clarendon, December 29, 1868.
  2. See Engelhardt, (I, 260).
  3. FO 102 53. Wood, November 10, 1857.

1858 "that a municipal council should be formed which would not only frame Municipal laws and regulations, but should undertake public works and improvements", the creation of the Municipal Council of Tunis was decreed in August 1858. It undertook very useful public works such as the maintenance of public buildings and streets, and the improvement of the street police. A military reform (August-September 1858) and a decree which put an end to the inferior status of the Tunisian Jews (September 1858), were the next steps towards the internal improvement of the Regency.<sup>1</sup>

12. As we have seen, Wood wanted to complement his programme of political reforms with the introduction into Tunis of European skill and capital, which, he expected, would result in economic progress for the Regency, and political and material benefit for the British. He spared no pains to take advantage of the first concessions he had obtained in 1856. The scheme for cotton cultivation, however, met with serious obstacles, the main difficulty being the reluctance of British capitalists to invest money in Tunis. At the end of 1857 an Anglo-Tunisian Company was created: its

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 58-63.

object was to introduce cotton cultivation on an extensive scale as an experiment: the Prime Minister showed much interest in the undertaking and the British Government themselves encouraged the scheme by sending cotton seed and machines.<sup>1</sup> Although precise information is lacking, it seems that the attempts made in the region of Djedeida were not successful enough to encourage an extension of the scheme. As long as the fundamental question of the right of the foreigners to possess real and landed property in Tunis was not solved, it was very unlikely that such schemes could prove workable.

At the outset the Concession for a bank had also met with little financial encouragement in London where Wood had sent Santillana, the Chancellor of the Consulate, to investigate the market.<sup>2</sup> With a view to encouraging Foreign speculators the Bey offered to provide the main part of the capital of the bank (£50,000 out of £75,000); it was then possible to interest a group of British bankers in the scheme.<sup>3</sup> The Bey promulgated a decree (April 1858) which defined the conditions of the granting of the concessions: The English and Tunisian bank would enjoy the privilege of

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1. FO 102 55. Wood to Malmesbury, April 5 and May 8, 1858.
  2. FO 102 54. Santillana to Clarendon, February 1858.
  3. FO 102 67. Wood to Malmesbury, June 15, 1858.

issuing bank notes during ten years; the Tunisian government would exercise their control over its operations; the British Consul would have a right of "interference in the affairs of the bank"; the Bank would be authorized to own "houses and lands...and other sort of immovable property".<sup>1</sup> The foundation of the Bank had scarcely been announced when the French Consulate manifested its opposition. Soon afterwards the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères took up the matter, to Wood's irritation; the tendency of French policy is "obviously," he wrote to Clarendon, "the prevention of British enterprise and the development of British trade and interests."<sup>2</sup> It is unquestionable that France looked unfavourably upon the progress of British influence in Tunis; but the Quai d'Orsay could put forward more valid arguments against the Bank. Negotiations took place between Paris and London and ultimately the contractors had to give up some of the most objectionable articles: the "English and Tunisian Bank" became the "Tunisian Bank"; the British Consul was deprived of his rights of control, no Charter was requested from the British Government. French opposition to the scheme having thus ended at

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1. FO 102 67. Wood to Malmesbury, April 5, 1858.
  2. FO 102 56. Wood to Malmesbury, October 20, 1858.

the beginning of 1859, the Bank could begin its operations: but the scheme was nevertheless a failure as the British contractors, dissatisfied with the limitations French intervention had imposed upon them, tried to evade the guarantees the Bey had written down in the Concession. Their pretensions led to serious difficulties with the Bey; in the end the London bankers cancelled the contract and tried to obtain the payment of indemnities which were justified neither by the prejudice they had suffered nor by the terms of the Contract, a scenario which was to be used more than once later on. On this occasion, however, the Foreign Office fully endorsed Wood's opinion and refused to support a claim which was wholly indefensible.<sup>1</sup>

Wood's failures in the economic field indicated that his policy in this regard was premature. The difficulties which had arisen with the British contractors proved also that such undertakings were not devoid of dangers for the Tunisian government. The Bey had had a foretaste of the risks he would incur if he allowed himself to fall into the hands of unscrupulous adventurers, who were attracted by his weakness and his lack of financial experience: one understands the Bey's

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1. FO 102 67. Wood to Russell, August 18, 1860.

hesitation in granting full economic rights to the Foreigners in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> Less than one year after the concession of the Tunisian Bank, the Bey agreed to be drawn into the restoration of the Carthage Aqueduct: Roches and the French contractor had promised that the benefits would be enormous; in actual fact the profit was small, and the expenditure heavy; and the undertaking dealt the first serious blow to Tunisian finances. The first outcome of the policy advocated by Wood was ominous for the future.

International position of the Regency (1857-1860).

13. Wood was not the only observer who concluded from the precarious international status of Tunis to the urgency of suitable decisions: at the beginning of 1858 the Austrian Consul, Merlato, while in Vienna, told Seymour that the Regency seemed condemned to become before long a French Province, unless her equivocal situation was at last settled and she was recognized as "a perfectly independent state".<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Office was not unaware of the danger, but for fear of impairing the status quo, it was led to abstain from doing anything, a situation which was a source of

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1. FO 102 55. Wood to Malmesbury, October 20, 1858.

2. FO 7 541. Seymour to Malmesbury, March 10, 1858.

embarrassment for Wood and of irritation for the Bey.<sup>1</sup>

Wood again took the initiative and suggested that his government should take advantage of favourable circumstances to bring the Bey "to recognize in a formal manner the temporal Suzerainty of the Sultan". Mohammed Bey was apparently convinced that his dependence on the Porte, being only nominal, did not assure him a complete protection; he seemed to be ready, if Britain took the initiative, to accept a rapprochement which he had always looked for. Wood had persistently repeated that the security of the Regency "should not be left to depend upon vague assurances that its political existence will be respected", and that it could only be efficaciously assured by the extension of the guarantee of integrity recently given to the Porte. Action was the more urgent as the heir apparent, Sadok Bey, was known to favour a policy of independence with regard to the Porte. A successful negotiation, Wood added,

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1. It is for instance very difficult to give account for Malmesbury's persistent refusal to bestow a British order on the Bey who was very eager to be awarded one, and who had been covered of decorations by all the European Courts, after the proclamation of the Ahd el Aman. His successor was at last awarded the Order of the Bath in 1865, one year after the suspension of the Reforms (FO 102 55 Wood to Malmesbury, April 5, 1858; Malmesbury to Wood, April 26, 1858).

depended on the Porte's readiness to give up antiquated pretensions and to recognize that it would be more advantageous to aid the solution of the problem "by submitting to a partial but in reality nominal sacrifice, than to subject herself eventually to a certain loss."

Wood accordingly defined, in his Memorandum of July 31, 1858, the conditions which the Bey seemed ready to accept as the basis for a settlement: The Porte would ensure "1. Confirmation of the right of succession in the family of Hassan ben Aly... 2. Non-intervention... in the internal administration of the Regency. 3. Continuation of the right of the Beys to arrange and carry on their Foreign relations. 4. Preservation of the Tunisian flag.... 5. Privilege of bestowing decorations." On the other hand, the Beys would: "1. Formally recognize the Suzerainty of the Sultan. 2. Apply for and receive their investiture!" 3. Coin money, 4. and Say the Friday prayer in the Sultan's name. The question of the tribute (which had never been paid by the Husseini Beys) could be solved, Wood imagined, by a moderate subsidy which would be considered as a mere contribution to the defence of the Empire. If Baynes had been the first to give an accurate description of the status quo, Wood's memorandum was the first British attempt clearly to define



the practical conditions of an eventual rapprochement between the Bey and the Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

Wood had realized from the start that such an agreement required the approbation of the Powers and particularly French assent. That very conviction may have been shared by the Foreign Office, and may have been the reason why Malmesbury instructed Cowley to inquire in Paris what the French government would do, should Britain take the course of action Wood had advocated (August 1858). The Foreign Office may have considered that the policy Wood suggested could not be carried on without the knowledge of the French, as ultimately it would be impossible to do without French agreement. But if the Foreign Office expected any kind of success it showed an ingenuousness which was the less understandable as in 1856 and 1857 France had refused to cooperate with Britain in Tunis for an object which threatened her traditional Tunisian policy much less than Wood's scheme was likely to do. Malmesbury may also have thought that the occasion was favourable for making a final effort to bring the Imperial Government to the much-desired cooperation, and, in case they refused, to oblige them to reveal their real objects in Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 55. Wood to Malmesbury. July 31, 1858.
  2. FO 27 1238. Malmesbury to Cowley. August 25, 1858.

If such was the case the Foreign Office was acquainted quickly and clearly with French views: Cowley reported that Walewski "not only evinced no disposition to join in such an attempt, but gave to understand that an attempt of the kind, made by any other power, would be viewed with extreme jealousy by the Imperial Government." French policy "whether right or wrong, Walewski added, had been to discourage any more approximation than existed at present between the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan"; Cowley was not surprised by an answer which he had anticipated.<sup>1</sup> But Malmesbury seemed to be unexpectedly taken aback, and he expressed a dissatisfaction which perhaps reveals the ingenuousness of the proposal he had made to Walewski.

Be that as it may, the Foreign Office informed Wood that his scheme offered "many difficulties" and acquainted him with Walewski's answer. For the Consul it was a further confirmation of the apprehensions which he was already entertaining with regard to French policy in Tunis. France, he reported, clearly aimed at "facilitating the annexation of this country to her African Possessions by its progressive but eventual severance from Turkey". Wood added to these traditional

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1. FO 27 1260. Cowley to Malmesbury, October 6, 1858.

considerations a suggestion which would have deserved to be acted upon; he suggested asking Walewski what was the status quo which, he asserted, France upheld in Tunis. Perhaps the French would feel greatly embarrassed and fail to set forth a coherent doctrine about a question which they preferred to leave "undefined and unexplained".<sup>1</sup> But the Foreign Office did not deem it necessary to carry on the discussion; Malmesbury was certainly not eager to raise fresh difficulty with the Imperial Government, in addition to the numerous problems which were already disturbing Franco-British relations in 1858.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the relations of the Powers with the Porte were so strained after the Montenegro and Djedda affairs, that the moment was rather inauspicious for entering into delicate negotiations with the Ottoman Government about Tunis.<sup>3</sup> It was unfortunate that such a conjuncture of circumstances should again prevent the Foreign Office from taking a positive course of action in Tunis.

14. After this episode Wood ceased to set his hopes in an eventual Franco English cooperation in Tunis: twenty years' experience in the Near East did not

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1. FO 102 55. Wood to Malmesbury, November 5, 1858.
  2. Seton-Watson, pp. 376-377.
  3. Engelhardt, I, pp. 155-157.

encourage him to think that such cooperation could last. But even if he had sincerely believed it possible in 1856 and 1857, he was soon induced to consider that everywhere French policy hindered the execution of his programme. The French Government were opposed to a settlement of the relations between Tunis and the Porte, they did not sincerely approve the reforms which Roches had helped to bring about, they openly obstructed British economic undertakings in Tunis. As in Wood's mind British interests had become identified with the interest of the Regency, he was gradually brought to show distrust, if not hostility with regard to French policy, in the name of the welfare of Tunis.

The winter of 1858-59 saw the growth of an antagonism which was but a resumption of the traditional Anglo-French struggle for influence in Tunis, and which accounts for the memorandum which Wood wrote in July 1859 for the Foreign Office. Wood attacked the whole Mediterranean French policy and remarked that France stood in the way of the introduction of any permanent improvement in the administration of Tunis with a view to taking advantage of its disorganisation and ultimately annexing the Regency; the French endeavoured to prevent a Tuniso Turkish settlement with the same object in view. In order to counteract these dangerous

designs Wood suggested the adoption of an active policy aiming at strengthening British influence in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> The death of Mohammed Bey (September 22 1859) and Sadok Bey's accession to the throne were immediately followed by a Convention which gave the concession of the Tunisian Telegraphs to France (October 24, 1859), an hasty decision<sup>which</sup> seemed to entirely justify Wood's apprehensions.

15. It is difficult to describe Sadok Bey's true personality: the disastrous events of his last years have cast a shadow over his whole reign and justify the unfavourable opinions which are generally expressed about him. Yet Sadok Bey did not lack talent or capacity and the beginnings of his reign were promising. But, from a British point of view, Sadok Bey's attitude with regard to Tunisian relations with Turkey was very alarming: he leant towards a policy which Ahmed Bey had followed before him and he appeared quite soon eager to assert his independence, whether he merely desired to strengthen his prestige, or acted on Roches' advice.<sup>2</sup>

1. The Memorandum was printed for the use of Diplomatic Agents. (FO 102 58. Wood to Russell, July 30, 1859).
2. Ben Dhiaf (Sadok Bey, p.9-10) comments rather severely on Sadok's policy: "On eût dit qu'il cherchait à traiter d'égal à égal avec les Chefs d'Etat et c'est là le cas de tous les faibles souverains du régime absolu quand leur état est atteint de la maladie de la décrépitude - Certes le Bey n'a tenu ce langage que parce que Léon Roches lui avait fait entrevoir des rêves irréalisables et il a voulu construire des châteaux sur le sable."

Wood endeavoured to combat the Bey's prejudices and tried to convince him to "lay aside personal considerations of ambition and frankly acknowledge the Suzerainty of the Sultan"; such a policy, Wood assured the Bey, would not lessen his authority, but would on the contrary give more stability and security to his position. Although he had been deeply impressed by Roches' arguments, and was afraid of being reduced to the rank of the Khedive of Egypt or of being involved in the external difficulties of the Empire, the Bey finally agreed to take advantage of the Mission he was to send to Constantinople on the occasion of his accession, and to entrust Khaireddin with a secret mission. In case the Porte should show a disposition to enter into negotiations with Wood's memorandum of July 31, 1858 as a basis, Khaireddin would suggest that, by a note to the ambassadors of the Great Powers, it should "invite them to assist with their counsel and advice in the definition of the matter". Wood expected Russell and Bulwer to induce the Porte to seize an opportunity which perhaps would never occur, even if the Porte were to make some sacrifices to obtain that end. The settlement he suggested originated in a realistic conception of the status quo and took account of the necessity of giving to that Status quo "an official value by a

Diplomatic act". The new plan seemed more likely to succeed than any previous attempt.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly the Foreign Office did not share Wood's optimism. In 1858 it had already shown some reluctance to act on Wood's suggestions. The British Government were now well aware of the French hostility to the scheme; they had to weigh the advantages which would accrue from a vigorous action at the Porte, against the difficulties which would necessarily arise with the Imperial Government, at a moment when Italian affairs were reaching a climax and when Russell and Palmerston were contemplating a rapprochement or even an alliance with France.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand Napoleon was in good faith trying to cooperate with Great Britain in Syria, in China and in Mexico, and the conclusion of the Commercial Treaty (January 23, 1860) was giving a further proof of his friendly dispositions. Was the Foreign Office to rouse a diplomatic storm by trying to settle the differences between the Bey and the Sultan when the Sultan had just received the Memorandum of the 5th of October 1859 in which the European Powers expressed their regret for Ottoman dilatoriness in

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1. FO 102 58. Wood to Russell, November 24, 1859.  
2. Seton-Watson, pp. 403-404.

implementing the promised reforms, and which was to be completed shortly afterwards by severe British remonstrances?<sup>1</sup> - From the British point of view it would have been difficult to find a moment more inappropriate to the action Wood had contemplated. As for the Porte, she was certainly not eager to increase her difficulties with a new burden; and it was most desirable that she could make up for her strained relations with the Powers by her friendship with France which the proposed negotiations was likely to seriously impair.

Khairaddin's negotiations in Constantinople (November and December 1859) had indeed little chance of success.<sup>2</sup> The Porte readily granted the Firman of investiture and the usual honours; the Ottoman Ministers assured Khairaddin that the Porte had no intention "to interfere with the established state of things or to disturb the hereditary rights" in Tunis but wished on the contrary to "consolidate the relations between the two countries"; none of the proposals written down in the memorandum seemed to arouse opposition in

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1. Engelhardt, I, p. 161 and 168.
  2. Khairaddin's negotiation of 1859 is actually badly known: Ben Dhiab makes no allusion to Khairaddin's secret mission and to the ensuing discussions in Constantinople; the correspondence between Bulwer and Russel gives no information whatever.



Constantinople. But the Porte did not show any intention of entering into more precise conversations; the Bey was even advised to act "in a conciliatory manner towards France". Bulwer, when consulted by Khairuddin, "expressed an apprehension that the settlement of the question would meet with formidable opposition". Khairuddin had to be satisfied with the promise that at "the very first favourable opportunity" the Porte would bring forward the question of "the recognition by the Great Powers of the connection of the Regency with Turkey as an integral part of the Empire".<sup>1</sup> The promise was rather vague: Wood could not ignore the fact that the policy, the necessity of which he had impressed upon the Bey, had run up against the probable opposition of France; neither the Porte nor Great Britain had displayed much energy in overcoming it. Wood was of course sorely disappointed. As for the Bey he could not but draw his own conclusions from the failure of a policy which he had reluctantly pursued; it contradicted Wood's assurances and justified Roche's advice; in any case it revealed so clearly the weakness of the Ottoman Government that the Bey would have been imprudent to rely entirely on the support of the Porte in case of need.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russel, January 28, 1860.

2. Ibid. September 29, 1860.

The Tunisian Constitution (1860).

16. If the reforms had begun in 1857 and 1858 at a satisfactory rate, the Bey had afterwards slackened the pace so much that at the beginning of 1859 Wood, on the eve of going on leave, had deemed it necessary to strengthn the Bey's determination. The drawing up of the reforms by the Commission met, of course, with numerous technical difficulties; but Wood was principally disquieted by the development of an opposition to the reforms. Some European residents in Tunis were beginning to state openly that the course of action the Consuls had pursued in 1857 "was a political error" which threatened to impair their interests; they suggested that the government should not be encouraged to persist in a policy of improving a country "which ought to be kept according to their opinion 'dans son état normal'".<sup>1</sup> That attitude was calculated to stiffen the resistance of these Tunisians who had always been averse to the reforms and had accepted them only as a temporary expedient. In March 1859 Wood had an interview with the Bey and reminded him of the promises he had made in 1857; he impressed upon him the expediency

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1. Wood does not specify the nationality of the adversaries of the reforms but the quotation refers obviously to the French residents.

of accelerating the work and asked him to enforce as soon as possible several measures which aimed at giving more efficiency to the administration (Creation of a Council of State; direct and personal responsibility of the Ministers and officers). The Bey promised to "shortly carry out the Organic Laws"<sup>1</sup> but his death happened before he could fulfil his pledge. On the very day of his accession to the throne Sadok Bey solemnly swore to abide by the Ahd el Aman; a few weeks later he confirmed his engagement in an interview with Wood: "He would not only carry out the improvements that his late Brother had commenced but he hoped... to introduce further ameliorations tending to the welfare of his people."<sup>2</sup> A few days after that interview he instructed the Commission of Reforms to accelerate the completion of the Civil and Penal Codes and of the project of political organisation which the Commission had been preparing for more than a year.<sup>3</sup>

A second series of Reforms was indeed completed by the beginning of 1860. The creation of an official Newspaper which was decided in the first weeks of 1860, bore the mark of Wood's direct influence. The government

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1. FO 102 58. Wood to Malmesbury, March 19, 1859.
  2. Ibid. Wood to Russel, November 12, 1859.
  3. Ben Dhi'af, Sadok Bey, p. 7-8.

had long hesitated and were rather reluctant to authorise the installation of a printing press for fear that this innovation should raise difficulties with the Powers. Wood at last succeeded in convincing Sadok Bey to allow Holt, a British subject, to establish a printing press in Tunis and to publish a newspaper. It was to be written in Italian and Arabic; it would be the official organ of the government and placed "under its protection and censorship" which, it was hoped, would avoid the possibility of difficulties with the Europeans.<sup>1</sup> The "Ra'id et Tunisi" was published for the first time on the 25rd of July 1860. It would be difficult to over-rate the importance of that innovation. The Ra'id was to become a tribune for the expression and defence of the reform movement; this was clear enough in the very first issue in which liberal and modernist ideas expressed themselves in laudatory references to the British example (such open admiration for the British system of government did not fail to offend some touchy European Consuls).<sup>2</sup> Other important decrees of Reform were issued at the beginning of 1860: the Conscription Law (February-March 1860) established compulsory and universal

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell. January 14, 1860.

2. Ibid., August 24, 1860.

enrolment; the annual contingent was to be drawn by lot from amongst the recruits who could however buy themselves out.<sup>1</sup> Two decrees (February 27 and April 11 1860) reorganized the ministries on the lines suggested by Wood one year before.<sup>2</sup>

17. In spite of these successes, Wood could not but notice a gradual strengthening of French influence since Sadok Bey's accession, and more particularly since the failure of Khairuddin's mission. The veiled hostility between the French and British Consuls gave rise to a struggle in which Wood was not in a position to have the last word: by clinging to the policy which had failed in Constantinople and by refusing to gratify the Bey's vanity and desire for independence, the Foreign Office could not fail to needlessly irritate Sadok Bey. The affair of the Throne, though rather Gilbertian, provides a good example of the suspicious relations between Wood and the Bey. At the beginning of 1860 Sadok Bey had decided to avail himself of the congratulations he had received from Paris for his "avènement au trône" to give "plus de prestige et de grandeur à son rang". During the official ceremony of

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, April 14, 1860.

2. Ibid. May 26, 1860.

investiture he made use of a throne instead of the more modest seat of his predecessors. It was enough to rouse Wood's concern; fearing lest the change should indicate the Bey's intention "to assume sovereign rank and dignity", he assured Sadok Bey that "the occupation of a throne by the Bey [altered] the status quo."<sup>1</sup> The Bey, for his part, was afraid to give cause for ridicule and to lose his prestige if he was to withdraw from his initiative; diplomatic skirmishes occurred with regard to the piece of furniture which Wood called a throne, the Bey a chair and the French Ministre des Affaires Etrangères "a kind of ornament". Wood's pugnacious attitude was at last rewarded: to the utter astonishment of the Tunisians he persuaded Roches to join in a note to be sent to the Bey with regard to the throne, and the Bey officially answered that the change of the shape of the chair could be of no political consequence. This put an end to the incident. Three months later a change in the protocol of the Beiram reception was similarly interpreted by Wood as an attempt (inspired by Roches) to weaken his own position and to assert the Bey's sovereignty. In this case as in the affair of the throne, it was the Bey's vanity

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, February 11, 1860.

which had to bear the blame rather than a desire to change the political situation of the Regency.

In August, however, Wood had better reasons for apprehension: Napoleon III having decided to go to Algiers, Roches suggested to the Bey that he should avail himself of that opportunity to meet the Emperor. French policy could not fail to take advantage of that manifestation of French prestige in Tunis: for the same reason, and because he remembered the incidents which had followed a similar journey in 1846, Wood thought it expedient to dissuade the Bey from accepting the invitation. But none of Wood's arguments (the main one being that "the Sultan and perhaps some of his allies would view such a proceeding with little satisfaction") could convince the Bey, who never missed an opportunity to strengthen his prestige or to assert his autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Wood then tried to interfere with the French game, and assured the Bey that the reception he would have in Algiers would not correspond to his rank; he even went so far as to say that the Imperial Government were so anxious to preserve the status quo in Tunis that they desired to avoid in Algiers "the inconvenience of receiving His Highness either as a Royal

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, August 10, 1860.

Personage or an independent Sovereign".<sup>1</sup> All in vain: on the 15th of September, the Bey left Tunis for Algiers. His short absence had none of the consequences Wood had feared but it demonstrated openly the strength of French influence in Tunis: though the Bey had received flattering marks of consideration, his visit could not but be looked upon as that of a vassal to his suzerain.

18. During his meeting with Napoleon, Sadok Bey presented to the Emperor a copy of the Tunisian Constitution which had just been completed by the Commission of Reforms and was the outcome of the Reform movement initiated in 1857. The Constitution transformed the Tunisian absolute Monarchy into a parliamentary monarchy. The legislative power was given to a Supreme Council composed of sixty Councillors appointed by the Bey (twenty from amongst the Higher Officials and forty from amongst the notables) and renewable by a system which combined co-optation and nomination. Between the sessions of the Supreme Council a Permanent Section of twelve members exercised the legislative power. The Ministers were responsible to the Supreme Council which shared the initiative in legislative matters with the Bey, particularly for the establishment of the budget

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, September 8, 1860.



and for the creation of new taxes. The judicial power was completely reorganized: the Courts of Justice (courts of First instance, of Appeal and Supreme Court of Appeal) were to be entirely independent from the executive power; the laws and customs would be revised and new codes edicted which would apply to all citizens. The Constitution reasserted the rights of the Tunisians which had already been written down in the Ahd el Aman; foreigners were to enjoy the same rights (including the right to practise trade and industry, and to acquire landed and immovable property).<sup>1</sup>

The text of the Constitution had been submitted to Wood's inspection before its proclamation. The Consul could not but rejoice at the liberal character of the document, though he expressed serious doubts "as to the prudence of granting to a people hitherto unaccustomed to the exercise of any power...so large a share in the administration", so large indeed that many civilized countries would have been "satisfied with an administration and institutions based upon the same principles." The only possible alternative, however, was the continuation of the absolutism and Wood was bound to approve the undertaking "with all its perplexities and dangers."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Fitoussi et Benazet, p. 68-90.

2. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, August 22, 1860.

Wood tried at least to dissuade the Bey from keeping a provision which was likely to create future embarrassment: Roches had suggested the insertion of a clause subjecting Foreigners to the Local Criminal tribunals, perhaps with a view to encouraging the Bey to go to Algiers and secure Napoleon's approval. Wood proposed that only the mixed causes in which the Tunisian was defendant should be brought before the native Criminal Courts: that prudent advice was ignored and the dangerous clause inserted. Actually Napoleon III, when consulted by Sadok Bey in Algiers, gave a "courteous but evasive" answer: the Bey had thus obtained none of the benefits he had expected, and he was to reap an abundant crop of difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

It seemed that the Constitution brought the period of Reforms to its conclusion and fulfilled the promises made by Mohammed Bey in 1857 and by Sadok Bey in 1859. At this stage Sadok Bey reminded Wood of the importance of the part Britain had taken in the whole process. The implementing of the Constitution was due "to Her Majesty's Consulate General which first took the initiative in the matter" and its ultimate success would largely

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1. Ibid. November 15, 1860. (Wood suggests that Roches had been prompted to make his proposal by the desire to place future difficulties in the Bey's way: see also FO 102 65. Wood to Russell July 30, 1862.)

depend on "the encouragement and support Her Majesty may give us. Our people confide in the wisdom of Her Government, and if we can convince them... our success will become certain."<sup>1</sup>

19. In so far as British policy had contributed to the success of the reforms, one must give Wood full credit for it. He had brought with him a programme of political reforms which took its pattern from the reforms already promulgated in the Ottoman Empire and had successively overcome all the obstacles which were in his way. External events had sometimes helped him, but he had made the best of the opportunities, and he had cleverly taken advantage of the support he could find in Tunis. The promulgation of the Constitution was a personal success, more than the result of a clearly defined policy of the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretaries had been more or less neutralized by the French reluctance to co-operate in Tunis with Great Britain; their only merit had been to approve and support a policy which was in strict conformity with the course they followed in Constantinople. Their intervention had never been decisive; but it is nevertheless obvious that without their support, and above

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, November 15, 1860.

all without the impression which prevailed in Tunis that Wood acted on precise instructions from his government, the Reform movement would not have met with a success unparalleled in the Ottoman Empire.

Wood had been less successful with the second half of his programme. From the start, indeed, he had understood the urgency of bringing about a solution to the problem of the Bey's international position; he had suggested various approaches to the problem, some of which were in harmony with the traditional British policy, while others would have involved a change in it. But his endeavours had been obstructed by the French Government which after a period of indecision had scrupulously followed the traditional French policy. The Foreign Office had been unable either to implement Wood's suggestions within the framework of the traditional British policy, because of French opposition and of Turkish weakness, or to look for a new policy, because of its own reluctance to depart from the principles which Palmerston had fixed twenty years before. Whatever reason had prevented the Foreign Office from acting, fear of French opposition or reluctance to change the status quo and irritate the Turks - the inaction of the Foreign Office showed that the Tunisian problem still depended on the general problem of British

relations with France and the Porte; a fact which resulted in the lack of a precise policy in Tunis.

In 1860 the future prospects of the Regency remained uncertain; the Constitution solved only some of the problems which confronted the Tunisian Government. After Sadok Bey's return in Tunis, Wood remarked that although he professed a sincere attachment to Britain, the Bey's conduct with regard to France was less conciliatory and prudent than unnecessarily subservient. Discouraged by the Porte's incapacity to take the initiative in 1859 the Bey seemed to contemplate a political rapprochement with France. The status quo had lost its meaning and its effect; the Bey had no longer confidence in it and his resistance to foreign pressure was accordingly weakening. Under these conditions Wood again brought forward the idea that Great Britain should "look to some other combination for securing [this country] against absorption".<sup>1</sup>

As for the Constitution itself Wood was under no illusion regarding the difficulty of implementing a liberal regime after centuries of absolutism and irresponsibility. Not to mention the problem of jurisdiction over foreigners, which threatened to raise serious difficulties

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, September 29, 1860.

between the Tunisian and the European Governments, Wood wondered whether the Tunisian Government could hold out against the pressure of the "universal and overwhelming fanaticism of their subjects" and whether tolerant institutions brought about by European action could be substituted for despotism without giving rise to the strenuous and unflinching opposition of those Moslems who did not accept the Reforms.<sup>1</sup> However, Wood concluded, there was no choice but between the continuation of an absolutism which had degraded the Moslem Countries and its replacement by a milder form of government. "With all its perplexities and dangers" the experiment which was just beginning was to be pursued with nearly balanced chances of success and failure.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, September 15, 1860.
  2. Ibid, August 22, 1860.

VI. The Defence of the Reforms (1861-1864)

1 The ultimate success of the reforms depended largely on the capacity of the Tunisians to ensure the working of the institutions which had been created in 1860. There is no ground for supposing that the Bey, in the first years of his Reign, was not sincerely determined to implement the reforms. The new institutions deprived him of some of his powers; but they also relieved him of the constant pressure which the Consuls had brought to bear upon his predecessors. Instead of having to deal with a single man who was amenable to their advice or threats, the Consuls had now to cope with a Ministry and Councils which would be less easily intimidated and would base their policy upon principles which had been forced upon them by the Europeans, to resist undue European demands. The high officials who composed the Ministries, Supreme Council and Justice Courts, were mainly Mamelukes; some of them were very remarkable men, as for instance Khaireddin, president of the Supreme Council, General Mohammed, Governor of the Sahel, and General Hussein, president of the Municipal Council of Tunis. The Tunisians were less numerous, but Ben Dhiaf, whom the Bey had appointed a member

of the Supreme Council, was one of the most prominent "reformists". Mamelukes and Tunisians alike showed ability and public spirit in the achievement of a very difficult task: the new institutions were viewed with suspicion or hostility by many Tunisians because they ran counter to their traditions, and were sometimes opposed to their interests; the economic difficulties were even more appalling: the country was backward and the Beys' inconsequent and sometimes extravagant financial policy had also contributed to weaken its economy.

The second condition for the success of the Reforms was discretion and moderation on the part of the European Powers. They had demanded reforms; would they wait with patience for them to take effect and accept the limits which the end of absolutism would set to their activity in Tunis? Great Britain was bound to support the reforms for which Wood's activity was largely responsible and which were in harmony with Britain's general policy in the Ottoman Empire. France had also taken an important part in the reforms and had officially expressed her satisfaction: but there were people both in Paris and in Algiers (where French officials generally held that sooner or later Tunis would be merged with the French possessions) who openly regretted a policy which seemed to prohibit any further intervention



intervention in the Regency. The situation was to be complicated still more by a new factor: The Italian Kingdom, recently unified, was soon to discover its Tunisian vocation and to break tumultuously on to the Tunisian stage.

More decisive however than the attitude of the Governments towards reforms was that of the European residents and Consuls in Tunis. As early as 1860 Wood remarked that the Europeans, "accustomed to live under the protection of their respective flags and to enjoy exclusive privileges do not wish to see those privileges extended to others, and pretend alarm and apprehension lest the Natives should abuse the freedom granted to them."<sup>1</sup> To what extent were the Europeans ready to give up privileges which the action of their Consuls had secured for them; and to what extent were the Consuls themselves ready to refrain from making use of more or less justifiable claims, for attacking the reforms? They still had to justify the flattering opinion Ben Dhiaf held of them: "Les Européens sont naturellement portés vers la droiture et l'équité", which however he immediately qualified: "Peut être dira-t-on qu'ils se conduisent ainsi dans leur pays et non ailleurs?"<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 60. Wood to Russell, August 22, 1860.

2. Ben Dhiaf, Sadok Bey, p. 74.

Beginnings of the Constitutional Reforms (1861)

2. The principles proclaimed in 1857 and 1860 were put into application at the beginning of 1861. In March, Wood received a copy of the Civil and Criminal Codes which had just been completed. They combined Moslem law with the principles of European law: although they could not be expected to attain perfection, Wood considered that they were a very important improvement in a country where a Code had not previously existed.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later (April 23 and 24, 1861) the Bey inaugurated the Supreme Council and the Courts of Justice and swore to "follow the laws which emerge from the Constitution"; the Members of his Family, the Ministers, the Ulema, the members of the Council and Tribunals, then took the same oath, amid general emotion and enthusiasm.<sup>2</sup>

The new institutions had hardly begun to be implemented when a first difficulty arose from the provision which the government had decided to insert in the Constitution, against Wood's advice, which subjected

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1. FO 102 63. Wood to Russell March 13, 1861. It is difficult to say what part Wood played in the drawing up of these texts, as the sources give little information on that point. We may however remark that in 1863 Wood was to "lend" Santillana, the Chancellor of the Consulate, to help the Tunisians in the drafting of the Commercial Code.
  2. FO 102 63. Werry to Russell, April 29, 1861.

foreigners to Tunisian Courts. In theory the problem of jurisdiction over foreigners was clear enough in Tunis: the treaties which had been concluded during the XVIIth, XVIIIth and XIXth centuries between the Bey and the European Powers provided that mixed cases should be settled by the Bey himself (generally in the presence of the Consul) whether the cases were commercial, Civil or Criminal, and whether the European was defendant or plaintiff (cases involving two Europeans were judged by the Consular Courts).<sup>1</sup> In the 1856 Treaty with Austria the Bey had for the first time agreed that cases of criminal offences committed by Austrian nationals should be brought before the Consul, with the Bey's concurrence for fixing and executing the sentence (commercial and civil cases still fell within the competence of the Bey's tribunal).<sup>2</sup> The new legislation posed a delicate problem, that of the transfer of the Bey's jurisdiction to a Tunisian Court, which the Bey could not expect to solve by himself. But the situation was complicated also by the recent assumption by the Consuls of rights which had previously belonged to the

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1. Rousseau: Treaties of 1662 and 1716 with Great Britain (pp. 431 and 433), of 1665 and 1685 with France (pp. 479 and 485), of 1816 with the Two Sicilies (p.539).
  2. Rousseau, p. 453.

Beys. Not only had they adopted the more favourable provisions of the Austrian Treaty (which concerned criminal affairs only) but they had also endeavoured to extend their jurisdiction to all the civil cases in which their nationals were involved.

Wood deplored these encroachments upon Tunisian jurisdiction, which had greatly irritated the Tunisians and which partly explained the clumsy attempt made by them in their Constitution, to recover their full control of jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the Constitution was published Wood had made strong reservations: the attempt, he said, was dangerous, as it would create unfavourable reactions among the Consuls and their Governments; and it was premature, as it was not likely that the Powers would at once readily give up their privileges, whether rightful (criminal jurisdiction) or usurped. The Foreign Office had approved of these reservations and remarked that "although Her Majesty's Government will rejoice when the time arrives for the Christian Powers to renounce the special privileges enjoyed by their subjects in the Tunisian Territory, Great Britain cannot for herself forego those privileges until

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1. Wood said bluntly: "The first material infringement of Treaty stipulations is directly traceable...to the action of the foreign Representatives." (FO. 102 68. Wood to Russell, July 7, 1863).

experience shall have shown that British subjects can there safely be left without that special protection for their persons and their properties".<sup>1</sup> Wood nevertheless carefully abstained from taking any "inexpedient and premature" step against the constitutional provision which was thus questioned, and left it to others to show their hostility. In this way he avoided appearing to obstruct the reforms, while knowing that he could rely on the other Consuls to raise the matter with the Bey.

3. In fact the European elements of Tunis (and particularly the French residents) were not long in showing their reluctance to accept the jurisdiction of native courts; the intervention of their Consuls followed immediately. The Bey then realised the difficulties which his hasty decision of 1860 was likely to arouse; when the inauguration of the Courts of Justice took place (on the 24th of April 1861) he declared that negotiations would be entered into with the Friendly Powers about jurisdiction over foreigners, and he made it clear that the Europeans should accept the local Tribunals as the counterpart of the advantages which they had gained under the Constitution.<sup>2</sup> Some Consuls

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1. FO 102 60. Russell to Wood, December 24, 1860.  
2. FO 102 63. Werry to Russell, April 29, 1861.

desired that the Bey should keep his direct right of jurisdiction, which had made it easier for them to exert their pressure and allowed them to turn a mere judicial affair into an international difference: the Bey had wished to put an end to that situation, and it was one of the main reasons for the institution of Tribunals. On the other hand if he yielded to foreign pressure it would be all the more difficult to make the new Tribunals work among the Tunisians. After having consulted Werry, who ran the Consulate in Wood's absence (he had been sent to Syria on a secret mission), the Bey decided to create a "Provisional Council" which was to judge cases in which Europeans were plaintiffs, pending the solution of the problem of jurisdiction over foreigners.<sup>1</sup> Werry was very severe towards the Consuls' policy of systematic opposition against the native Courts: they had been "carrying into the matter more heat than was perhaps necessary, and giving greater publicity to their feelings than was certainly prudent." On the contrary, Werry remarked, the Tunisian Government had readily acknowledged "the necessity of making a change whenever such a necessity

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1. FO 102 63. Werry to Russell, October 5, 1861, and Wood, July 15 1862. Ben Dhiyf, pp. 52-53. Ben Dhiyf had been appointed president of that Provisional Tribunal.

[had] been calmly and clearly shewn to them."<sup>1</sup>

The Bey was later to give a further proof of his sincere desire to apply the Reforms. A considerable proportion of the Tunisian population opposed the reforms on various grounds;<sup>2</sup> one of the main grievances being the slowness of the new Tribunals. The scarcity of grain which occurred in 1861 provided another pretext for agitation. On the first of October 1861, a demonstration took place in Tunis and a delegation went to the Bardo and asked the Bey to prohibit the export of olive oil and grain, and to resume his judicial audiences in his Palace; "they would rather have their heads cut off by his order, they said, than be graced by fellow citizens like themselves". The Bey answered that by his granting a Constitution he had done more "for their benefit and that of the country than any of his Predecessors". Because of the agitation before the delegation had been sent to him, the Bey decided to hand over 29 of the ring leaders to the regular tribunal; after a fair trial they were sentenced to relatively light punishments (especially if one thinks of the summary procedure which would have been their fate before the

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1. FO 102 63. Werry to Russell, October 5, 1861.
  2. "The Ultra fanatical party" Werry says; and Ben Dhiaf "Certains insensés appartenant à la lie du du peuple".

Constitution), and they were actually reprieved some weeks after, on Wood's advice.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may have been the Bey's secret thoughts,<sup>2</sup> his attitude in the matter showed the change which had occurred in Tunis, and justified the hopes which Wood pinned on the Reforms. Wood's subordinates, asked by the Consul to give information about the working of the Reforms, were obviously less confident: If Stevens, the Vice-Consul in Sousse, remarked that the population, at first "rather astonished", seemed to be "satisfied" on the whole, the Vice-Consuls in Bizerte and Sfax answered that the new order of things had rather lessened the internal security, and echoed the complaints of the natives and the Europeans against the working of the new Tribunals.<sup>3</sup> Wood, however, abstained from transmitting these unfavourable comments to the Foreign Office, probably with the idea that it was premature to pass judgement on an experiment which had just begun.

Wood and the Turkish solution (1861-1863).

4. Wood had not been in the least discouraged by the failure of Khaireddin's mission and he remained convinced

1. FO 102 63. Werry to Russell, October 5, 1861.
2. Ben Dhiaf (p.80) reports that a notable had convinced the demonstrators "qu'en protestant contre le nouvel état de choses ils répondraient au voeu secret du Bey" and seems to share that interpretation of the facts.
3. FO 335 112/6 Stevens (November 25) Spizzichino (November 14), Carleton (November 25 1861) to Wood.



that it was urgent that the problem should be solved. While on a secret mission in Syria (1861), Wood availed himself of several meetings with Fuad Pasha in Damascus to re-examine the question. The Turkish statesman reasserted that the Porte desired that "these distant Dominions instead of being severed from her, should by their closer union add to the general strength of the Empire"; the Porte wished to reach an agreement which would prove satisfactory for the Bey, and it did not intend "to encroach upon his established and recognized Rights and Privileges or to intervene in his affairs". In order to overcome French opposition, Fuad Pasha suggested a kind of bargain: The Porte would acknowledge French domination in Algeria, but in compensation France and Turkey would conclude an agreement about the frontier which would amount to a "de facto" recognition of Ottoman Suzerainty over Tunis.<sup>1</sup>

Wood thought that this suggestion might provide a basis for resuming the negotiations about Tunis. The occasion was provided by Roches' return to Tunis in November 1861, which gave the signal for a new French attempt to solve the long-standing frontier question in Algeria's favour. Strong pressure was brought to bear

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1. FO 102 63. Wood to Russell, November 18, 1861.

upon the Bey to obtain his agreement to the creation of a mixed Commission for the delimitation of the frontier. Sadok's predecessors had persistently refused to enter into "tête à tête" negotiations with a partner so powerful that she was likely to force her own views upon them. Sadok, perhaps because Khaireddin's failure had convinced him that the Porte was unable to support him in case of danger, seemed to be more prepared to fall in with the French request.<sup>1</sup>

Wood feared lest the Bey should be compelled to accept unconditionally the French demands, and he accordingly proposed to the Foreign Office that the Porte should be encouraged to insist "that the French Government should recognize her Suzerain rights by allowing her to take part in the adjustment of the Boundaries".<sup>2</sup> In the meantime he persuaded Sadok Bey to send a mission to Constantinople, with the ostensible object of congratulating the Sultan on his accession; but the envoy would be instructed "to listen to any overtures which Fuad Pasha....might have to make" with regard to the Frontier question.<sup>3</sup> Wood was thus paving the way for the agreement Fuad Pasha had suggested

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1. FO 102 63. Wood to Russell, November 18, 1861.
  2. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, January 3, 1862.
  3. Ibid, January 10, 1862.

making about Tunis. The Consul moreover laid the emphasis on the importance of settling the frontier question: it was in itself a very serious problem; furthermore, should the Bey feel that he was completely isolated and that the Porte was unable or unwilling to protect him, his discouragement might bring about serious political consequences.<sup>1</sup> But the matter now exceeded Wood's powers and it remained for the Foreign Office and the Porte to make the best possible use of his suggestions.

5. As in 1859, and for very similar reasons, the Tunisian Envoy came back with empty hands from Constantinople. The circumstances were as unfavourable as two years earlier to the negotiation which Wood had suggested; the Porte showed the same reluctance to worsen its relations with France at a moment when the Syrian Crisis had strained its relations with the European powers nearly to breaking point. France was taking so great

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1. Campenon (then Chief of the French military Mission in Tunis) gives suggestive indications about the possibility of using the confusion of the Algero-Tunisian frontier: "On a voulu délimiter une frontière entre la Régence et l'Algérie," he wrote in 1862 to the French War Office. "Il faut... que la frontière reste vague. N'engageons pas le présent, réservons nous l'avenir et n'élevons pas de barrière entre la riche vallée de la Medjerda, les gisements métallurgiques et la forêt de liège du massif de Tabarque." (quoted by Granchamps "Révolution de 1864" I, xvi).

a part in the Syrian affair, and her influence was so strong in Constantinople that Aali Pasha was deterred from confronting her for the sake of the Bey of Tunis, a distant, and recalcitrant vassal.<sup>1</sup> As Bulwer wrote to Wood as early as February 1862, the Porte feared lest France might "not only oppose her intervention but... might even refuse to recognize the Suzerain rights of the Sultan over this Regency."<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Office admitted that these fears were well grounded. On the other hand it was difficult to encourage the Porte to interfere with Tunisian affairs and involve itself in more trouble at a moment when, referring to the recent occurrences in Syria, Russell was solemnly warning the Sultan that "the public opinion of Europe would not approve of a protection accorded to the Porte in order to prevent the signal punishment of a Government which should permit such atrocities to continue."<sup>3</sup>

Russell's answer to Wood's suggestion made it quite clear that the Foreign Office was not surprised by "the reluctance of the Turkish Government to exercise its rights of suzerainty over the Regency of

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1. Driault, pp. 186-187, and 195-197. Debidour, Histoire diplomatique, II, p. 238.
  2. FO 102, 65. Wood to Bulwer, May 10, 1862.
  3. Marriott, p. 321.

Tunis." Obviously Russell had not deemed it necessary to put pressure upon the Porte, as had been proposed by the Consul: "It is useless to expect that the Porte will vigorously assert a supremacy which she has virtually abandoned for half a century, nor is it probable that Aali Pasha or the Grand Vizir will offend Turkish prejudices by making what will appear to be a needless concession." That discouragement is easily accounted for by the previous failures; it is more difficult to explain how Russell could nevertheless assert that "the present status quo must be maintained."<sup>1</sup> As Wood remarked, the Porte's policy of successive renunciation could not but weaken if not destroy her Suzerain rights in the long run. For fear of meeting France's opposition the Porte had gradually reduced its suzerainty over Tunis nearly to nothing. The Tunisian Government had reason to believe that "either the Porte is grown indifferent to the possession of this Province or that she is too weak and unable directly or indirectly to vindicate his rights and afford its protection". The only logical policy, Wood concluded, since Great Britain refused to acknowledge the independence of Tunis, was to "take action in the

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1. FO 102 65. Russell to Wood, May 26, 1862.

matter" to draw the Regency from its "present undefined position" instead of leaving it to "drift out of its connexion with the Porte".<sup>1</sup>

6. Wood's argument was logical but the Foreign Office, being unable to carry out its policy and reluctant to change it, was content with the reassertion of a meaningless "status quo". Nothing was more significant of that policy than the insistence of the Foreign Office on maintaining the semblance of Turkish Suzerainty in Tunis: That attitude was likely to rouse minor difficulties with the Bey and to hinder Wood's action in Tunis without really benefitting British Policy. The proclamation of the Constitution occasioned an overflow of decorations from every court in Europe: Great Britain alone failed publicly to express her satisfaction. In January Wood was even obliged to remind the Foreign Office of the Bey's letter which accompanied the text of the Constitution; the Foreign Office had actually forgotten to acknowledge receipt of the letter and of the Constitution, and to reply with the usual official letter of congratulations. There was apparently no reason for that omission except carelessness, and it was immediately rectified, but the delay could

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Bulwer, May 10, 1862.

not but cause "personal mortification and disappointment to the Bey."<sup>1</sup> In 1862 the Bey agreed that Tunis should be represented in the London Exhibition; but the Turkish Ambassador demanded that the Tunisian stand should be merged into the Turkish exhibition; the British officials supported that demand and the Bey, remembering the precedent of the Exhibition of 1851 (when Tunis had a separate stand), decided to give up the whole scheme. The incident created "a very painful sensation in Tunis".<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when acquainted in December 1862 with the project for an Anglo-Tunisian Convention, the Foreign Office took care to write consistently "Regency of Tunis" in the place of the words "Kingdom of Tunis" which had been used everywhere by the Tunisian Government.<sup>3</sup>

A little later the Foreign Office had an opportunity to reassert British policy in Tunis. Wood had reported that the French and Spanish Consuls laid claim to the title of "Chargé d'Affaire" and asked for advice, as their pretensions weakened his own position. Russell replied that this nomenclature was tantamount to "a recognition in the person of the Bey of some

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1. FO 102 63. Wood to Russell, January 12, 1861.
  2. FO 102 65 Wood to Russell, March 12, 1862.
  3. Ibid. Note dated December 22, 1862.

species of independent sovereignty", but that the British government were not prepared to change their views concerning that problem "whatever other Powers may do". Russell, however, did not deem it necessary to start discussions "as to the position which those Powers may think fit to consider that the Bey of Tunis holds towards the Porte."<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to call attention again to the inconsistency of some of the principles of British policy in Tunis; but it is not superfluous to remark that by refusing to discuss the French conception of the Bey's "independence" Russell was in danger of allowing it to become law in Tunis; the "Turkish solution" thereby became more chimerical than ever. Campenon clearly indicated how the French policy could take advantage of that confused situation: "On a voulu faire de Tunis un petit royaume indépendant," he wrote in 1862, "notre intérêt est qu'il conserve sa position ambiguë, qu'il reste, en droit, vassal de la Porte; en fait indépendant grâce à notre protection: en tout temps sous le coup de la crainte du Turc, le jour où la main de la France s'éloignerait de lui."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 68. Russell to Wood, July 10, 1863.
  2. Grandchamps, I, XVI, Campenon to the Ministre de la Guerre, May 31, 1862.



The first threats against the Reforms (1862-1863)

7. British influence would most likely have suffered from these difficulties if the Tunisian government, and particularly the "Reform Party" had not been obliged to look for Wood's support against the increasingly critical attitude of Italy and France to the Reforms.

After two years' working of the Reforms the French element was beginning to realise that the administrative and judicial improvements had created a situation much less favourable for the intervention of their Consuls than the previous absolute regime, a result which Wood had foreseen and wished for. As Constant, the most authoritative exponent of French policy, was to say of the Constitution: "C'est la ruine de nos privilèges, la fin de notre prépondérance.... La Constitution fonctionne à peine et déjà nous regrettons de l'avoir imposée au Bey".<sup>1</sup> As early as 1861 and 1862 the question of the Provisional Commission and of the jurisdiction over foreigners brought about a lengthy exchange of notes between Roches and the Bey, which revealed basic differences of opinion.<sup>2</sup>

While the relations between the French Consul and the Bey were becoming embittered, Roches was nevertheless

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1. Constant, p. 34.

2. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 50-64.

unable openly to express his disappointment regarding the fruits of the policy which he had warmly advocated from 1857 to 1860 and which remained the policy of his government. But Colonel Campenon,<sup>1</sup> had full liberty to give his opinion and to launch an offensive against the Reforms. The political power, he wrote in May 1862, had passed out of the Bey's hands into the hands of irresponsible Mamelukes; dissatisfaction was increasing in the country against the Reforms. Campenon then severely criticized the policy of the European Agents from 1857 to 1860: "On ne s'explique guère comment les Consuls Européens... ont pu se rendre complices de la création monstrueuse de ce Conseil Suprême, où tous les pouvoirs sont confondus et qui n'est qu'une réminiscence des anciens Divans Turcs". The Consuls had lost their influence: "Aujourd'hui l'intervention directe des Consuls sur le Bey n'existe plus puisque le Bey ne gouverne plus. Leurs conseils ne sont plus demandés, leurs représentations guère écoutées". Campenon advocated a gradual action: "S'il ne parait guère possible de forcer le Bey à déchirer le pacte qu'il

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1. Campenon, then captain, had been entrusted with the organisation of the Bey's army from 1850 to 1854. He returned to Tunis in 1862, as a Colonel and Chief of the French Military Mission, and remained in Tunis until 1864. He was to be Minister of War in Gambetta's Cabinet in 1881.

a juré, il y a a peine une année, forçons au moins son gouvernement à marcher avec modération et équité dans l'application de réformes aussi radicales". The French Consul should speak "haut et ferme" and rally the Foreign Agents around him with of course the exception of Wood, who would not have been sorry to change the Regency into "une sorte de Belgique sur le flanc droit de nos possessions Africaines".<sup>1</sup> On the French side the Tunisian Government could not henceforward expect more than a neutrality which was becoming less and less benevolent.

The feelings of the Italian government and Consul were undergoing the same changes: as early as October 1861 the arrival in Tunis of Nigra (then Directeur du Département des Affaires Etrangères) and of General Della Rocca, to investigate the claims of Italian subjects against the Tunisian Government, had shown that the newly created Kingdom of Italy intended to have an active Tunisian policy, a pretension which was justified by the importance of Italian interests in Tunis: one third of the traffic at the Goulette in 1865 was Italian, and in 1860 out of 10,000 Europeans at least 3,000 were Italians.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Grandchamps I, XII to XVI: Campenon to Randon, May 31, 1862.

2. Cubisol, *La Régence de Tunis* (1867) p. 79, and V. Guérin, *Voyage archéologique* (1862).

The Italian nationals in Tunis were among the first and most resolute opponents of the Reforms: their Consul had to be prudent in his dealings with them and more or less to support their most questionable claims for fear of being recalled by his government as a result of their representations.<sup>1</sup>

8. Under these conditions Wood's task was very difficult: he had to advise and encourage the Tunisian Government in the way of Reforms, and at the same time it was incumbent on him to moderate the Tunisian feelings of irritation towards Europeans who were hostile to the Reforms. On the other hand Wood had to struggle with the other Consuls, to try to overcome their suspicion and to remove the obstacles which hindered the development of the improvements. Finally Wood had to endeavour to awaken the remote interest which the Foreign Office took in the problem of Reforms: none of his appeals for the backing of his Government was ever left unanswered; but the punctual approval of the Foreign Office revealed a dispassionate and rather unimaginative approach to the Tunisian question.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ben Dhiaf, p. 65. Wood (FO 102 65 July 30 1862) comes to the same conclusion.
  2. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, July 30, 1862, October 30, 1862.

His patience was, however, severely tried by the strange behaviour of the European residents: "It is a singular phenomenon," he wrote on July 30, 1862, "that whilst the foreigners in the Levant should complain that the Concessions made in virtue of Hatti Houmayoum remain inoperative, the Europeans in Tunis should complain that the Bey is too serious in carrying out his promise of Organic reforms". And Wood then expounded the reasons of that attitude: before the Reforms the excessive pressure of their Consuls enabled the Europeans to do business "in a manner that would never have been tolerated in a more civilized state of society"; that behaviour was no longer consistent with the existence of new Courts of Justice, "uninfluenced by political motives and unmoved by threats."<sup>1</sup> And the very consequences of the Reforms which deeply annoyed the Consuls filled Wood with satisfaction: "The Bey being now bound to act with and by the advice of the Council of State, is placed in a better position to resist the pressure and importunities to which heretofore he was individually subjected."<sup>2</sup>

Wood considered that as a whole, the Tunisian judges did not deserve the accusations which were

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, July 30, 1862, N.23.  
2. Ibid, N. 24.

brought against them: "The Provisional Commission is discharging its duties to the best of its power". The Consul gave whole-hearted support to the Commission and Ben Dhiaf, as the president of the Commission, deeply appreciated that sympathetic attitude: "L'impartialité du Consul Anglais Richard Wood au siège du Tribunal Provisoire mérite d'être citée par tout homme juste.... Ainsi les Tunisiens purent se rendre compte de visu que les Anglais étaient justes et malgré leur amour de la liberté s'inclinaient devant les décisions du juge". Wood carefully avoided exasperating the difficulties in which he sometimes happened to be involved with the Tunisian authorities, a policy which induced Campenon to say that Wood "faisait fort bon marché" of the interests of the Maltese population. Indeed he dealt with British interests in Tunis in a manner which was characteristic of his policy: when the complaints of the British Merchants had led him to ask the Bey to speed up the judicial procedure against indebted Tunisians, Wood tried to overcome the Bey's reluctance without giving to his intervention a comminatory character. And when full satisfaction had been given by the Bey to his requests, Wood recommended the

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1. Ben Dhiaf, p. 75.

British Agents to show the utmost prudence: "Instead of making it appear that these arrangements are the fruit of pressure and remonstrance, you will testify to the... local authorities the gratitude of British Community for this fresh evidence of the interest which His Highness takes in their prosperity".<sup>1</sup>

Owing to that moderation Wood was able at one time to encourage the Bey to resist Foreign Pressure and to receive from him the renewal of his pledge "that he would never abandon the Organic Laws he had solemnly sworn to maintain"<sup>2</sup>; at another time he advocated patience when, irritated by the refusal of the Europeans to accept local laws, the Bey contemplated the withdrawing of the advantages which the Constitution gave to them: Wood then would represent to him that the institution of a double system of administration (one for the Europeans and the other for the Tunisians), would certainly lead to the restoration of the "old arbitrary system" to the entire satisfaction of some Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Wood could also exercise a kind of arbitration between the opposite tendencies which co-existed in the Tunisian Government. In

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, July 19, 1862.
  2. Ibid. July 30, 1862.
  3. Ibid. August 9, 1862.

November 1862 Khaireddin had tendered his resignation from his functions of Minister of Marine and of President of the Supreme Council on account of his disagreement with the Bey about the Constitutional responsibility of the Ministers before the Supreme Council.<sup>1</sup> That Constitutional crisis indicated a serious change in the political customs in Tunis in so far as it was the first time that a governmental crisis had ever occurred in a country where the Ministers generally left their position only when they died or fell out of favour (in the latter case they normally lost their properties and ended their career in prison or on the scaffold). Wood, however, deemed it necessary to recommend to Khaireddin (who was thus becoming "leader of the opposition" in the Supreme Council) to avoid "rendering the Bey averse to the new order of things by an indiscrete and perhaps impolitic attempt to weaken and curtail the Bey's prerogatives and rights".<sup>2</sup>

9. Wood was not fully satisfied with a purely defensive attitude: apart from his daily struggle against

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1. Khaireddin thought that the Bey could not accept the resignation of one of his Ministers without the previous assent of the Supreme Council, the Bey that the Constitution allowed him to dismiss a Minister who had no longer his confidence.
  2. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, December 3, 1862.



the obstacles which existed in the path of the Reforms, he never stopped thinking of extending the results previously obtained. It was partly with that object in view that he seized upon an overture made by Khaireddin and suggested to the Foreign Office, in August 1862, that it should negotiate with the Bey an agreement defining the conditions "upon which British subjects should be entitled to hold property in this country according to the provisions of the Organic Laws."<sup>1</sup> Wood's views in the matter coincided but partly with Khaireddin's: one can notice here (and it will not be the last time) that the Consul succeeded very cleverly indeed in tacking the development of British interests in Tunis on to the cause of the Reforms. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the material benefit which the British residents could reap from an agreement which was the necessary starting-point of the creation of European agricultural and industrial undertakings in the Regency: from that point of view the proposed Convention was in full conformity with the policy of economic penetration which Wood had advocated as early as 1857 but which had not been in the least successful. The other side of the project, while undoubtedly appealing more to Khaireddin's imagination

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, August 23, 1862.

had quite as much interest for Wood: it went without saying that as a preliminary condition for the agreement, the Bey insisted that the foreigners who would profit by it should be brought before the local Courts, in accordance with the local laws; the project suggested to London in October 1862 was very clear on this point. Wood had shown since 1860 that he did not fear the application of Tunisian jurisdiction to his Nationals; but the other Europeans refused it and this problem was one of the most serious difficulties in the way of the Reforms. There was, however, no doubt that were the British to obtain the right of holding immovable property in Tunis, the other Powers would ask for the extension of that privilege and would be therefore obliged to accept the jurisdiction of the local courts under the local law. In this way the Powers would be led by concern for "leur intérêt bien entendu" to accept conditions which two years' discussions could not induce them to contemplate. A decisive step would at last be taken towards the consolidation of the Reforms.<sup>1</sup>

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Russell, August 23, 1862, and October 18, 1862. It was of course not a mere coincidence that Wood's project in Tunis was nearly similar to the project brought forward in Constantinople by the Ambassadors (1862). The matter was, however, to fail in Constantinople (until 1867) owing to the problem of the application of local jurisdiction to Foreigners (Engelhardt I, pp. 211-213).

Italian Offensive against the Reforms (1863-1864)

10. It was the more urgent to escape from the deadlock with regard to the problem of the jurisdiction over foreigners, because Italy was seizing upon that question for launching the first full-scale offensive against the **Reforms**.

A series of trifling difficulties had put a strain upon Italo-Tunisian relations in 1863 and had given an impression that Italy was looking for a pretext for taking up a more active policy in Tunis. Wood had tried to bring about an amicable settlement of these difficulties either by bringing pressure to bear upon the Italian Consul, or by advising the Bey to make reasonable concessions. But the problem of the competence of the Provisional Commission was a very serious one, which led very quickly to the intervention of the Italian Government. Wood had expressed more than once his satisfaction at the working of the Commission. On the other hand many Europeans, and particularly the French and Italian Consuls, openly questioned the impartiality of the Tunisian judges. The Tunisians were of course irritated and bore uneasily "les procédés vexatoires et humiliants" to which they were subjected.<sup>1</sup> They felt that their resentment

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1. Ben Dhiab, p. 64.

was the more legitimate as it had been agreed from the start that the Provisional Commission would have its competence limited to those cases in which Tunisians were defendants. It did not at all follow from this concession that the Tunisians gave up asserting that Tunisian jurisdiction applied to all mixed cases, civil or commercial: they were undoubtedly in the right according to the letter of the treaties, but the French and Italian Consuls were reluctant to admit it. Lengthy discussions ensued between the Government and the two Consuls in 1861 and 1862.<sup>1</sup> The Provisional Commission was of course strongly tempted to settle the problem by itself and to call before it cases in which foreigners were defendants. Wood had persistently rejected such a scheme: while refusing to discuss the justice of the Tunisian arguments, he thought that such an attempt could not but lead to serious difficulties. He had, however, shown his conciliatory spirit by authorizing British subjects, when defendants, to go before the Commission in order to determine whether the case was worth being brought up before the Consular Court. Though Roches had accepted the same arrangement the Italian Consul had refused to

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 53-68.

accept any kind of compromise, even temporarily,<sup>1</sup> and in April 1863 an attempt of the Commission to summon Italian defendants before it resulted in an appeal of the Consul to his government: Wood had tried, without success, to dissuade his colleague from a decision which was hurried and out of proportion to the importance of the incident.<sup>2</sup>

The Italian Government turned to the Foreign Office. In May 1863 D'Azeglio, the Italian Foreign Minister, indicated the points which the Italian Government thought should entail the criticism of the Great Powers with regard to the Constitutional provisions of 1860: the right given to foreigners to hold immovable property on condition that they should accept the relevant local laws (article 113); the application of the jurisdiction of local Courts to foreigners; whether plaintiffs or defendants (article 114).<sup>3</sup> The problem, important as it was for foreigners, did not seem to justify the appeal to international action which the Italian Government were contemplating, the more so as they were still negotiating directly with the Bey. It seems logical to interpret

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, July 7, 1863.
  2. Ibid, April 18, 1863.
  3. FO 45 51. D'Azeglio, May 9, 1863.

the Italian demarche in London as aiming at isolating Wood and depriving him of the support of his government in order to facilitate direct attacks on the Reforms.

The Foreign Office could not but notice from the beginning that d'Azeglio's views were exaggerated. As early as the 12th of May Hammond, the permanent Under-Secretary, remarked, with regard to the policy of the Tunisian Government: "I do not see that we can object to this as contrary to the treaty". Wood was immediately consulted and his reply was a firm defence of the Reforms and a vigorous criticism of the behaviour of some European agents and residents in Tunis. To begin with, he annihilated D'Azeglio's legal arguments by a close examination of the legal status of the Europeans as justified by Treaties, and of the subsequent distortions brought about by the activity of the Consuls: the "ancient customs and Consular prerogatives" alluded to by D'Azeglio, appeared doubtful, unless he meant by them "those contraventions and deviations from our Treaties which the Foreign representatives have forced upon the Tunisian Government by the employment of moral coercion and a pressure beyond the power of the Bey to resist". Wood admitted that the Bey, in spite of his advice, had tried to go too

far; but the principles written down in the Constitution had remained inoperative and Wood had once more endeavoured to dissuade the Bey from claiming direct jurisdiction. The Bey had promised to be patient and he had undertaken to communicate a project for a Commercial Code and Court which would provide a definite settlement of the problem. With regard to the Bey's refusal to grant the right to hold immovable property to Europeans unless they gave him reliable guarantees, Wood remarked that his cautious attitude was entirely justified by the present attitude of the foreigners: those who held (illegally) immovable properties eluded the laws and local regulations so that the government feared lest "they should, as in other instances accept the boon but reject the obligations attached to it". The projected Convention was the only answer to these difficulties. D'Azeglio's demand, Wood concluded, was part of the attempt made by the majority of the foreign residents to bring about the abrogation of the Organic laws: they "have manifested a spirit as factious as it is intolerable... they have avowed themselves the enemies of the establishment of regularity in the system of administration because such regularity shuts the door to acts which must be passed in silence". As the British Consul was the main

obstacle to their action by the support he gave to the Reforms, they were now trying to paralyse him and to induce the British Government, "on pretence of preserving intact Treaties from which we have so largely deviated ourselves, to cooperate with them by its passive attitude, to destroy what has been so humanely accomplished".<sup>1</sup>

Wood's reasoning was convincing. The Foreign Office gave the Florence government to understand that it regretted the attitude of excessive intransigence which they had assumed in Tunis. The Italian Government then perhaps tempered their action in Tunis: it appeared at least that for a short time the Italian Consul adopted more conciliatory manners in his dealings with the Government of the Bey, and that a lull followed Russell's clear endorsement of Wood's action in Tunis.

11. While he was trying to avert the eventuality of an Italian intervention, Wood was quickening the pace of the negotiations for the Anglo-Tunisian Convention. As was to be expected, the difficulties which the European Residents in Tunis were raising with regard to the jurisdiction problem, made the Tunisian government uneasy and dubious whether they should facilitate

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, July 7, 1863, N.20 and 21.



European penetration: the most responsible Tunisian statesmen were at least strengthened in their desire to obtain reliable guarantees for the future. Some of them remarked with bitterness that they did not endure easily the fact that "notwithstanding the progress they had made in Tunisian affairs they were still treated as Corsairs and Pirates by Foreign Agents". With a view to gaining their support, Wood insisted upon the argument which was the most likely to convince them: that the Convention would bring about a solution of the problem of jurisdiction over foreigners.<sup>1</sup>

The last objections were ultimately overcome and the Convention concluded (October 1863) when Wood, according to the suggestion of the Prime Minister and the "most advanced members of the Council", agreed to insert in the draft Convention a new provision which read as follows: "The right of British subjects to hold immovable property being derived from enactments founded upon the Organic laws....it has been further agreed that they shall be maintained as a greater security for the due performance of the conditions of the present Convention".<sup>2</sup> The avowed aim of that addition was to give an international character to the

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, July 16, 1863.

2. FO 102 68. Ibid. August 1, 1863.

Organic laws and thus place them under British guarantee and supervision. It suited Wood's policy so well that it is hardly credible that the Consul should have been purely passive in the matter (some weeks later Wood similarly persuaded the Bey to create a Privy Council to ensure the continuance of the Reforms and to protect the Regency "against the possibility of future misgovernment").<sup>1</sup>

Wood did not lose sight of the economical advantages the Convention was bound to bring about. He was negotiating actively for a project of a Railway from Tunis to the Goulette but the government had had so little cause "to be satisfied with the manner its contracts and concessions [had] been carried out by Foreigners" that they showed the utmost caution. On the other hand a mining scheme was under consideration and in December 1863 the Bey had decided to have a Survey of the Mines, forests, and other natural resources of the country executed at his own expense, as a prelude to the economic exploitation of the country.<sup>2</sup> It seemed as if the Convention was fulfilling the purposes Wood had in view at the beginning.

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, October 8, 1863.
  2. FO 335 116/2. Wood to Pearson, September 12, 1863. Lindo to Wood, October 10, 1863. Wood to Jump, February 20, 1864.

It so happened, however, that it came too late to save the Reforms, and that, by opening Tunis to European undertakings, it was to contribute to the ultimate ruin of the Regency, a nearly .ineluctable consequence which Wood had not foreseen.

12. The lull which followed the failure of the first Italian offensive against the reforms was very short lived. At the end of the summer of 1863 a new Italian Consul arrived in Tunis. Gambarotta was well known to be intransigent; as a matter of fact he again took up the discussion of the jurisdiction problem, and warned the Bey "that his government was averse to the new administrative system and would wish to see a return to the old order of things".<sup>1</sup> The Quai d'Orsay too sent a new Consul in Roches' place in November. De Beauval was a man "nerveux, orgueilleux, de langage brutal" who was perhaps entrusted with a secret mission, unknown to the very French Ministre des Affaires Etrangères: Napoléon III himself would have charged him with the task of paving the way for his project of a "Reyaume Arabe" in which Algiers and Tunis would have been merged.<sup>2</sup> The very existence of the scheme

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, September 28, 1863.

2. Emerit, La Révolution Tunisienne de 1864 (Revue Tunisienne 1939, pp. 222-225).

is uncertain, but De Beauval appears to have been in indirect relations with the Emperor outside the official channels. He had no sooner arrived in Tunis than he sent very hostile reports about the Reforms; he resumed Campenon's main arguments (failure of the Constitution, domination of the Mamelukes and Wood's intrigues) and suggested a policy of active opposition to the Reforms. Drouyn de Lhuys advised him to be prudent but actually gave him free scope of action: "Si nous devons tenir la main à ce que nos nationaux ne soient pas lésés dans leurs droits séculaires, nous ne saurions être trop réservés en ce qui concerne l'administration intérieure du pays, dans laquelle nous n'avons aucun titre à intervenir, à moins que les intérêts de nos nationaux ne s'en trouvent particulièrement atteints".<sup>1</sup> To begin with, de Beauval tried to induce the Bey to cancel the Convention of 1863 as favouring British interests too much; his demand did not meet with success. De Beauval perhaps went so far as to demand the dismissal of the Prime Minister, Mustapha Khaznadar, whom he held responsible for the situation in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Things were obviously heading for a crisis.

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1. Grandchamps I, p. XV-XIX and p.4: De Beauval November 27, 1863. Drouyn de Lhuys December 23, 1863.
  2. Felix Julien, Tunis et Carthage, p. 7.

In the meantime Wood did not remain idle; he endeavoured to allay Gambarotta's hostility to the Reforms and to convince him "of the fallacy of any attempt to compel the Tunisian government to abandon the present administrative system based upon European Institutions for an autocracy of the most despotic description". He advised him "to act with moderation" with a government whose difficult task entitled them "to patient forbearance".<sup>1</sup> As soon as the Convention had been concluded Wood had suggested its adoption by the Italian Government; but neither the Italian cabinet, which demanded the upholding of the Capitulation (as improved by the encroachments of Europeans), nor the Italian residents who took advantage of the lack of agreement to ask for the support of their Consul at every turn, were eager to answer Wood's proposal. At the end of 1863, while the French and Italian Consuls were pressing the Bey's government hard and were asking for the settlement of several hundreds of claims which had remained in obedience for years, Wood seized every opportunity to act as a mediator or to advise the Bey and his counsellors to show a conciliatory spirit with regard to these demands. Wood himself

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, September 28, 1863.

had similar claims to bring forward, but, he wrote to Russell, he was "deterred by prudence and reasons that require no explanation, from uniting his action with that of the other Foreign authorities" whose ultimate objects he did not approve of.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1864 many French and Italian claims had been thus settled and the danger of a French or Italian intervention seemed to be averted for the moment.

13. 1864 seemed to begin under favourable auspices. Wood indeed admitted that the obstacles remained formidable; the open hostility of the majority of the Europeans (an influential portion of the colonists, Wood remarked, wished to bring about the overthrow and subversion of the Constitutional Laws; and he concluded that they had "lost all sense of justice in the pursuit of gain")<sup>2</sup>; the support given by the French and Italian Consuls to that opposition; the distrust of a strong body of Tunisians and the weariness of some partisans of the reforms (who were sometimes discouraged by the apparent indifference of the British government, now their sole external support - or irritated by the concessions they were obliged to

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1. FO 102 68. Wood to Russell, December 14, 1863.  
2. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, February 16, 1864.

make to unjustified Foreign claims for the sake of peace). On the other hand Wood looked at what had been achieved with legitimate satisfaction: the Provisional Commission had worked rather satisfactorily and the impending creation of a Mixed Commercial Court (composed of an equal number of Tunisians and Foreigners)<sup>1</sup> would settle the problem of the jurisdiction over Foreigners. The Convention of 1863 would soon bring about the economic advantages which Wood had hoped for, and it was likely that the Powers would ultimately decide to share in its advantages.

In March and April 1864, while visiting the Sahel, Wood expressed publicly his confidence and optimism, and, according to the French Vice-Consul in Sfax, engaged in "propagande en faveur des Medjeles [Judicial Courts] et de la Convention" and tried to convince the Europeans of the "grands bénéfices qu'il en est résulté de nes institutions [sic]"<sup>2</sup> On his return to Tunis Wood reported his favourable impressions to Russell: this Country, he wrote, was "at present rapidly progressing under a mild system of administration."<sup>3</sup> On the same day Wood informed the

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, February 16, 1864
  2. Grandchamps, I, 101. Mattei to De Beauval, March 28, 1864.
  3. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, Tunis, April 16, 1864



Foreign Office of the outbreak of the internal troubles  
which were to bring about the ruin of the reforms and  
endanger the very existence of the Country.





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## VII. The Revolution of 1864.

1. It would be necessary to describe the whole process of the economical and financial decay of the Regency to account for the financial decision of Djumada II 1280 (November-December 1864) from which originated the Revolution of 1864. To the already existing causes of financial embarrassments the Europeans had added new ones by advocating public works which proved ruinous and useless - the Aqueduct of Zaghouan was the first example of that policy - and then by offering their financial "help" at an exorbitant rate of interest. The local debt swelled from 12 million francs in 1861 to 28 million in 1862. Continental bankers began to feel some interest in Tunisian finances: a first attempt to raise a loan of 35 million on which the Bey would have had to repay 120 million in 25 years, failed in 1860; a second proposal was rejected in 1862 by the Supreme Council who were "strongly opposed to contracting pecuniary obligations towards European Nations not to increase their influence or afford them hereafter the means of injuring the Tunisian Government."<sup>1</sup> These

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1. FO 102 65. Wood to Russel, May 9, 1862.

apprehensions were wholly justified but the government were running so short of money that they ultimately accepted in 1863 d'Erlanger's offer: it sounded quite reasonable (35 million francs at 7%) but the Bank appropriated 9 million; several millions more were lost on the way (to the very great benefit of the Khaznadar) and the Bey ultimately received 5,600,000 for which he was to pay 65 million in 15 years.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Constant, that loan was "un lacet que des spéculateurs ont passé au cou du Bey sans qu'il s'en doute, un lacet qui l'étranglera".<sup>2</sup> The Erlanger Bank was Prussian but had interests in Paris and London; which explains why neither Roches nor Wood deemed it expedient to express reservations. The loan had hardly been contracted (May 1863) when the government were already looking for money in order to pay the interest (4,200,000 francs, i.e., one third of the Tunisian budget). They borrowed in Tunis, sold the export permits of olive oil to be delivered in May 1865, and decided to increase the taxes. In Djumada 11, 1280 (November 13-December 12 1863) the Bey, in spite of the opposition of the Supreme Council (and particularly of Khaireddin) decided to

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1. FO 102 114. Wood to Stanley, June 23, 1868.

2. Constant, pp. 35-36.

double the rate of the mejba (poll tax) from 36 to 72 piasters.<sup>1</sup> The fate of the Reforms was sealed by that decision, but the troubles which occurred in 1864 were only the belated symptom of serious internal difficulties.

Main features of the Revolution of 1864.

2. The revolution of 1864 was a very complex movement and the protagonists of the drama added to its obscurity and confusion by their bias.<sup>2</sup> One fact seems at least to be unquestionable: the immediate cause of the troubles was the doubling of the mejba. The great nomadic tribes who lived in the mountainous regions of the centre of the country (Fraishish, Majeurs, Ouled bou Ghanem) refused in March 1864 to pay the mejba at its new rate of 72 piasters and rose in a body to obtain a reduction of the taxes, which overburdened them.<sup>3</sup> Such revolts were not unusual in the Regency, especially in the mountainous regions of the north (Kroumirie) or in the subdesert regions of the south: two had occurred very recently, one in 1861 in the Djerid, and another in 1862 in the Kroumirie; in both cases the origin of the

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1. Ben Dhiab, Revolution of 1864, pp. 3-6.
  2. The documents (of French origin) which Grandchamps has published in his "Révolution de 1864" are to be used with prudence: the events as De Beauval and his subordinates describe them, often have but a remote connection with the reality.
  3. Grandchamps II 305. N 64. Ali ben Ghedahem to Sadok Bey (1866?).

movement was the refusal of the tribes to pay the taxes which were demanded by the Bey. The movement had all the characters of these previous Bedouin uprisings: "Nous sommes des Bédouins, Ali ben Ghedahem wrote in 1866, et nous ne réfléchissons pas aux conséquences de nos actes - Nous sommes jeunes et nous avons été entraînés par les tribus."<sup>1</sup> But the situation was complicated this time by elements which greatly embarrassed the government.

The French Consul, de Beauval, persistently endeavoured to give colour to his own theory that the origin of the difficulties was to be found in the hostility of the Arabs to the Constitution and to the domination of the Mamelukes (especially of Mustapha Khaznadar). Besides this movement (with which he was in sympathy) he thought he discovered an Anglo Turkish intrigue at work in the Sahel for the reestablishment of the Sultan's direct authority. On the contrary Ben Dhiaf and Wood were prone rather to minimize the hostility of the Arabs to some provisions or consequences of the Constitution: "Tout homme clairvoyant et religieux", the Tunisian chronicler wrote, "se rend parfaitement compte qu'il est impossible de prétendre que la promulgation de la Constitution est la cause du malaise qui régnait."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Grandchamps II, p. 307.

2. Ben Dhiaf, Revolution of 1864, p. 16.

There seems to be no doubt, however, that on the whole the Arabs complained that the regular tribunals dispensed justice much too slowly, and wished for the reestablishment of the Bey's direct jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> The Bedouins unanimously wanted Tunisian Kuids instead of the Mamelukes who had been generally appointed by the Beys since Ahmed Bey; they demanded that they should be consulted on their choice of their Kuids, and that the Governors should remain in their Provinces instead of administering them from Tunis. These universal grievances explain why the revolt spread to nearly all the tribes of the Regency. On the other hand, the movement found a leader and an organiser, Ali ben Ghedahem, a notable of the Majeurs, who was able to discipline and unite the previously unruly tribes. The situation of the government was the weaker as they had no money and no troops at their disposal: the greater part of the army had been disbanded by Mohammed and Sadok Bey in order to save money. The action of the Bey was also hindered by the rivalry between the Powers, their unceasing intervention in the internal affairs of the Regency, and especially by the intrigues of the Consuls of France and Italy,

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1. Ben Dhiaf, however, denies that such a demand was ever presented by the insurgents and deems it "invraisemblable".

particularly the former, who was to take advantage of the revolution to obtain the suspension of the Constitution.

Threat of European intervention (April-May 1864)

3. The first troubles occurred at the beginning of April 1864: on April 16 Si Ferhat, Governor of the Kef was attacked and killed by Arabs. The movement then spread then <sup>like</sup> wildfire: all the tribes of the centre and south-west of the Regency joined the insurrection.<sup>1</sup> As soon as it received Wood's alarming reports, the Foreign Office assumed an attitude which closely followed the traditional British policy of protecting the Regency from the dangers involved in European intervention. Wood was instructed by telegraph to "protect the persons and property of British subjects", to refrain from interfering "on any account" in the internal affairs of the country, and to act as far as possible in concert with the French agent,<sup>2</sup> and later with the Italian agent and the Turkish Commissioner. The despatch of May 10 1864 was typical of this preoccupation: Russell cancelled a phrase in the first draft which alluded to Wood's possible intervention "to assist the Bey in

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, April 21, 1864.  
2. FO 102 70. Russell to Wood, April 25, 1864.



suppressing the [insurrection]", and specified once more that Wood should avoid interfering "in the internal disputes of the Bey and his subjects".<sup>1</sup> It was thus quite clear that at this stage of the Revolution, the Foreign Office was more anxious to keep the Powers out of the Tunisian imbroglio than to help the Bey to restore his authority and save the reforms. But that policy of complete non-intervention was quickly to prove unworkable, as the other interested Powers (and particularly France) were interfering with Tunisian affairs.

As soon as he was informed of the troubles De Beauval demanded the abrogation of the Constitution and the dismissal of the Prime Minister (as being responsible for the Revolution), and the cancellation of the Convention of 1863 "as prejudicial to French and Tunisian interests."<sup>2</sup> As the Bey refused to comply with demands which he had already rejected in 1863, de Beauval repeated them in April and May in an increasingly threatening tone. As might have been expected, de Beauval hoped that the situation would so develop as to make it easier for him to apply pressure successfully: very early he got into touch with the insurgents with a

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1. FO 102 70. Russell to Wood, May 10, 1864.
  2. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, April 21, 1864 N13 and 15. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 45-53.

view to utilizing their action to break down the Bey's resistance to his suggestions.<sup>1</sup> As early as April 19 Colonel Campenon bluntly suggested the countering of an eventual British landing (an event which was very unlikely to occur) "en appuyant carrément le mouvement arabe qui est la négation de la politique Anglaise dans la Régence."<sup>2</sup>

De Beauval could not express his own feelings with Colonel Campenon's soldier-like candour: but it is incredible that Drouyn de Lhuys should have been completely unaware of the activities of his impetuous subordinate in Tunis.<sup>3</sup> If he was, the strong representations made by the Foreign Office were calculated to open his eyes. However, when confronted with de Beauval's actual policy in Tunis, Drouyn de Lhuys was content with the answer that he was not aware of these facts. If he made some observations to de Beauval, he showed such restraint in his reprimands that there was some excuse for de Beauval's believing that his Minister tacitly approved of his proceedings.<sup>4</sup> Drouyn de Lhuys was unable openly to

1. De Beauval first came into contact with the insurgents on the 21st of April through Mattei (French Vice-Consul in Sfax). (Grandchamps I, p. 27. Mattei April 21, 1864.
2. Grandchamps II, 318. Campenon to Randon, April 19, 1864.
3. Emerit (p. 238-9), however, holds that view.
4. When Drouyn de Lhuys communicated to Cowley in December 1864, extracts from his correspondence with de Beauval, the Ambassador could not refrain from remarking "that he had a very lenient mode of conveying severe blame". Drouyn answered (but failed to convince Cowley) that these expressions were usually used in the Quai d'Orsay "to express displeasure" (FO 27 1537 Cowley to Russell, December 20, 1864)

support de Beauval's intervention for fear of "une immixtion possible des autres puissances" - But he actually gave de Beauval a free hand, and one is indeed led to think that he criticised de Beauval's clumsy methods and ultimate failure more than his actual initiative. That conclusion emerges for instance from Drouyn's despatch of May 11: the Minister first indicated that de Beauval's demands (which had been sharply criticized by the Foreign Office) could not receive "un assentiment explicite" from the Quai d'Orsay. Direct demands "aussi compromettantes" should have been avoided, Drouyn added, and de Beauval "aurait pu venir en aide à l'irrésolution du Bey... par une action d'un autre genre conduite avec prudence et discrétion". Drouyn's despatch of November 15 was even more explicit: "Ainsi que j'ai eu l'Occasion plusieurs fois de vous le faire remarquer, de semblables démarches [Drouyn here alluded to the incidents which had followed Khairreddin's departure for Constantinople] qui seraient à peine justifiées par le succès, [risquent], surtout quand elles ne réussiraient pas de compromettre le gouvernement de l'Empereur."<sup>1</sup> De Beauval could not but be encouraged

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1. FO 27 1537 enclosures in Cowley, December 20, 1864: Drouyn to de Beauval, May 11, 1864 and November 15, 1864.

to go ahead and to put a very free interpretation on his instructions. But on the other hand, the Comte d'Orsay was bound to be accused of duplicity by the Foreign Office.

4. From the very beginning of the Revolution Wood gave the Tunisian Government a measure of assistance which went beyond the limits which Russell had intended to set to his action. Even if he had been sincerely desirous of carrying out the policy of non-intervention which his government advocated, he would have been forced into action by de Beauval's intrigues. But Wood obviously considered that "non-intervention" did not mean refraining from helping the government to overcome their difficulties - "My utmost efforts will be employed....to aid the Bey in averting events which might necessitate foreign intervention or the temporary occupation of the Regency" he wrote on April 22.<sup>1</sup> Wood displayed unremitting efforts with that object in view: he advised the government to make "reasonable concessions" to the rebels, and particularly "to remit the heavy capitation tax"; he put a British ship at the Bey's disposal to carry urgent despatches, and helped the Tunisians to charter a ship in Malta for carrying troops

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, April 22 1864, N.14.

to and from the Sahel; he suggested the expediency of replacing the "old and feeble" Governor of Sousse by a "younger and a more energetic officer"<sup>1</sup>; he proposed that the wishes of the population should be satisfied by the nomination of Governors chosen from the great Tunisian families (a Djelluli in Sfax, a Ben Ayad in Djerba, etc.). In Sousse, at the beginning of May 1864, Vice-Consul Stevens even went so far as to get in touch with the chiefs of Arab tribes who were putting forward their demands; the re-establishment of the ancient system of taxation, the nomination of Kaid's chosen from the tribes, and a general amnesty; and to advise them to make their submission to the Bey.<sup>2</sup> That action entirely justified the apprehensions which de Beauval expressed "à propos du projet attribué à M. Wood de vouloir compromettre la révolution actuelle."<sup>3</sup>

Wood's action was particularly aimed at checking the manoeuvres of the French Consul against the Constitution and the Prime Minister by putting an equally strong pressure upon the Bey. Sadok actually refused to dismiss his Ministers: "Ce n'est pas le Bey" de

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, May 20, 1864, N.38.
  2. Ibid., May 14 and 17, 1864.
  3. Grandchamps I, p.61, N.61. De Beauval to Drouyn April 30, 1864.

Beauval wrote on the 24th of May, "ce n'est pas un favori sans courage, un mameluk Grec qui nous résiste... C'est de fait l'Angleterre contre laquelle nous luttons."<sup>1</sup> But Wood was unable to save the Constitution; at the same time as he reduced the mejba to its previous rate, the Bey decided to suspend the working of the judicial organization and of the Constitution (April 22, 1864). Undoubtedly the Bey had not displayed the same energy in the defence of the Reforms that he had shown when his Ministers had been threatened by de Beauval. Wood was unable to act sternly, however, as he was afraid of aggravating the Bey's position. On April 29 he resorted to a last expedient: while protesting against an unilateral abrogation of the Constitution promulgated in 1860 with French and British assent, which, he said, "would constitute an act of official diplomatic discourtesy" and particularly a disloyal act towards Great Britain, Wood asked the Bey for "the immediate formation of the long promised mixed Commercial Tribunal" and suggested that de Beauval should join in an intervention to that effect.<sup>2</sup> Wood was trying to play for time and to oblige de Beauval to show his hand. The offer was of course rejected - Wood then tried to obtain safeguards

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1. Grandchamps I, p. 138, N. 155.

2. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, April 30, 1864.

for the future. On May 2 he asked the Bey to make it clear "to what extent the Constitutional laws of the Regency have been temporarily suspended to meet an emergency", and for how long. The Fundamental law, he reminded the Bey, was the basis of the Convention of 1863; as such it had become "one of the rights of the British Government" and should continue in force "in all its integrity".<sup>1</sup> The Bey was not eager to reply to these embarrassing questions: it needed a second injunction (July 22, 1864) to induce him to adopt a definite position regarding Wood's questions: the Ahd el Aman, he wrote to the Consul, "is respected and honoured by us and we shall make suitable arrangements for carrying it out in accordance with the policy of the country."<sup>2</sup> Lip-service having thus been duly paid to the Reforms (and Wood was obliged to appear to be content with it), they fell into the sleep of death.

5. Events were taking such a threatening course in Tunis that Wood had no time to dwell on the ruin of eight years' efforts. At the beginning of May the situation in Tunis was aggravated by the simultaneous arrival of English, Italian, and French ships in the

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell May 3, 1864 (Ben Dhiab gives a more complete version of Wood's letter: p. 70).
  2. FO 102 72. Wood, August 12, 1864.

Goulette. While the Italian government were preparing an expedition of 4,500 men and were thinking of landing 800 men at once,<sup>1</sup> the Italian and French Consuls in Tunis contemplated landing troops for the protection of the European residents. The three Admirals had held a meeting and Albini and Herbinghem had proposed considering the possibility of such a step. Wood, however, firmly refused to discuss so dangerous a matter and to anticipate that "any emergency would occur to render necessary the landing of men". But events in Tunis were moving out of Wood's control: in the night of May 6, French sailors were nearly landed. De Beauval affirmed that there had been an error of transmission<sup>2</sup>; but after that rather obscure incident the French Admiral demanded that the chain which closed the Goulette Port should be left permanently open at night. There could be no mistake about the serious consequences to which these nocturnal activities were likely to lead: Wood deemed it prudent to reconsider his views about the problem of intervention. Since a French or Italian landing was impending it appeared wiser to define beforehand the conditions of an eventual intervention of the

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1. Grandchamps II, p. 268-273.

2. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, May 11, 1864, N 31.



three Powers, as a combined action involved less danger than the initiative of one isolated Power. On May 9, Wood proposed to his two colleagues "to come to an understanding together as to the measures to be adopted in case of urgent necessity."<sup>1</sup> Wood suggested a definition of the circumstances which would justify a combined landing: cessation of the Bey's authority, imminence of a massacre of the Europeans, formal demand by the Bey. In any case, the Bey's consent and the agreement of the three Consuls should precede any such action. De Beauval showed little enthusiasm for a proposal which lessened the prospects of intervention: "Ce bon M. Wood," he wrote on May 15, "prétendait que lorsque le couteau serait sur notre gorge nous devrions aller dire au Bey 'Estimez vous qu'il y ait danger et nécessité de faire descendre nos forces?'"<sup>2</sup> The Consuls agreed to have another meeting; but the arrival of a Turkish Commissioner, Hayder Effendi (on May 11), changed the problem fundamentally.

The Commissioner had been sent by the Porte "to enquire into the state of affairs in Tunis". His coming seemed to be calculated to complicate matters further in the Regency; it actually led to their disentanglement.

1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, May 11, 1864, N. 31.
2. Emerit, p. 229. De Beauval to Mme. Cornu, May 15, 1864.

Taken by surprise the French Consul and Admiral thought of preventing Hayder Effendi's landing, if necessary by force. But their astonishment went beyond all bounds when they learned from Paris that the French Government had been kept informed of Hayder's departure, and instructed de Beauval to co-operate with him: Hayder's arrival, de Beauval wrote on May 15, "a paru comme une sorte d'attentat contre la France"<sup>1</sup>, and he added three days later: "Je crains bien que le Turc n'ait gâté nos affaires." The problem of the landing indeed assumed a new complexion with Hayder's arrival: if French troops landed in Tunis not only England and Italy, but also Turkey would be likely to intervene likewise: "C'était renoncer à jamais à notre prépondérance en Tunisie".<sup>2</sup> The impending threat of an armed intervention suddenly vanished: the second meeting of the three Consuls was postponed sine die at de Beauval's request; the French Consul explained that there was now no ground for thinking that a landing could be necessary.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Emerit, p. 229-230: De Beauval to Madame Cornu, May 15. Emerit thinks that the French government had thought that in return for their good will in Tunis the Porte could be led to recognize the French domination in Algiers (p. 228). French policy was then wavering with regard to Tunis.
  2. Julien, p. 9.
  3. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, May 18, 1864.

6. Meanwhile the Foreign Office focussed its activity on the aspect of the question which it deemed to be essential. The energy which it displayed in limiting the international implications of the Tunisian Revolution shows up the better the relative indifference with which it received the news of the suspension of the Constitution. With the exception of Palmerston's note suggesting a protest in Paris against de Beauval's endeavour to "undo all the good which the English and French governments have effected in Tunis" and proposing to encourage the Bey "to hold firm to his Constitution", the brutal ending of the Reforms gave rise to no noteworthy reaction in London. The Foreign Office easily resigned itself to a change which had no repercussions outside Tunis. On the contrary a foreign intervention in Tunis was likely to give rise to international difficulties which the Foreign Office wanted to avert. The European diplomatic situation was indeed of a kind to make the settlement of the Tunisian difficulties easier. The Danish crisis was then at its height and neither the French nor the British government could be expected to turn their full attention to a problem which, by comparison, was unimportant.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Napoleon III was negotiating the settlement of the Roman

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1. Constant, p. II.

question with Italy (these conversations were to result in the Convention of September 1864), and seemed to be ready to abandon Tunis to the Italians, if they would make concessions in Italy. That attitude indicated at least that Napoleon III had not decided to push the Tunisian matter to the very end; but one must also take account of the frequent discrepancies which existed between Napoleon III's secret policy and the official policy of his government.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as he was informed of de Beauval's interventions in Tunis, Russell pressed the Quai d'Orsay to explain the Consul's attitude, and exposed the inconsistency of his proceedings with Drouyn de Lhuys' assurances that France supported a policy of non-intervention: "Has the French Consul acted without instructions?" (May 5). Would it not be desirable "to ascertain by direct enquiry from M. Beauval whether he had obeyed his instructions?" (May 26). Drouyn replied that de Beauval did not mention the facts which Russell was referring to, complained of Wood's proceedings, and reasserted his desire to abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of the Regency. These rather unconvincing protestations

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1. With regard to Napoleon's offers and Italian hesitations see: Cowley to Russell April 28, 1865 (FO 27 1570); Chiala, Pagine di Storia contemporanea II 223 (Pepoli's declaration in 1880) and Chabod Storia della politica estera italiana (p.541-542): Visconti Venosta May 29, 1894.

found Russell very sceptical indeed: "It would not be safe for Her Majesty's Government to order British Consuls on similar occasions to act in concert with their French colleagues, unless they can feel sure that the latter will carry out the instructions of the French government", Russell wrote to Cowley.<sup>1</sup> In the end, however, partly on account of British representations, and partly for fear of the international intervention which De Beauval's initiative threatened to bring about, Drouyn de Lhuys changed his attitude and sent instructions advising moderation to the Consul. There was a sharp contrast between Drouyn's despatch of May 18 (in which he alluded to military preparations in Algiers and emphasized French determination to oppose the intervention of any Foreign Power in Tunis) and his instructions of June 7: The Tunisian crisis requires "beaucoup de prudence, de calme et de sang froid... Vous devez... éviter tout ce qui, dans votre attitude ou vos démarches tendrait à faire supposer que le Consulat Général est favorable à l'insurrection".<sup>2</sup> The arrival of Admiral Bouët Willaumez with two more French vessels before Tunis (May 24) indicated the French fear lest the other

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1. FO 27 1518. Russell to Cowley, May 26, 1864.  
2. Grandchamps I, p. 118, N. 136 and p. 164 N 183.

Powers should try to intervene in the Regency, rather than an intention to land troops should an opportunity present itself.<sup>1</sup>

The Foreign Office was also keeping a close watch on Italian politics. Napoleon III's hints had undoubtedly encouraged the Tunisian ambitions of the Florence Cabinet, and Wood had been aware, from the beginning, of Italian impatience. When Wood reported allegations that the Italian Consul intended to utilize the presence of Italian warships to press some claims upon the Bey and that military preparations were going on in Italy, Russell intimated clearly to the Italian Government that "the time [appeared] very ill chosen and that the only object ought to be the restoration of tranquillity by the Bey's own means" and asked for explanations about the reported preparations for a naval expedition<sup>2</sup>. The Italian government affirmed that there was no foundation whatsoever for reports regarding their hostile intentions and the expedition, although the preparation of an expeditionary force in the Italian Ports is altogether beyond doubt.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Visconti Venosta then thought of occupying Tunis with a mixed Anglo-

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1. F. Julien, p. 9.

2. FO 45 55. Russell to Elliot, May 30, 1864 and Ibid June 3, 1864.

3. Grandchamps II, pp. 268-273.

Franco-Italian force, in order to prevent an isolated French action; but that project received so little encouragement in London that Visconti Venosta ultimately gave up the idea. The Italian Government in their turn ceased to contemplate the eventuality of military intervention in Tunis.

Russell completed his diplomatic survey of the Tunisian question in Constantinople: the Porte was asked for an assurance that she would not take advantage of the circumstances to attempt to strengthen her authority in Tunis or even depose the Bey.<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman Government immediately denied that they had "the slightest idea of attempting any great change in Tunis". That pledge did not, however, prevent them from setting some hopes on Hayder Effendi's mission, as we shall see later. But on the whole the activity of the Foreign Office had been successful: there is no doubt that its immediate and firm opposition to any kind of European intervention in Tunis had greatly helped to restrain the venturesome impulses of the French and Italian Governments, or at least of their Consuls. The suspicions which the Powers entertained about their respective secret intentions had done the rest: a kind of safety thus arose from the very multiplicity of the dangers.

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1. FO 78 1798. Russell to Bulwer, May 19, 1864.

The Powers neutralize one another in Tunis (June-July 1864)

7. Towards the end of May the situation in Tunis had seemed to improve: there had been but little change in the attitude of the Arab Tribes, and Wood's hope that a meeting of their Sheikhs in Kairouan might prove decisive for the restoration of peace had been disappointed. But the insurgents, while still commanding the interior of the country, refrained from engaging in open hostilities with the government so long as no offensive was launched against them. In Tunis Hayder Effendi had been careful not to commit himself to the insurgents, and De Beauval, while keeping his prejudices against the government, showed in his relations with the Bey "an unusual politeness and courtesy" which seemed to indicate that he was at last convinced that the complexity of the situation called for a prudent reserve in his proceedings. At this stage the revolutionary movement reached the Sahel (end of May 1864).

The population of the Sahel had reasons for dissatisfaction which were roughly similar to those which had given rise to the insurrection of the tribes: incidents had already occurred in Sousse, Sfax and Moknine. But the seriousness of the movement in Sfax (May 23) and Sousse (May 31) was largely the result of the feeling which then prevailed, that the country was threatened with



foreign intervention: this accounts for the national and pro-Turk character of the revolt in the Sahel. Beauval's indiscreet activity was mainly responsible for that feeling. The demands he had repeatedly brought forward, his suspected relations with the rebels,<sup>1</sup> his threats when Hayder Effendi had arrived in Tunis, fitted in with some very ambiguous public utterances which seemed to forebode military intervention. A short raid of Italian marines in Sousse (May 9), and the arrival of Bouët Willaumez helped to confirm fears which were so deeply rooted in the Sahel that the Governor of Monastir publicly declared at the end of May "Retenez bien que nous n'avons pas peur des Arabes, mais bien de la mer qui fume et qui brûle."<sup>2</sup>

In Sfax, on May 23, the inhabitants rose with shouts of "Down with the mamelukes" and "Long live the Sultan" and set up a kind of Provisional Government. First of all they hoisted the Tunisian flag on the fortifications and loaded the guns in the expectation of a landing.<sup>3</sup> The French Vice-Consul in Sfax telegraphed on May 25 that public opinion was "en faveur des Anglais et du Sultan, contre le Bey et la France".<sup>4</sup> In Sousse

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1. Ben Dhiaf, p. 54-60.
  2. Grandchamps I, p. 141.
  3. FO 102 71, Wood to Russell, May 30 N.48
  4. Grandchamps I, p. 139.

the situation was perfectly clear: On May 31 the inhabitants "as they had received intelligence that the French were coming to occupy their country" demanded the keys of the town and of the Kasba: "Vous avez livré notre pays aux chrétiens" they said to the Governor.<sup>1</sup> During the following days they busied themselves "erecting and mounting the guns of the two, dismantled, batteries which lie on the sea side".<sup>2</sup> "Nous sommes littéralement exécrés par tous les indigènes", the French Vice-Consul wrote to de Beauval.<sup>3</sup> The movement quickly subsided in Sousse, but as it had been rumoured in Sfax that a French landing had been made there, the Sfaxis increased the guard and bought gun powder with the full and determined intention to impede any landing there. The rising was now universal in the Sahel.

8. De Beauval did not try to hide the satisfaction which he felt as the situation deteriorated in the interior but was more reserved with regard to the incidents of the Sahel which, he thought, confirmed his first suspicions regarding an Anglo-Turkish plot. These apprehensions and his realization that armed intervention was altogether impossible, led de Beauval to think of utilizing the Arab

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1. Ben Dhiaf, p. 42.

2. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, June 4 1864, N 50.

3. Grandchamps I, 160.

revolt as a means of pressure upon the Bey, to whom he would have appeared as a mediator: "Cette race [arabe], he wrote on June 11 to Drouyn, "est la nation révoltée... qui malgré ses moeurs primitives et ses antipathies religieuses, vaut d'être recherchée pour amie". In actual fact he had established direct communication with Ali ben Ghedahem at the beginning of June; his letters to the ring-leader of the Revolt reveal a singular conception of his duties as a Consul accredited to the Bey, as well as some naïvety regarding the character of the Bedouin movement. The first letter (June 2 1864) promised the Arabs French support: "The arrival of our ships...is with the object of forcing your government to accede to your demands". De Beauval continued with a violent attack upon British ambitions in Tunis, as revealed by the Convention of 1863 whose cancellation the French government tried to obtain by the dismissal of the Ministers and the abrogation of the Organic Laws. De Beauval concluded with an offer to communicate the demands of the Tribes to the Bey.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of this offer and those which followed in June, Ali ben Ghedahem refused to commit himself with the Consul; he obviously shared the suspicions of his fellow countrymen about the secret motives of French policy in Tunis.

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1. FO 102 72. Enclosure in Wood to Russell, September 3, 1864.

De Beauval nevertheless tried to force his mediation upon the Bey: he hinted that he was able "to put a stop to the revolt in twenty four hours", an affirmation which was obviously an over-statement. "Le gouvernement de l'Empereur et ses agents," he wrote on June 13, "n'ont ici d'autre pensée que de servir au besoin de lien entre le Bey et ses sujets"<sup>1</sup>. A few days later he again (unsuccessfully) offered to favour a rapprochement between the Arabs and the Bey. It would be difficult to show more disregard for the instructions which he was then receiving from Paris.

9. Wood of course was not yet aware of the exact extent to which de Beauval had compromised with the rebels but he knew enough to warn the Foreign Office of de Beauval's intrigues.<sup>2</sup> It is not easy to follow the day to day action by which Wood tried, to use his own words, "to act with prudence and discretion....in favour of peace and conciliation". There is no doubt that Wood's encouragement, and British support, counted for much in the resistance with which the Bey opposed de Beauval's pressure; on May 27 Wood emphasized the good effects of Russell's instructions and assured him that the Bey

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1. Grandchamps, I, p. 171, N 190.

2. The whole story was only revealed at the beginning of September 1864 by Ali ben Ghedahem himself.

had been highly gratified by them and that a "magical change" had been wrought "in his hitherto passive and dejected countenance." Wood was sometimes more directly concerned with the efforts to restore order. In Sfax the revolutionary movement had shown open pro-Turkish and pro-English proclivities, mainly because it was directed against French policy. Wood had hardly been informed of that rather embarrassing patronage when he made it quite clear to the Sfaxian authorities that, should they persist in their rebellion, Vice-Consul Carleton would "quit a town which has thrown off its allegiance and has ceased to acknowledge the only constituted authorities recognized by Great Britain".<sup>1</sup> The threat made an impression which reveals the strength of British influence and prestige in the country: the inhabitants sent a delegation to inform Carleton that "as neither Great Britain nor the Sultan would ever sanction the subversion of the Bey's authority... they [returned] to their allegiance to His Highness" (June 19, 1864).<sup>2</sup>

Wood endeavoured, less successfully, to put forward a positive scheme to bring the revolt to an end. Towards June 15, the Tunisian Government was preparing a column

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, June 10, 1864.
  2. Ibid, June 27, 1864, N 66.

of 5,000 or 6,000 soldiers, with a view to crushing the movement in the interior. Contemplating the possibility of a failure, which would leave the Bey defenceless, Wood remarked that, as the intervention of European troops was impossible on account of the divisions of the Powers and the probable hostility of the population, he recommended "the intervention of Ottoman troops". The utilization of Mahomedan Troops seemed to be "of a more practicable and less dangerous character"; and if France, he added some days later, persisted in her opposition to a Turkish intervention, even if it was limited and asked for by the Bey, one could call upon the help of Egyptian troops.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion attracted Russell; he immediately instructed Cowley to urge upon France that "if intervention in the affairs of Tunis [were] to take place it should be by Turkish rather than by christian forces".<sup>2</sup> As was to be expected, Drouyn de Lhuys did not appear ready to contemplate the landing of any Turkish troops in any circumstances, and he showed the same reluctance with regard to Egyptian troops. In explanation of his refusal, Drouyn expressed a rather optimistic view of the situation in Tunis, which did not fit in well with the alarming reports he was then

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell June 14 and June 20.
  2. FO 27 1519. Russell to Cowley, June 25.

receiving from de Beauval.<sup>1</sup>

The Foreign Office did its best at least to neutralize de Beauval's dangerous activity. Drouyn de Lhuys gave repeated assurances in answer to Russell's inquiries that France intended to pursue a policy of strict non-intervention in Tunis; these would have been satisfactory, if Russell had felt that Drouyn did not approve of, and even censured, de Beauval's policy. But obviously the Imperial policy was not quite straightforward: on August 3, Drouyn approved of de Beauval's "intérêt bienveillant" for the tribes, and did not object to his eventually giving his support to their grievances.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising that these proceedings should have given rise to Palmerston's outbursts of anger, which Russell tried subsequently to translate into more diplomatic language: "Lord Cowley should ask Monsieur Drouyn," Palmerston remarked on August 21, "to consider what confidence can be placed in the political action of the French government with regard to their relations with Foreign Governments, when their agents abroad are permitted to act in direct contradiction with the formal instructions which the French government alleges it has given them."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Foreign Office

1. FO 27 1531 Cowley to Russell, June 30, July 7.
2. FO 27 1537, in Cowley, December 20.
3. FO 102 72.

gave unremitting support to Wood, whose policy had gained him the sympathy of the Tunisians but had cut him off from the majority of his European colleagues. In the end Russell gave full approval to Wood's endeavours to "maintain the authority of the Bey of Tunis" and the advice and support he had given the Bey in order that "the political relations of Tunis should remain as they are and that the Regency should be tranquil and prosperous"; by so doing he implicitly admitted that his first instructions had restricted Wood's action within much too narrow limits, and that Wood's broad interpretation of his duties was justified.<sup>1</sup>

The Revolution comes to an end (August-October 1864)

10. Though the rivalry of the Powers partly neutralized their action in Tunis, it was no remedy for the difficulties which assailed the Tunisian Government. But the Bey took advantage of the respite with which he was thus provided and tried to put an end to the revolution. He undertook first to pacify the Arab tribes, which were more dangerous to his authority than the insurgents of the Sahel. As early as June signs of disintegration appeared in the movement; the approach of harvest time incited the cultivators to go back to their fields; the old

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1. FO 102 70. Russell to Wood, July 15, 1864.



rivalries were again dividing the tribes which Ali ben Ghedahem had kept united for some time; the Prime Minister skilfully fostered these divisions and bribed the most influential chiefs. In the Sahel itself, the towns, under <sup>the</sup> threat of being looted by the nomadic tribes, contemplated a rapprochement with the government. Everywhere the feeling that a prolongation of the insurrection was likely to bring about a Foreign intervention induced people to lean towards conciliation.

The Government acted with moderation, promised a complete amnesty, reduced the taxes, and hastily prepared troops for all eventualities. At the end of June the Camp began to move slowly towards the western regions of the Regency. Its object was obviously more to negotiate the submission of the tribes than to fight against them. At the end of July de Beauval was still sceptical with regard to its chances of success, and daily reported its dissolution or its destruction by the Arabs, but at that very moment Ali ben Ghedahem was negotiating with General Ismael Sunni the submission of the Arabs. Ali ben Ghedahem's conditions (a general amnesty, the reduction of taxes and some advantages for his family and himself) were accepted and the pacification was brought about in the interior on July 26.<sup>1</sup> The Revolt

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, July 30, 1864.

now continued only in the Sahel where the villages led by the inhabitants of Msaken refused to yield. Stevens, the British Vice-Consul in Sousse, had vainly attempted at the beginning of August to negotiate with their leaders and to induce them to accept the Bey's authority.<sup>1</sup> But it was now a desperate struggle. De Beauval, however, refused to admit that his policy had failed, and reported to Drouyn de Lhuys that the revolt was going on "plus unanime que jamais".<sup>2</sup>

11. In spite of the improvement of the internal situation, the presence of Foreign ships at the Goulette was a serious danger for the Tunisian government in so far as the possibility of an intervention was not completely averted. Not to mention de Beauval's intrigues (his correspondence with Ali ben Ghadahem was disclosed by the rebel after his submission), many Italian residents were prompting their Consul "to avail himself of the presence of the fleet to press their claims against the Tunisian government".<sup>3</sup> The departure of the Foreign squadrons was absolutely necessary for the restoration of a normal state of affairs in Tunis. The virtual end of the troubles, the complete safety which the Europeans

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 10, 1864.  
2. Grandchamps II, p. 6. De Beauval, August 20, 1864.  
3. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 17, 1864.

had not ceased to enjoy, the approach of the bad season were further inducements to a general departure which was only delayed by the mutual suspicions of the Powers.

Wood was well aware of the embarrassments which the prolongation of that awkward situation threatened to bring about; he also realized that, while the departure of the fleets must be simultaneous, the Porte ought to make the first move. It was clear enough that the French government was primarily concerned about the eventuality of a Turkish intervention in Tunis. Thus the key to the whole problem was in Constantinople. As early as August 13 Wood wrote to Bulwer and suggested that the Ambassador should advise the Porte to recall Hayder Effendi: since the Revolution had been brought to an end, and his mission thus accomplished, his presence was no longer necessary in Tunis and could only delay the departure of the French Fleet.<sup>1</sup> A few days later Admiral Yelverton, who commanded the British squadron impressed upon Sadok Bey the necessity of obtaining the departure of the Porte's Envoy. Wood then succeeded in persuading Hayder Effendi to ask permission of the Ottoman Government to leave Tunis; as the Consul pointed

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1. FO 195 792A. Wood to Bulwer, August 13. The documents belie Julien's (and de Beauval's) assertion that Wood was opposed to the departure of the squadron and that it was decided by the Admirals.

out to Hayder, since in any case he would shortly have to quit Tunis, "it was desirable that he should make his own departure the occasion for that of the Vice-Admirals."<sup>1</sup> In addition, Wood now entertained friendly relations with the French Admiral Bouët Willaumez who was dissatisfied with de Beauval's personal policy, and was anxious to leave Tunis as soon as possible. Drouyn de Lhuys had reached the same conclusions and had informed the Porte, the Foreign Office, and de Beauval in the first days of September that he would accept a simultaneous departure of the fleets.

When Hayder Effendi, received the Porte's authorization to leave Tunis "simultaneously with the Foreign squadrons" it only remained for the Admirals to solve a technical problem which involved delicate considerations of prestige. Albin, Bouët Willaumez, and Hayder Effendi decided that the simultaneous departure would take place on September 23, according to a programme whose complication and minuteness of detail gave a perfect example of the mutual distrust of the Powers in Tunis. Some days later Admiral Yelverton, who had remained behind (a mark of confidence which was tantamount to admitting that Great Britain had no political

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 25 1864, N 95.

ambitions in Tunis) left the Goulette in his turn.

The Foreign Office tried to take advantage of the withdrawal of the foreign warships to obtain a pledge binding on the French government for the future. Russell suggested that the Consuls of France, Italy and Great Britain should hand over one common note or three separate notes, to the Bey, to the effect that their respective governments had "no wish or intention to interfere in the internal government of Tunis".<sup>1</sup> Drouyn de Lhuys showed "with some irritation of manner" that the proposal was distasteful to him; such a declaration, he replied to Grey, was "ill-timed" as the Powers were just proving, by the departure of their fleets, that they did not intend to intervene in Tunis; it was also "dangerous" as it seemed to imply that undue interference had actually occurred. "It would be impolitic, he added, to give the Bey an assurance that, whatever he might choose to do, nobody would interfere with him"; France "could not give him any assurance of the kind". Drouyn's attitude, although not unexpected, was in no way reassuring for the future of Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 27 1520 Russell to Grey, September 21, 1864.
  2. FO 27 1534 Grey to Russell, September 23 and 30, 1864.

12. At the end of August 1864 a second column of 4,600 soldiers, under General Ahmed Zarruk's command, began to move slowly towards the Sahel; once more the government were relying upon negotiations with the rebels rather than upon the hazards of war to put an end to the insurrection. The great nomadic tribes were now supporting the government, or were fighting one against another and were neutralized. In the great towns the "conservative" party of the middle-class men, the notables, and the landed proprietors rallied to the government (as in Sousse and Sfax) or kept a prudent neutrality for fear of reprisals by the rebels (as in Monastir and Mahdiya).<sup>1</sup> The "revolutionaries" (the soldiers or the lower classes) were still in control of the villages of the Sahel, under the leadership of the village of Msaken. The stubborn Msakenis had rejected a last offer of mediation and were getting ready for a desperate resistance. Ultimately the two armies met at Kalaa Kebira (near Sousse), and the rebels were completely defeated. In the meanwhile Ali ben Ghedahem, who entertained fears regarding the intention of the Government to break their promise towards him, had taken up arms again: a third expedition was sent against him and he was ultimately obliged to seek refuge in Algeria (January 1865).

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1. Grandchamps II, N 324, 326, 346, 349.

The revolution was now crushed everywhere: a violent repression began, especially in the Sahel. While Zarruk arrested the rebels, executed the ring-leaders, inflicted very heavy fines on the country (20 million piasters in Sousse, Monastir and Mahdiya, 6 million in Sfax, 5 in Djerba), the Bey took savage reprisals, arresting and cudgelling hundreds of notables to whom he had often given the "aman" (guarantee of safety). Wood did not allude to these unfortunate occurrences in his despatches: it is unlikely that he approved of them but he must have thought that he had to support the Tunisian Government to the bitter end in the restoration of order. This consideration accounts for the euphemistic way in which he reported Zarruk's extortions in the Sahel: the war contribution, he wrote, would not exceed £300,000, "a sum that will fall short of half the value of this year's oil crops and consequently will not be much felt by the people."<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare that assertion with Ben Dhiaf's striking description: "Les villes du Sahel," he wrote, "devinrent désertes et la région veuve de ses habitants. Cette province qui était la plus peuplée de la Régence est retournée à l'état primitif et il n'y entra plus que ceux qui enviaient le sort des morts. Souhaiter la mort pour soi est pire que la mort."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, December 24, 1864.
  2. Ben Dhiaf, p. 84.

13. One may consider that this decay marks the limit of the success of British diplomacy in Tunis during the Revolution. The energetic action of the Foreign Office had probably played a large part in averting European intervention which would most likely have given rise to serious consequences. Wood's activity on the spot did much to help the Tunisian Government to overcome their difficulties and to neutralize the interference of the other European Consuls. British prestige had been greatly enhanced, the more so as de Beauval's venturesome policy had been responsible for the eclipse of French influence.<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister had been naturally led to side completely with the British, and in December 1864, full of misgivings about French policy towards him, he had even secretly asked for the protection of the British consulate if the Bey should ultimately decide to dismiss him. But on the whole British policy had paid dearly for that success: the French Consul had finally obtained the repeal of the reforms, and the Bey had not offered the stout resistance which might have been expected from him. His assurances that it was only a suspension had but little value when

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1. It seems that in the end the French Government had become aware of de Beauval's errors: in December 1864 Napoléon III said to Cowley that the Consul was "a most honorable man...hot headed and clearly unfit for the post which he had been occupying. His conduct has been absurd (Stupide)." (FO 27 1537. Cowley to Russell December 18).



confronted with the actual re-establishment of an autocratic and irresponsible system of government. It was the more disquieting as the nearly exhausted country badly needed an administration which would restore internal peace and prosperity and so avoid the impending financial and political collapse. Wood had been quite justified in trying first to preserve the Regency from an internal disruption; but the protests against administrative abuses were largely justified; the revolution once crushed, the defects which had given rise to the discontent still remained to be remedied.<sup>1</sup>

What had been done could not be undone, but at least the Foreign Office and Wood had an opportunity to come to useful conclusions about the Tunisian question. The crisis had revealed the internal weakness of the Regency; but it was not to be expected that any quick remedy could be found to cure the defects and abuses from which the country was suffering. On the contrary the Imperial policy was an immediate danger to Tunis; Palmerston and Russell had criticized it very severely indeed: "The conduct of the Emperor and of Drouyn de Lhuys" Palmerston wrote on September 26, "has been a compound of the grossest injustice and the most disgraceful

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1. Ben Dhiab, p. 90.

duplicity."<sup>1</sup> The first thing to do was obviously to try to strengthen Tunis against ~~that~~ external danger: Once more Wood was faced with the problem of the settlement of the international position of the Regency which British diplomacy had tried to solve from 1835 to 1855 and which had constantly exercised Wood's mind since his arrival in Tunis.

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1. FO 102 72.

VIII. Khaireddin's mission to Constantinople

The preliminaries (Summer of 1864).

1. The revolution of 1864 had in some way helped to clarify the problem of the international position of Tunis: De Beauval's actions and Italian dreams had revealed afresh the difficult situation of the Regency. De Beauval had indeed given a personal interpretation of French policy, but Drouyn's tolerance (to say the least) during the crisis, and his refusal to give the pledge asked for by the Foreign Office, seemed to justify Wood's statement that France wanted "to establish her supremacy in the Regency over which she already assumes a protectorate", and his conclusion that "the political status of the Regency is... at this moment in danger of being irretrievably subverted."<sup>1</sup> There was no doubt that French policy ignored what Great Britain regarded as Turkish rights in Tunis. The Quai d'Orsay had (rather unexpectedly) accepted Hayder Effendi's coming to Tunis but under such conditions as seemed to reverse the relative positions of France and Turkey with regard to Tunis: from Aali Pasha's assurances,

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 30, 1864. N.97.

Drouyn wrote to Moustier on May 13, "nous devons conclure qu'il n'est pas dans la pensée de la Porte de méconnaître les engagements qu'elle a pris d'ancienne date envers nous à l'égard de Tunis, et qu'elle reconnaît que les intérêts spéciaux résultant pour nous de la possession de l'Algérie ne nous permettraient pas de laisser porter atteinte dans la Régence au status quo".<sup>1</sup> Wood considered these assertions and the similar position taken by de Beauval in Tunis to be very alarming: "The question is too important to remain any longer in abeyance without producing hereafter much embarrassment," he wrote on July 9. "The rights of the Porte, of whatever nature they may be have been gradually weakened by being directly disputed if not altogether rejected." His conclusion struck a now familiar note: "Unless the Turkish Government should avail themselves of the very events....to reconfirm their Rights....it would be a wiser and a safer policy....that the neutrality of this Regency should be secured."<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances seemed to be favourable for a new effort. Convinced at last of the urgency of reaching an agreement, even at the cost of some concessions, the

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1. Documents Diplomatiques, 1864, p. 141. Drouyn to de Moustier, May 13.
  2. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, July 9, 1864. N 72.

Porte had sent Hayder Effendi with a view to taking advantage of the events in Tunis and settling its relations with the Bey "without altering the existing conditions of Tunis."<sup>1</sup> The relations between Hayder Effendi and the Bey had rested on a basis of mutual confidence. Sadok Bey could not but contrast the Porte's friendly attitude with de Beauval's hostility. In addition the revolutionary events (particularly in the Sahel) had shown that the discontented populations could eventually turn towards the Sultan for redress: such a consideration was likely to induce the Bey to reach a settlement with the Porte. Lastly, the Foreign Office had constantly reasserted the Porte's rights of suzerainty over Tunis during the crisis, and had clearly perceived the dangers which were inherent in the Bey's isolation. Under these conditions it could be assumed that it would support Wood's policy with more energy than in 1860 and 1862.

2. When informed of the secret object of Hayder's mission, Wood deemed it advisable to act with the utmost prudence, in order to avoid another failure. He first communicated the conditions of a better understanding between the Bey and the Porte to Hayder Effendi: they were roughly similar to the principles he had defined

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1. FO 78 1798. Bulwer to Russell, May 30, 1864.

in 1858 (hereditary succession, administrative autonomy, free external relations, no tribute). Hayder Effendi replied with his own suggestions: the Bey would go to Constantinople to receive his investiture, he would pay an annual tribute of 3,000,000 piasters, and the treaties concluded by the Bey would be submitted to the Sultan's approval. Wood remarked that these last two points seemed to be wholly unacceptable to the Bey. In any case the Consul emphasized the necessity of obtaining the sanction of the Great Powers to whatever arrangement should be concluded between the Bey and the Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

The Porte was kept informed of the negotiations by Hayder Effendi and by Bulwer who exerted strong pressure in favour of Wood's arguments and tried to impress upon it "the danger of postponing the settlement of an important question and that any sacrifice would be preferable to the eventual loss of all its Rights."<sup>2</sup> The negotiations went on during the summer between Wood, Sadok Bey, and Hayder Effendi and resulted in a Memorandum ("Proposed bases of arrangement between Turkey and the Regency of Tunis") which was to be given to Khaireddin and submitted by him to the Porte in November 1864. The arrangement "strictly in conformity with the

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1. FO 102 71. Wood to Russell, May 26, 1864.
  2. FO 195 792A. Wood to Bulwer, July 4.

existing state of things", Wood remarked, was to be presented as a mere "confirmation by the Sultan of the existing Rights and Privileges" of the Bey in order to avoid giving rise to the opposition of the Powers. In substance it confirmed the provisions of the memorandum of 1858 with greater precision; confirmation of the right of hereditary succession (articles I and VI); administrative autonomy (II and III); "faculté [ pour le Bey ] de maintenir ses relations extérieures" (IV) (however, the Treaties which were likely to "affecter la sécurité générale de l'Empire, tels que les Traités d'alliance...cession de territoire, démarcation des frontières" would require the Sultan's agreement (V); the right of the Bey to keep his distinctive flag (IX) and to give decorations (X). On his side the Bey would ask for investiture by the Sultan (VI); coinage would be struck and prayers said in the Sultan's name (XI and XII). The memorandum did not explicitly mention the Sultan's suzerainty over Tunis (unlike the memorandum of 1858) but, Wood remarked, the sixth clause (as well as the fifth) clearly indicated that the Regency was an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. As for the tribute (the problem had been left without solution in 1858), the memorandum suggested replacing it by an annual contribution "à titre d'aide pour la défense

générale de l'Empire." (viii)<sup>1</sup>

Khaireddin's negotiations in Constantiple.

3. It had been agreed between Wood and the Bey that the object of Khaireddin's mission would remain secret until an agreement should be reached with the Porte, in order to avoid giving rise to premature opposition. The Porte would then send a Firman embodying the agreement and would adopt whatever course it might deem most convenient and opportune "for bringing the imperial confirmation of the status quo to the knowledge of the Great Powers, with the view to invest it with the character of a European Diplomatic act, without which it would lose much of its validity and importance."<sup>2</sup> The precaution was not superfluous. No sooner had De Beauval heard of Khaireddin's departure for Constantinople than he tried to discourage the Bey from making a demarche which his government would look upon "with great dissatisfaction". The Tunisian government decided to go ahead and hastened Khaireddin's departure in order to avoid any further discussion. De Beauval then lost his head: he ordered the French warship, which was stationed before the Goulette, to prevent Khaireddin's ship from standing

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1. FO 102 72. Wood, November 26, 1864.  
2. Ibid, and FO 195 792 A Wood to Bulwer, November 28, 1864.



out to sea, by use of force if necessary. The "Bechir" was eventually able to escape pursuit (November 13 1864) but the incident, which might have given rise to serious consequences, wholly confirmed Wood's opinion that the Porte had to chose between the acceptance of the Bey's proposals and the "complete separation and final absorption of Tunis by its powerful neighbour". If Khaireddin's mission failed, Wood added, the only solution left would be "the recognition of its neutrality under the guarantee of Europe".<sup>1</sup>

The gleeful notes which Palmerston and Russell sent to one another when they received Wood's despatch announcing Khaireddin's mission show clearly the satisfaction of the Foreign Office: "The proposal of the Bey," Russell wrote, "seems to me a very good one" and Palmerston answered "Mr Wood has shewn much ability in bringing the matter so far to bear, and much sagacity and foresight in his memorandum."<sup>2</sup> However, the two statesmen, by common consent, decided not to take into account Wood's suggestion, and communicated the matter immediately to Paris. It is not likely that Palmerston or Russell still entertained illusions about the

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, November 26, 1864. N.122
  2. FO 27 1521. Russell December 9, Palmerston, December 10, 1864.

possibility of obtaining French co-operation, as the precedent of 1858 and French policy during the last crisis left no doubt about that point. But they must have thought that since French consent would have to be sought ultimately in order to give an international value to the agreement, it was "wise" and "honest" to inform Paris of what was going on.

On December 13 1864 Russell accordingly instructed Cowley to inform Drouyn that the British Government considered the Bey's propositions "very well suited to his present position as regards France and the Porte" and contemplated co-operating with the French and Italian Governments in recommending the Sultan to adopt the course suggested by the Bey; such interference was, however, likely to be useless as the Sultan would undoubtedly eagerly adopt "a course the advantages of which [were] so obvious."<sup>1</sup>

4. It does not appear that Khaireddin's negotiations were in the least affected by the attitude which the Powers adopted towards his Mission. The Powers were informed too late to react in good time. The secret, too, was so well kept in Constantinople (in accordance

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1. FO 27 1521. Russell to Cowley, December 13, 1864. The Italian Ambassador was informed on the same day by Russell.

with Khaireddin's instructions) that confusion prevailed there, and that Khaireddin was able to pursue his negotiation successfully.<sup>1</sup>

But Russell was under some apprehensions regarding the view which the French Government was taking of the project. Napoléon III and Drouyn, at first surprised by the news, had given rather vague answers to Cowley's communications and had emphasized that France was anxious for the continuation of the status quo in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> French opposition was soon stated more precisely: on December 19 Drouyn wrote to la Tour d'Auvergne (the French Ambassador in London) that France was determined to "empêcher tout ce qui tendrait à altérer les conditions d'autonomie dans lesquelles se trouve aujourd'hui la Régence" and concluded: "Nous sommes trop les amis de la Porte pour vouloir devenir ses voisins".<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile the Quai d'Orsay endeavoured, with some success, to obtain Italian support for that policy. But it seems that the Quai d'Orsay was ultimately misled by the secrecy of Khaireddin's proceedings at the Porte. Moustier having asked for and easily obtained Aali Pasha's assurance that the Porte did not intend to change the status quo

1. The secrecy of the negotiations partly accounts for the lack of precision in the reports: Ben Dhiaf himself gives no information.
2. FO 27 1537. Cowley to Russell, December 15 and 18, 1864
3. Documents diplomatiques, 1864, Drouyn de Lhuys, December 19, p. 143.

in Tunis and the Bey strongly denying that anything of the kind was contemplated, Drouyn de Lhuys drew the conclusion in January that if proposals had ever been contemplated they had not been actually discussed in Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> Russell, however, had already intervened vigorously in Paris, Turin and Constantinople to encourage the Bey and the Sultan in their project and to prevent the Powers from practising obstruction: but Khaireddin had already left Constantinople on December 24 with the Porte's answer.

Khaireddin brought back very satisfactory news for the Bey. A letter from the Grand Vizier confirmed the Sultan's desire of "strengthening the ancient privileges by way of official renewal" and preserving the "old connection and distinguished Dependence" of the Province of Tunis upon the Porte. The Grand Vizier then enumerated the provisions of the memorandum which the Porte had endorsed. The problem of the tribute (article 8) had not been touched, Wood commented, "to obviate inopportune opposition" and the question of the Treaties (article 5) had been "left unnoticed by the Grand Vizier".<sup>2</sup>

1. FO 27 1564. Cowley to Russell, January 10, 1865. Documents diplomatiques 1864. Drouyn de Lhuys to Moustier, January 6, 1865.
2. Wood refers to a following separate despatch for comments about the Porte's answer but it does not appear to be in FO 102 nor in FO 335 (Archives of the Consulate).

The provision referring to the Bey's internal autonomy provided that the Bey should abide by "the Sheraa... as well as such administrative laws as are sufficiently efficacious to protect individuals, security, property and honour as circumstances and time may require." (This formula seemed to reintroduce the question of reforms). On the whole the memorandum had been accepted by the Ottoman Government as the basis of their future relations with the Regency. It had nevertheless been decided in Constantinople that the Porte would not immediately issue a Firman, but that the Bey should officially ask for it. It is possible that by this somewhat complicated procedure the Porte intended to create an opportunity for negotiating with the Powers. However that may be, the Bey expressed to Wood his "unbounded satisfaction" and assured the Consul that he was resolved to ask for the Firman "without unnecessary delay."<sup>1</sup>

The Powers and the Firman.

5. After Khaireddin's return the secret of the negotiation was disclosed and the Bey could not postpone explanations any longer, the more so as France and Italy were showing much bitterness about having been kept in

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, January 12, 1865.

ignorance of the negotiation. Their Consuls tried to dissuade the Bey from asking for the Firman and de Bellecourt, the new French Consul, was partly successful in his attempt to frighten the Bey with the idea that in case of war between Turkey and one European Power, Tunis would be involved in the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of January 1865 the Bey appeared so hesitant that Wood decided to precipitate matters. During an interview with Sadok Bey the Consul noted that the formula used for the investiture of the Beys referred to an "election" and he reminded Sadok of Ali ben Ghedahem's "election" by the tribes. As long as there was no formal recognition by the Porte of the hereditary rights of the Husseini family, Wood concluded, the Bey's position would remain unsettled. Under these conditions Wood impressed on the Bey the urgency of having his rights "formellement reconnus par la Sublime Porte...et par l'Europe", and of putting an end to "des usages surannés" about the election by the Divan and the people.<sup>2</sup> Wood's plan was to make the Bey uneasy enough to induce him to overcome French and Italian opposition, and to look for an agreement with the Porte. In addition the

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell January 12, 1865  
2. Ibid, January 31, 1865, N. 11 and 12.

Consul hoped that France, which wished to maintain the quasi independent reigning dynasty in Tunis, would contemplate cooperating for the recognition of the hereditary right of the Husseinis by the Porte, and would thus accept the proclamation of Tunis as a part of the Turkish Empire which was also in the Firman.<sup>1</sup> The manoeuvre was apparently skilful and it met with immediate success but gave rise to unexpected consequences. The Bey felt so uneasy indeed that he immediately consulted the representatives of the Powers, to obtain assurances about the hereditary character of his authority, an assurance which France was for her part ready to give. As for Russell, he thought the step rather clumsy as his whole attitude towards the projected Firman was based upon the assumption that it merely defined the existing status quo, while Wood was apparently suggesting an improvement of that status quo. The propositions, he wrote to the Consul, tended to alter altogether the existing relations between the Sultan and the Bey and to confer upon the Bey through the influence of Great Britain an independent title. Wood was accordingly instructed "to restrain from taking any proceedings of a nature to cause change in the relations between the Sultan and the Bey unless

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, March 6, 1865.

[he received] positive instructions authorizing [him] to do so." British diplomacy went forward along the classical highway, which Wood had thought of abandoning in order to take an adventurous byway.

French opposition to the issue of the Firman was gradually stiffening: the Firman, de Bellecourt assured the Bey, was useless "as neither the Porte nor any of the Great Powers disputed the quasi independence or the hereditary rights of the Bey"; it was dangerous because the Porte might try to take advantage of the Firman to make demands which would modify the status quo.<sup>1</sup> The French government disputed the allegation in the Firman that the Regency formed an integral part of the Ottoman Dominions, and endeavoured to intimidate the Bey: did the Tunisian government, de Bellecourt asked, wish to bring about a European war by their persistence?<sup>2</sup> The Bey decided to send Khaireddin to Paris in order to try to overcome the opposition of the Quai d'Orsay.

Russell made a new attempt to dissuade the French government from opposing the Firman: "As the Firman in question would....confirm the present status quo....Her Majesty's Government are desirous that the Sultan should

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, February 25, 1865.  
2. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, March 29, 1865.



grant it" he wrote to Cowley.<sup>1</sup> But neither Cowley's demarche nor Khaireddin's efforts could lessen Drouyn's opposition to the Firman. Cowley and Khaireddin were however under the impression that if the Porte chose to grant the Firman no positive opposition would be made by France; that impression seemed to be confirmed by Drouyn's despatch to de Bellecourt (April 26) in which the Minister endeavoured to reduce the significance of the Firman to the mere reassertion of the Sultan's religious suzerainty over Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Wood made use of the dangers which this theory involved to bring pressure to bear anew upon the Bey, who ultimately decided to apply for the Firman (July 1865). The success or failure of the undertaking now depended on the Porte's attitude: at this critical stage Wood once more emphasized the importance of encouraging the Ottoman government to give a favourable answer to the Bey's demand.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of the Firman is delayed.

6. The summer of 1865 was somewhat troubled: while the Foreign Office was encouraging the Porte to send the Firman and trying to overcome French hostility, the

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1. FO 27 1557. Russell to Cowley, April 25, 1865.  
2. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, July 10, 1865.  
3. Ibid. July 11, 1865.

Tunisian government were embroiled in a series of difficulties with Italy and France which were not without connection with the problem of Tunisian relations with the Sultan. The French Government indeed were not sorry to make the Bey feel their irritation at the weakening of their prestige in Tunis since 1864; their sudden stiffness indicated that they had decided to strengthen their grip on the Tunisian government and to counteract the progress of British influence. On the other hand, their high-handed proceedings with the Bey conveyed a clear lesson to the Porte: The Ottoman Government were invited to ponder carefully over the dangers which they would incur should they go ahead in the question of the Firman and assume responsibility for Tunisian affairs.

The Italians had taken the initiative and were keeping alive some trifling difficulties which had been pending for a very long time. Ultimately, in August 1865, a scuffle of sailors in Bizerta provided an opportunity for a naval demonstration accompanying demands which, Wood remarked, were out of all proportion to the original incident: "I could not see the utility of humiliating the Tunisian Government by making it a party in an affray between Foreign sailors and its subjects<sup>1</sup>

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, August 19, 1865.

Russell kept a close watch on Italian proceedings in Tunis and he had advised the Florence Cabinet at the end of August "to deal with the Bey....in a spirit of moderation", a piece of advice which was also a warning.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time some incidents of little importance were increasing the tension between the French consulate and the Tunisian government. At the end of August things at last came to a crisis: Several Algerians who had been long established in Tunis, had entered the Tunisian service and were considered Tunisians by the government, had been imprisoned by the Tunisian authorities and beaten with cudgels as the result of a minor offence. The French Vice-Consul considered it his duty to protest officially and to claim reparation under the pretext that these Algerians were French protégés. Drouyn approved of this action and assured Cowley that the incident was of the most serious nature and likely to provoke very grave consequences should the Bey refuse to give the satisfaction which was demanded of him.<sup>2</sup> The Bey, on the other hand, had good reasons for refusing to yield, as one such concession would have given weight to the protection which the French Consul claimed to

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1. FO 45 69. Russell, August 28, 1865.
  2. FO 24 1575. Cowley to Russell, August 29, 1865.

exercise over several thousands of Algerian Zouaves who were serving in the Bey's army and had completely cut off their ties with Algeria. Drouyn informed Cowley in September that the Imperial Government were "determined not to put up with the indignity of finding their just demands uncomplied with." Baron Saillard was sent to Tunis and instructed to obtain reparation, sanctions against the responsible authorities, official explanations presented by the Prime Minister, and the recognition of the Algerians as French protégés; otherwise these demands would be enforced.<sup>1</sup> The threat was not exaggerated, for in the meanwhile the Governor of Algeria was instructed to prepare an expedition against the Regency, in case Saillard's demands should not be complied with.<sup>2</sup> Russell thought that it was essential to avoid the military action which the French Government seemed resolved upon, and which would be likely to end in a French quasi-protectorate over Tunis. He immediately instructed Wood by telegram to "advise the Bey to comply with French demands."<sup>3</sup> Wood had already arrived at the same conclusions: overcoming his own misgivings about the justice of the French case he

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1. FO 27 1576. Cowley to Russell, September 19, 1865.
  2. FO 27 1611. Colonel Claremont to Cowley, January 30, 1866.
  3. FO 102 75. Russell to Wood, September 25, 1865.

advised the government "by a reasonable compliance with [the French Government's] demands to neutralize any ulterior measures in contemplation for enforcing them." The Bey reluctantly decided to yield: the Prime Minister went to the French Consulate and publicly expressed "the regret of the Tunisian government."<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to think that this humiliation was not regarded in France as a revenge for the events of 1864.

7. While the French Government were thus energetically affirming their unique situation in Tunis at the expense of the Bey's prestige, the discussion was going on with the Porte about the Firman. The position of the Ottoman Government, between the contradictory advice given by France and Great Britain, was a very awkward one: while the Porte contemplated favourably the strengthening of its ties with the Regency of Tunis, the prospect of a quarrel with France was disheartening. As French influence remained very strong in Constantinople and was felt as a moderating influence on the whole, the risks were too momentous to be faced lightly.<sup>2</sup> The

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1. FO 102 75. Wood to Russell, September 25, 1865.  
2. Engelhardt, I, pp. 216-218.

Foreign Office put very strong pressure on the Porte to counterbalance its fears of French resentment; at the beginning of August 1864 Russell put the case clearly before Aali Pasha and once more described the problems and alternatives with which Turkish policy was confronted in Tunis, as reported by Wood.<sup>1</sup> Aali Pasha's answer to Bulwer was far from enthusiastic; he affirmed however that the Porte considered that it was "bound by verbal and written promises to comply with the renewed demand of the Bey of Tunis". But the Ottoman Government, Aali Pasha added, wished to consult the French Government first, a very imprudent procedure indeed, if the Porte really intended to issue the Firman, in consideration of Drouyn's overt opposition to the scheme.<sup>2</sup> The Ottoman Ambassador in Paris was so reluctant to communicate the projected Firman to Drouyn that Cowley was obliged to call his attention once more to Aali Pasha's instructions (September 1865).<sup>3</sup>

Drouyn's answer was such as could have been easily foreseen. In addition to his previous arguments against the Firman, which he deemed to be useless (if it did not modify the status quo) or alternatively unacceptable to

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1. FO 78 1854. Russell to Bulwer. August 3, 1865.
  2. FO 78 1861. Bulwer to Russell, September 4, 1865.
  3. FO 27 1576. Cowley to Russell, September 22, 1865.

France, the Minister made rather ominous comments, in the light of recent happenings in Tunis. France would regard the issue of the Firman as an act of hostility and would be induced to show "greater watchfulness over French interests in the interior of the Regency and less dispositions to pass over cases of insult or injury." Should new difficulties occur in Tunis, the Porte would be more directly involved in their settlement; the issue of the Firman, Drouyn concluded, would "not improve the [Porte's] relations with the French Government". As Cowley tried to have recourse to purely "legalistic" arguments, Drouyn admitted readily that the Bey had a right to ask for the Firman and the Sultan an equal right to grant it and even that the Firman contained nothing "to which he could not himself subscribe", but considered that it would involve too many dangers for French rule in Algiers for the French Government to accept it.<sup>1</sup>

Drouyn's considerations could not but damp the already lukewarm enthusiasm of the Ottoman Government. On Lyons' arrival in Constantinople as Ambassador, a last effort was, however, made to convince the Porte that it should go ahead: Lyons tried to reassure Aali Pasha with regard to threats which were so violent "that they could

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1. FO 27, 1576. Cowley to Russell, September 29, and October 9, 1865.

hardly be serious"; the Ambassador then advised the Porte to issue the Firman at once rather than to "continue negotiations which had for only effect to lead the French to make strong declarations against it." It was a very sound piece of advice: Aali Pasha admitted it but Lyons entertained no illusion about the success of his suggestion as the Ottoman Government made no secret of their apprehensions regarding the French attitude, should they proceed farther. The matter was dropped quietly during the winter of 1865.<sup>1</sup> The last echo came of course from Tunis: in March 1866 the tenacious Wood alluded to Fuad Pasha's courteous but not explicit answer to the Bey, and asked Lyons whether the Bey was justified in entertaining some hope of confirming and consolidating his relations and connexion with Turkey, or whether he was to remain "contented with the precarious position assigned to him by the requirements of the policy of his powerful neighbour."<sup>2</sup> A significant silence was the only answer to that anxious interrogation.

8. The Ottoman Government had shrunk from risking French opposition to the settlement of the long-pending

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1. FO 78 1861. Lyons to Russell, November 7, 1865.  
2. FO 195 792 A. Wood to Lyons. March 1, 1865.



question of the relations between the Sultan and the Bey. That indisputable failure should be examined in the light of Wood's unceasing warnings about the necessity for the Porte to enforce her claims to Suzerainty over Tunis as otherwise her rights would gradually fall into disuse. The affair of the Firman had shown that the French veto had been enough to prevent a definitive solution of the problem. The Regency remained in the ambiguous position which de Beauval and Compenon thought conducive to the progress of French influence; it did not benefit from the international protection which a clear recognition of its belonging to the Ottoman Empire would have ensured to it; at the same time its independence was neither recognized nor guaranteed by the Powers.

British influence and prestige could not but be affected by this disappointing conclusion of the policy which the Foreign Office had advocated in Tunis and the advantages of which Wood had been instructed to impress upon the Bey. Nothing could be clearer by 1865 than Turkish and English inability to overcome the French opposition. The moment might have been deemed favourable for having recourse to the "alternative" policy which Wood had recommended on several occasions should the "Turkish solution" ultimately fail. It appears that after 1864 the Khaznadar had thought of neutralizing

the Regency and of giving her a statute of quasi-independence which, several European publicists suggested, was the only solution left.<sup>1</sup> But the eventual success of the enterprise depended on an international agreement: it is difficult to see how the Foreign Office, anxious as it was to maintain a coherent policy with regard to the Ottoman Empire, and more and more reluctant to meddle in European difficulties, could have suggested or indeed desired that alternative policy.

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1. Constant, p. 46. Some of the publicists who suggested recognizing the independence of Tunis - Prévost "La Tunisie devant l'Europe" (1862), "Des rapports de la Tunisie avec l'Europe" (1865), "La Tunisie et la Civilisation" (1867), Albert François: "Tunis et la Régence" (1867) - obviously drew their inspiration from the Palace of the Bardo.

IX. The financial problem comes to the forefront  
(1865-1867)

The Regency after the revolution of 1864.

1. The revolution of 1864 had disastrous consequences for the Regency in the economic as well as in the political field. After the suspension of the Constitution and of the Judicial organization, the Bey had created a Consultative Committee which was meant to give him advice and, in a limited way, take the place of the Supreme Council: but Sadok ceased very soon to consult the Committee, which fell into disuse towards the end of 1864.<sup>1</sup> Wood's efforts to induce the Bey to maintain the reforms were utterly unsuccessful, and it was a bitter irony of fate that the British Government should at that very moment have decided at last to bestow upon the Bey a distinction which was now meaningless. On July 27 1865 Admiral Yelverton solemnly conferred the Order of Bath on the Bey. Wood extolled Anglo-Tunisian friendship and praised the Bey's past achievements, perhaps with a view to encouraging him to go on in the same way: the Bey, he said, "nous a réservé la joie de donner les bases solides à la civilisation dans les

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 80-81.

régions africaines, de faire régner la justice et l'équité  
.... le Gouvernement Anglais souhaite ardemment que  
votre action bienfaisante soit couronnée par la complète  
réalisation des vœux de vos sujets". The Bey was  
deeply moved and highly gratified, but gave no answer to  
Wood's suggestions. The Tunisian government fell back  
into the bad old ways of absolute and arbitrary rule  
which Ben Dhiaf and Khaireddin, the protagonists of the  
Reform movement, deeply resented and sharply criticized.

The re-establishment of the Bey's absolute power,  
which perhaps satisfied his inmost preferences, did not  
increase his actual authority in external or internal  
affairs. The incidents of 1865 had shown the weakening  
of his position in his relations with the Powers. Inside  
the country the Bey had been unable to re-establish  
confidence and peace: the severity of the repression  
and the continued mismanagement of the administration  
fostered the discontent and agitation. In November 1865  
Ali ben Ghedahem came back to the Regency, perhaps in  
consequence of letters inviting him to return to Tunis.  
After several weeks of apprehension regarding a possible  
rising of the tribes, Ali ben Ghedahem surrendered and  
was imprisoned (March 1866): he was to die in his prison  
in October 1867, in somewhat suspect circumstances.

The economic and financial situation, bad as it

was before 1864, was made even more critical by the revolution. The events of 1864 undermined the economy of the Regency and impaired its finances. The war-indemnities which were levied in the revolted areas (and specially in the Sahel) were so heavy that many villages had recourse to foreign merchants who advanced them the necessary funds against their produce of olive oil, at a fixed price, with their property being mortgaged as security: as the crops were insufficient to meet their liabilities, the Tunisians renewed their engagements, and their debts increased accordingly: "in some instances, Wood reported in 1870, the produce of a whole village is insufficient to pay the interest upon its debt".<sup>1</sup> At the same time the government had to meet the expenses incurred during the insurrection with the usual expedients (anticipatory sale of olive oil and local loans), and ultimately resorted to a new loan in France. In 1865 the Bey borrowed 25,000,000 francs from d'Erlanger; he was to reimburse 60,000,000 in 15 years and received only 7,500,000 francs in cash.

A loan contracted in these conditions could not but aggravate the Bey's difficulties: his liabilities now reached 11,800,000 francs yearly, (8,200,000 for the

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Clarendon, March 16, 1870.  
Ben Dhiaf, p. 84.

French debt and 3,600,000 in Tunis), and he had to ask for more money from the population, but the resources of the country appeared to be exhausted. The Summer Camp of 1865 in the region of Beja led to dreadful extortions. The crops of 1865 and 1866 were a complete failure; the Camp of the Arad (March-July 1866) collected only insignificant sums, less than its expenditure, and the Camp of the Djerid (April - August 1866) was equally unsuccessful. It visited also the region of Beja but "il n'y avait rien a recouvrer - Tout était ruiné" and Ali Bey returned empty-handed.<sup>1</sup> The Bey was unable to deliver the oil which he had sold in anticipation or to pay for it: his obligations were renewed, with the addition of the interest (12 per cent yearly). Sadok then resorted to the very dubious expedient of coining copper money (May 1866) which lost half of its value and had to be devalued in December 1866. In the meanwhile the agriculturists had shown such reluctance to receive it in payment that the scarcity of corn was considerably aggravated, so that to financial difficulties were added famine and epidemics.<sup>2</sup> The Tunisian government were threatened with bankruptcy if some drastic action was not taken to remedy their financial difficulties.

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1. Ben Dhiaf, pp.169 and 172: FO 102 77. Wood to Stanley, September 2, 1866.
  2. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 172 to 189.

The consolidation of the debt (1867)

2. In April 1866 Wood sent a rather disheartening report about the Tunisian financial situation; the government, he added, were endeavouring to find money (about 110,000,000 francs) in Europe, but it appeared highly improbable that they would be able to raise money upon more favourable terms than 10 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the foreign merchants who held Government bonds were protesting against the Government's failure to meet their liabilities. The Consuls besieged the Bey with their claims, but Wood showed a reserve which he justified by political considerations: "by superadding to the pecuniary difficulties of the government [the protest] dogged its action whilst it tended to precipitate a financial collapse which we were all anxious to avert."<sup>2</sup> The ultimata of the French and Italian Consuls indicated that the financial problem would soon take a political aspect: under these conditions Wood felt bound to help the Government to the utmost of his power in order to avoid foreign intervention. On the one hand he advised the government "to submit to any sacrifice rather than to draw upon itself coercive measures".

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1. FO 102 77. Wood to Clarendon, April 14, 1866.  
2. FO 102 77. Wood to Russell, July 12, 1866.

On the other, he tried to persuade the Bey's creditors "in their own interests" to "use moderation and accept a temporary accommodation" pending the conclusion of a loan.<sup>1</sup>

The negotiations for that loan proved long and ultimately unsuccessful. The Bey needed too much money, and was reluctant to accept the very harsh terms which he was offered, especially after the two disastrous experiences of 1863 and 1865. At the beginning of September 1866 the prospects, however, seemed more favourable, and a Tunisian Envoy, Mussali concluded a preliminary agreement with a British Bank. In order to obtain the quotation of the loan in the London money market, and also to encourage subscriptions, the contractors and the Bey hoped that the British government would grant to that loan "the same favour and privileges which are accorded to other Foreign loans". Wood unreservedly supported that demand as, in the event of financial collapse, the governments of the creditors were likely to use coercive measures to enforce payment. Wood even went so far as to place Santillana, the chancellor of the Consulate, at the disposal of the Tunisian government, in order to help Musalli in his

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1. FO 102 77. Wood to Russell, August 28, 1866.



negotiations. This last step was deemed "questionable" by Stanley, and the Foreign Office replied to Wood that although his compliance with the Bey's request was not disapproved of under the circumstances, he must understand that the British Government had "no desire to be mixed up with the financial difficulties of the Bey".<sup>1</sup> The ultimate failure of the loan - the Tunisian government considered that the terms were too heavy for the resources of the Regency - removed the grounds for the anxieties of the Foreign Office. The reluctance of the Tunisian government was undoubtedly justified but their credit was now at its lowest ebb.

3. At the beginning of 1867 matters had come to a standstill; the Government had not been able to pay the bonds which had fallen due since June 1866; the negotiations for a loan were interrupted. The detractors of the government accused them of only trying to gain time; though Wood did not look upon the situation "in the same point of view", he was bound to understand the exasperation of the creditors, many of whom were British. They were of course trying to get the support

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1. FO 102 77. Wood to Stanley, October 13, 1866 - Note Hammond, October 23, Stanley to Wood, October 24, Wood to Stanley, November 24, 1866.

of their respective Consuls and Governments, a course of action which was pregnant with momentous consequences for the political status of the Regency, if some of the Foreign Governments should "consider themselves called upon to intervene for the protection of the interests and fortunes of their subjects."<sup>1</sup>

Under these conditions Wood was led to suggest a local consolidation of the debt redeemable in a stated number of years, the annuities to be paid out of certain revenues, under the supervision of representatives of the local creditors. Should the government refuse to liquidate their debt, Wood argued with the Bey, the European governments might consider themselves obliged to adopt adequate measures "not perhaps by the presence of ships of war but by deputed Commissioners charged to enquire into the receipts and expenditure of the Tunisian Government, for the purpose of allotting a portion of the public revenue towards the liquidation of its obligation...". In such a case, Wood added, the government would experience the gradual loss of their freedom of action in matters of internal administration.<sup>2</sup> The adoption of his proposals, Wood believed, would avert

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1. FO 102 79. Wood to Russell, January 12, 1867.  
2. Ibid., February 21, 1867.

the impending crisis. On the other hand the organization of the control on a private basis would not involve the political dangers which the official intervention of the Powers was likely to bring about. Last and not least the arrangement suggested by Wood was particularly favourable to British interests as British debt claims were invested in the local loans (11,000,000 francs) and only to a minor extent in the "French loans" of 1863 and 1865 (1,000,000 francs).<sup>1</sup> The Bey was so depressed by the situation that he was ready to accept any reasonable offer; the Prime Minister accordingly approved Wood's suggestion that parts of the revenues should henceforward be assigned for the progressive payment of a portion of the local debt. (February 1867)

4. Wood's initiative seemed at first to meet with complete success, technical as well as political. In March 1867 an agreement was concluded between the Tunisian government and six French, Italian and English residents under the auspices of the English and Italian Consuls (the French Consul later asked the two Frenchmen to withdraw from the Commission but several French claims remained involved in the agreement). The government

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1. FO 102 114. Wood to Stanley, June 20, 1868, N 32.

deposited as securities, with the representatives of its creditors, permits for the export of olive oil, wool, dates and soap within five years, the proceeds being used for the repayment of 8,000,000 piasters. The agreement was later extended by contract to the payment of additional sums of 4,000,000 (March 17) and 8,000,000 (April 8).<sup>1</sup> This first conversion (of a total amount of 20,000,000 piasters), relieved the government of the pressure which had been brought to bear upon them and restored some kind of confidence among the creditors. The creation of stamp duty allowed a second conversion of 10,000,000 francs (August 1, 1867): the stamp duty, and various export duties were to be administered by 6 merchants (3 Frenchmen, 2 Italians, and one British), the interest and principal of the converted debt being extinguished in the course of six years.<sup>2</sup> As, however, the amount of the local debt appeared to be greater than had been at first supposed, two further contracts of conversions were concluded, the first of 10,000,000 francs (September 1) and the second of 8,000,000 francs (in January 1868). The Tunisian government seemed to be proceeding peacefully towards the gradual liquidation

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1. FO 102 79. Wood to Russell, March 7 and 23, April 20 1867, and FO 102 114. Wood to Stanley, June 23, 1868.
  2. FO 102 79. Wood to Stanley August 19, 1867. FO 102 114. Wood to Stanley, May 1, 1868.

of their debts.

Some kind of settlement was urgently needed; there were disquieting signs that in Italy and France impatience was increasing. In March Wood had passed on rumours of naval preparations in Brindisi and Cagliari.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of April Baron Castelnovo was sent to Tunis by the Italian government to urge the settlement of the Italian claims, before the government "saw itself compelled by the Chambers as well as by public opinion to have recourse to coercive measures for their adjustment". Wood intervened and acquainted Castelnovo with the first agreements for a conversion which "superseded the necessity of any coercive action". At Castelnovo's departure, Wood was able to express the hope that the Italian government would be satisfied with the settlements already affected and would therefore cease to entertain unfriendly feelings towards the Bey's government.<sup>2</sup> The French Consul had shown a marked hostility to the conversion scheme and had made it quite clear that French subjects could not form part of an International Commission "especially in Tunis where France had special and separate interests, which, for

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1. FO 102 79. Wood to Stanley, March 9, 1867.
  2. FO 102 79. Wood to Stanley, April 3 and 20, 1867.

political objects must be kept distinct from those of other nations."<sup>1</sup> But French merchants had nevertheless taken part in the arrangement and their representatives were even members of the Board of Administration of the second and third conversions. De Botmiliau had nevertheless sent very alarming reports to Paris about the Tunisian situation and, according to Wood, the French Government had contemplated sending an expedition to Tunis, perhaps with Italian co-operation.

The affairs of Italy had, however, led the French to suspend the expedition, and on the French side also the situation seemed to improve during the summer of 1867. Wood himself had to deal with the impatience of the British creditors who were of course less prone than Wood to further British political interests in preference to their own material interests. The Chamber of Commerce of Malta besieged the Governor of Malta with complaints against the Tunisian Government and Wood's alleged inefficiency: "We regret to observe that Maltese interests in the Regency of Tunis are not protected in the same manner as the interests of subjects of other countries" the Maltese merchants wrote on June 27.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 79. Wood to Russell, March 7, 1867.
  2. FO 102 79. Chamber of Commerce to Governor of Malta: March 13, May 23, July 4, November 2.

The Foreign Office transmitted these complaints to Wood but, it seems, without pressing him too hard. Wood, however, recommended moderation to British subjects and tried to settle their claims fairly and amicably with the government, with an obvious desire not to complicate their situation too much. Wood's experiment justified thin rays of hope but the restoration of Tunisian finances was a long and exacting labour, and many difficulties were still ahead.

The crisis of the Autumn of 1867.

5. Famine and misery combined in 1867 with epidemics created in the Regency a state of unrest which found expression in a series of troubles. In May 1867 Arab tribes approached Beja in the hope of being able to procure food, and various reports referred to the disaffection of the Arab tribes in the Kairovan and Djerid districts.<sup>1</sup> In September 1867 Adel Bey, the Bey's youngest brother, left the Bardo secretly and went over to the Rebels in the mountains near Beja. In the state of exasperation of the population a general rising of the tribes was to be feared. The prince, however, was soon tired of his nomadic existence, and

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1. FO 102 79. Werry to Stanley, May 14, 1867.

the Bey of the Camp, Ali Bey, had no sooner offered him an amnesty than Adel Bey surrendered with his companions (October 4, 1867). The Bey hastily proceeded to a repression out of proportion to the importance of the rising: two well-known generals, General Reshid and Ismael Sahib et Tabaa, who were involved in Adel's departure were summarily executed, while many other officers were arrested, and Adel put in prison where he died on November 5.<sup>1</sup>

The event provoked a simultaneous protest by the French and English consulates. While the French Consul expressed his concern at "l'évènement tragique qui vient de souiller de sang le palais du Bardo"<sup>2</sup>, Vice-Consul Werry (who was in charge of the Consulate during Wood's leave of absence) was more precise in his criticism and related the affair to the broader question of Reforms. After having described the double summary execution as "lamentable and arbitrary proceedings", Werry remarked that it would have been better to submit the affair to a trial before a Court Martial: the Bey had sworn to his subjects to abide by the Constitution and the Ahd el Aman which gave guarantees of personal

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1. FO 102 79. Werry to Stanley, September 17 and 21, October 5, 1867, Ben Dhiaf, pp. 198-200.
  2. Ben Dhiaf, pp. 201-202.



security which the Powers "would never consent to see destroyed". And in a written note Werry insisted: "les lois, quoique suspendues par la force regrettable de circonstances exceptionnelles, existent et ne peuvent cesser d'exister".<sup>1</sup>

6. As soon as he returned to Tunis, Wood seized upon Adel Bey's case and linked it with the threat of French intervention. The internal disorganization which the uprisings of 1867 had revealed, as well as the possibility of the Powers taking the interests of their nationals in their hands if no remedy was given to the administrative and financial defects, gave Wood weighty arguments in favour of immediate reforms.

The Consul had a very dramatic interview with the Bey in the last days of November. After having emphasized the injustice of the summary execution of Reshid and Ismael, Wood reminded the Bey of his repeated demands that the Bey should comply with the written assurances given to Wood in 1864 "that the **Pacte Fondamental**... should be maintained in all its integrity". The disaffection in Tunis, Wood continued, was directly attributable to the present situation which the French Consul reported

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1. FO 102 79. Werry to Stanley, October 12, 1867.

as "tantamount to a complete disorganisation of the Regency". De Botmiliau's complaints were undoubtedly over-stated but there was no denying that there existed much room for complaint and for serious reflection. Under these conditions Wood pressed the Bey to adopt at once "ameliorations in the administrative system....before they were forced upon him by foreign intervention". If the Bey refused to make reasonable changes France would present her ultimatum which would lead to the establishment of her control over the finances and ultimately to the loss of the Bey's internal autonomy. "The time had now come," Wood concluded, "when facts and not mere words would satisfy [France] as well as the other European Powers that the Tunisian Government had sincerely entered into a wiser system of administration". The Bey promised Wood to follow his advice and asked him to come to an understanding with the Prime Minister "as to what should be done under existing circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

Wood endeavoured to take advantage of the internal discontent and of the external dangers to start the movement of reforms anew: the circumstances, and Wood's tactics were similar indeed to those of 1857. Such a move, Wood thought, could only avert the impending French

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1. FO 102 79. Wood to Stanley, November 30, 1867.

menace and, by giving satisfaction to their most legitimate complaints, make a further intervention by the French government useless. One can interpret in this light the interview which Wood had some days later with de Botmiliau. By informing him of his proceedings with the Bey and of the Bey's promises, Wood was able to break down the dangerous isolation of the French Consul, and to induce him to accept discussion and reforms instead of resorting to force. De Botmiliau, although he showed some astonishment at Wood's attitude, could not but promise to give "his best advice" and "the assistance in his power... for a satisfactory settlement of the present difficulties". Negotiations actually began between the French Consul, the Government, and Wood for the reorganization of the Ministry and the cooperation of "two or three qualified Europeans....with the Minister of Finances for the organisation of the finances". Wood, however, entertained but moderate hopes for lasting reconciliation between the Bey and French Consul: French policy in Tunis, he commented gloomily, "has now assumed a more defined and determined character and consequently susceptible of easier execution at any opportune moment".<sup>1</sup>

1. FO 102 79. Wood to Stanley, December 23, 1867. Wood's audacious diplomacy met with only the half-hearted approval of Stanley, who comments: "You would have acted more prudently if you had not told the French Consul General that you had stated to the Bey that if His Highness did not adopt a system of reform he would see Tunis occupied by Foreign Troops" (F.O.102 82. Stanley to Wood, January 8, 1868)

1868 began in an atmosphere of drama which justified all misgivings about the future of the Regency. Famine and epidemics had set the nomadic tribes and the agriculturists in movement towards the towns. The situation as described by Wood and Ben Dhiaf was dreadful during the winter of 1867-1868. "Number of corpses [are] found on the roads in the immediate neighbourhood of this city alone.... The deaths from starvation, cold and disease have reached the appalling number of 8000 within a few weeks.... No description can depict the horror of seeing emaciated children devouring the putrid offal...in the streets.... No conception can be formed of the accumulation of offal, of the exhalations that emanate from a black mass of liquid mud mixed up with it,... of the nauseous odours from the burial grounds as well as from the poor famished and diseased Arabs lying about in all the thoroughfares."<sup>1</sup> It was against this background of misery and insolvency that a new attempt for reforms was to begin, with the foreign creditors waiting at Tunis's door.

7. Wood's last bid for reform closed a period which had begun in 1856 with the highest hopes. The

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1. FO 102 83. Wood to Stanley, January 4 and June 6, 1868

personalities of Wood and of Palmerston had dominated British policy during these ten years. Whoever had been Foreign Secretary, the "Palmerstonian spirit" had continued to inspire the action of the Foreign Office. Palmerston had even intervened personally at critical junctures and played a decisive part in maintaining a policy which retained the main features he had defined earlier as a Foreign Secretary: fear of a French occupation of Tunis, desire to effect a rapprochement between the Bey and the Sultan. The policy of Reforms was only a variation which had precedents in Palmerston's policy towards the Porte. Anxiety to maintain the diplomatic tradition, and the reluctance to contemplate any change liable to effect British policy towards the Porte were of course the weak points of Palmerston's doctrine; that was already obvious in 1856. In Tunis Wood had played the essential part in advocating a policy of Reforms which he had brought with him in Tunis and for which he was indebted to Palmerston and Stratford Canning. The action of the Foreign Office had hardly been positive and the British Government had very often been content with approving Wood's proceedings, which on the whole fitted into the general framework of British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Wood was unable to make a success of his Turkish policy because

the obstacles which had prevented the "Turkish solution" from 1835 to 1856 still remained in his way, and because the Foreign Office refused to contemplate accepting a modification in the status of Tunis which Wood thought necessary and had proposed more than once.

The ultimate failure of the policy of Reforms was a hard blow for Wood's policy. It is not very easy to make a fair division of the responsibility. The French commentators have laid the emphasis upon the errors of the Tunisians themselves and the fact that the new institutions were ill adapted to the situation of the Regency: "The attempt to introduce civilization by instituting Organic laws was unreasonable, since the natives were mere agriculturists", de Beauval remarked in 1864 "...It was to the increase of this source of prosperity that the energies of the government should be directed."<sup>1</sup> The Constitution was perhaps too liberal and in some ways impracticable; it did not really establish a parliamentary regime, there remained religious difficulties to solve, and the conditions of social life in the Regency were most unfavourable: "What the population clamoured for above all was justice and peace, and these two essentials were absent."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 72. Wood to Russell, August 30, 1864.
  2. Safwat M., Tunis and the Great Powers, pp. 21-26.

The Tunisian reformers stressed the evil deeds of the foreigners, sometimes with great vigour. There is no doubt that the new institutions could not last if the Europeans were reluctant to play a straightforward game and refused to accept the consequences of the reforms which they had themselves forced upon the Bey. The events of the years 1861 to 1864, and particularly the crisis of 1864, showed that most of the Europeans in Tunis were indeed ready to sabotage the Reforms. "Certains gouvernements européens," Khaireddin remarked in 1868, "ont cherché et cherchent encore à soulever les sujets de quelques Etats musulmans contre l'acceptation des institutions politiques et administratives que leurs souverains voudraient octroyer."<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, necessary to remark that ultimately the economic and financial collapse of the Regency was bound to cause the experiment of political reforms to fail. The mismanagement of public affairs, the incapacity, the corruption existed before 1830; the increasing backwardness of the Regency when compared to the European countries, which were then progressing by leaps and bounds, quickened the decay which the proximity of Algiers made particularly dangerous. But the Europeans

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1. Khaireddin, Réformes nécessaires aux Etats Musulmans  
p. 46.

appeared very skilful at taking advantage of the defects they found in the Regency, when they did not create for themselves the opportunities for fruitful bargains: from the Aqueduct of Zaghuan, to the loans of 1863 and 1865, and the extortions of the local creditors, the Tunisian government climbed a Calvary which was to end only in foreign control over their administration. From that point of view Wood was confronted with a dilemma which he was unable to solve: the opening of the Regency to European capital which was one of the main points of his programme in 1856 and was made possible by the Anglo-Tunisian Convention of 1863, could not fail to worsen the Tunisian difficulties and ultimately embitter the rivalries of the European Powers.

Confronted with the Tunisian collapse the Foreign Office clung to its traditional policy and was content with limiting the diplomatic implications of the revolution of 1864 without trying very hard to prevent the total wreckage of the political institutions which Wood had so largely contributed to build up. It is not improbable that, in London, confidence in the Tunisian reforms was less strong than in Tunis. The discouraging experiences of the Ottoman Empire were of course such as to justify some scepticism about the success of the Constitution of 1859. The Bey's decision was of course



called "temporary suspension", but experience later showed that the suspension was to be definitive, and Wood's hopes in this matter were utterly disappointed. The financial and economic problems which had already underlain the political history of the Regency for ten years, began to monopolize attention; unhappily Wood's interest came too late and the steps he took in 1867 were palliatives likely only to delay the crisis, not to avert it. British policy seemed to be one move behind with the Tunisian problem.

III. The Policy of Economic Penetration  
(1868-1877)

"... Those foreign pecuniary speculations which have invariably been the harbingers of evil both to Egypt and Tunis."  
( Wood, 1871)

X. The International Financial Commission (1868-1870)

From the French Commission to the International Commission  
(March to May 1868)

1. The four conversions had been a political success for Wood's policy and a defeat for France's; but they did not really solve the financial problems. The debt was much more important than Wood had at first thought; in all it reached some 160 million francs (66 for the loans of 1863-1865, 40 for the conversions and 55 for the local floating debt) with an annual interest of 19,500,000 francs, which exceeded the total resources of the budget.<sup>1</sup> Even with the relief brought by the conversions the Tunisian Government were utterly unable to meet their liabilities; in order to satisfy their local creditors they had given them securities which had already been assigned to the French loans; the French creditors who held the main part of the debt in their hands were not long in protesting against this situation and against the advantageous position which the Commissioners of the Conversions assured to the local creditors. When the Tunisian

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1. Constant, p. 55 and f.

Government failed to pay the coupon which had just fallen due the French creditors turned to their government for support.

Although the Quai d'Orsay later endeavoured to present the suggestion as coming from the Bey himself, there is no doubt that it was de Botmiliau who first proposed the creation of a Mixed Commission for the administration of the revenues of the Regency.<sup>1</sup> A first project was rejected by the Bey and modified to take more account of his prerogatives: the Financial Commission was to be composed of two Tunisian officials, two representatives of the foreign merchants, two representatives of the French bond-holders, the first deputy of the French nation, and "a person learned in the Administration of Finances who [should] be brought from Paris". The Commission would attend to the revenue of the government and annual expenditure, and would employ one part of the revenue for the expenditure of the government and the other for the payment of the debt (April 4, 1868).<sup>2</sup> By the creation of a Commission which would obviously be dominated by its French members, the French government took revenge for the Conversions of 1867 and obtained a double advantage: they received absolute control over

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1. Ben Dhiaf, p. 222.

2. FO 102 113. Wood to Stanley, March 28, April 7, 1868

the finances of the Regency for the benefit of French creditors and of French economic enterprises; they took over the political initiative which they had lost in 1867. The success was so decisive indeed that it was likely to provoke a reaction from the other Powers interested in the Tunisian question.

2. Wood's objections to Botmiliau's scheme were strongly formulated from the very beginning. Serious dangers, he remarked as early as March 28, would accrue from the project which required considerable modifications, not only in regard to the protection of the Bey's right to administer the revenues of his own country, but also to the protection of the material interests of the subjects of other Governments. Italy and Great Britain could not agree that the interests of their nationals should be dealt with by a Commission dominated by France, and in which they were not represented.<sup>1</sup> The Consul asked the Bey to suspend any further negotiations pending the consultation of their respective governments by the Italian and British Consuls. Should the Bey persist, Wood added, he would perhaps have to suspend relations with him until he should receive instructions.<sup>2</sup> In all this Wood was

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1. FO 102 113. Wood to Stanley, March 28, 1868

2. Ibid., April 6, 1868.

acting in complete agreement with the Italian Consul. The first result of his opposition was that de Botmiliau was obliged to agree, at the Bey's request, that nothing further should be done until the British and Italian Governments should come to a friendly understanding with the French Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> The discussion was to continue on a higher level: but whatever its outcome might be, the establishment of some kind of tutelage over the government of the Regency was now inevitable.

The attitude of the Foreign Office in the Tunisian crisis corresponded with its European policy. Since the Danish affair the Conservatives were as anxious as the Liberals to avoid continental complications and, as a reaction against Palmerston's policy of interference, non-intervention had become the fundamental creed of both parties. The importance of internal problems also helped to put foreign policy into the shade for some years.<sup>2</sup> One can infer that under these conditions Stanley had no desire to get mixed up in the Tunisian imbroglio and to pick a quarrel<sup>there</sup> with France. Stanley was indeed ready to recognize that French influence and vicinity justified their strong interest in the Regency, but at the same time was convinced that France did not

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1. FO 102 113. Wood to Stanley, April 11, 1868  
2. Seton-Watson, pp. 474 and 485.

think of annexing Tunis. It did not, however, follow that Stanley was in anyway ready to accept a French protectorate over Tunis, or to sacrifice British interests there.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, the French move in Tunis was bound to give rise to serious reserves in London. While limiting the scope of his intervention to obtaining "for British subjects an equal measure of justice with those of other Powers", Stanley at once defined his objections to the French scheme: England and Italy should be associated in the Commission on equal footing with France; the operations of the Commission should be "prospective" and should not affect the arrangements already entered into by the Bey with foreign creditors.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, Stanley kept the Italian Government informed of what was happening in Tunis and received promises of complete support. As a further measure of precaution the views of the British Government were also communicated to Bismarck.<sup>3</sup> The diplomatic encircling of France was thus completed.

3. The French Government, however, offered fierce resistance. While assuring Lyons of his anxiety to "act

1. FO 102 115. Stanley to Herries, October 19, 1868. Newton, Lord Lyons I, 221. Newton's assumption that "the French Government therefore obtained, as far as we were concerned, a free hand" seems to be exaggerated.
2. FO 102 113. Stanley to Wood and to Lyons, April 8, 1868.
3. Ibid, Stanley to Loftus, April 22, 1868.

entirely in concert with Her Majesty's Government", Moustier, the French Foreign Minister, tried to give colour to his theory that the Bey had "spontanément" proposed the institution of the Commission; the French Government had not yet come to any decision regarding the Bey's proposal which, however, they could not disregard; France had only to "open her mouth to swallow up Tunis whenever she pleased"; but she did not pursue any exclusive advantage in Tunis and was acting for the interest of all parties. France desired to settle the matter amicably with the British and Italian Governments. The intervention of the Italian and British Consuls had been unfortunate: France, Moustier concluded, asked the Foreign Office not to take any step which would "interfere with the French position at Tunis" and to instruct Wood "not to create embarrassment and confusion by treating the matter with the Bey's government, and not to place himself in antagonism to his French colleague."<sup>1</sup>

This attempt to neutralize Wood was combined with fresh endeavours to bully the Bey and to force the acceptance of the proposed commission upon him. It is not surprising that in these circumstances Stanley replied that Moustier's explanations were not sufficient to remove

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1. FO 102 113. Lyons to Stanley, April 10, 17 and 23, 1868.



British objections: "If M. de Moustier," Stanley wrote to Lyons on April 20, "means that while Mr. Wood's hands are to be tied up by his Government the French agent is to be left unfettered to exercise whatever pressure he thinks proper on the Bey, Her Majesty's Government cannot subscribe to any such one sided engagement."<sup>1</sup> Stanley was, however, ready to come to an understanding at Paris with the French and Italian Governments about the plan of placing the administration of the finances of Tunis in the hands of a mixed Commission, on the two conditions which he had already expressed.<sup>2</sup>

The British position being thus firmly stated, there was no alternative left to France but to come to an agreement. De Moustier tried at least to retire in good order: he demanded that, as a satisfaction to French dignity, the Bey should seal the decree on the Commission, merely as a matter of form. The Foreign Office did not feel inclined to object to this demand provided it obtained from France "satisfactory assurances as to the constitution and powers of the Commission."<sup>3</sup> Lyons accordingly suggested to Moustier that, in order to avoid future misunderstanding, he should confirm in writing

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1. FO 102 113. Stanley to Lyons, April 20, 1868
  2. Ibid, April 27, 1868
  3. FO 102 114. Stanley to Lyons, May 16, 1868

the explanations he had already given verbally that the French Government would not act on the Bey's decree until the two governments of England and France should have come to an understanding as to the modifications to be made in it. As soon as the assurance was given, Stanley instructed Wood to cease his opposition to the promulgation of the decree (May 23). The Italian Government was less confident about French intentions in Tunis and had repeatedly warned the Foreign Office that France "had a political object....to make Tunis a dependency of France", but in spite of his misgivings Menabrea could not but conform to the British attitude.<sup>1</sup> As for Wood, his suspicions were not lulled and as late as May 27 he still expressed the hope that some stringent provisions would be made to render the decree inoperative in any future contingency. But there was of course no dissent regarding Stanley's instructions.

Organisation of the International Commission.

4. France had experienced a check which the ultimate sealing of the decree by the Bey (May 29, 1868) barely concealed.<sup>2</sup> The negotiations were now transferred to

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1. FO 102 113, Paget to Stanley, April 25, 1868.  
FO 102 114, Paget, May 19, 1868.

2. Constant, p. 53 comments: "Cet arrangement consacrait l'abdication forcée de notre prépondérance en Tunisie."

Paris and London, a change which did not make them easier, as the difficulties of April and May had aroused the susceptibilities and suspicions of the negotiators. In addition the three governments <sup>were</sup> somewhat embarrassed, as the proposed Commission was the first experiment of international cooperation in the administration of the finances of a Foreign State.<sup>1</sup>

The French and English governments were inclined each to suspect the other of trying to solve the financial problems of Tunis to its own advantage: indeed opportunities were not lacking on each side. During the summer, two British contractors, Blackmore and Hope tried to work out a profitable operation of consolidation and unification of the Tunisian debt, and endeavoured to secure the support of the Foreign Office for their scheme under the pretence of maintaining the independence of Tunis "threatened at present by the French". From the start Hammond did not show much enthusiasm: "It is the old story of private advantage sought under the disguise of enlightened philanthropy", he remarked on July 14, 1868.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately Hammond's first impression prevailed that the Foreign Office could not "consistently with its under-

1. The Egyptian "Caisse de la Dette" was established in 1876; the International financial control of the Turkish debt was decided at Berlin (1878) but was carried into effect only in 1881.
2. FO 102 114. Lyons to Stanley, June 18, Blackmore to Stanley, July 13, 1868.

standings with France further this separate undertaking."<sup>1</sup>  
On the other hand the "Crédit Lyonnais" was proposing a Contract to the Bey for the Conversion of the debt. It is not very clear whether the Quai d'Orsay favoured the scheme; de Botmiliau appears to have supported it in Tunis; Moustier, however, assured Lyons that he would "most decidedly" object to the Bey's incurring any fresh liabilities until the establishment of the commission; but the mission of Capitaine Bonfils, Prince Napoleon's Aide de Camp, was related to the scheme and had obviously a semi-official character.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly the negotiations were pursued amid the recriminations of the Bey's creditors, who complained of the insolvency of the Tunisian Government and asked for firm action on the part of their Governments: "Indeed but for considerations of more importance than the settlement of these claims," Moustier told Lyons in September, "[I] should have been disposed to send a squadron of ships of war to bring the Bey to reason."<sup>3</sup> And Wood dwelt on the awkwardness of his situation, as the British subjects

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1. FO 102 115. Note on Blackmore's letter of November 18, 1868.
  2. FO 102 115. Wood to Stanley, July 14, Lyons to Stanley, July 17, Wood to Stanley, September 7, 1868
  3. Ibid, Lyons to Stanley, September 4, 1868.

were besieging him with complaints while he felt the necessity of acting "with much circumspection and forbearance"<sup>1</sup> The simultaneous changes of Ministers in Great Britain, where Clarendon became Foreign Secretary in December 1868, and in France, where La Valette took Moustier's place, also contributed to hinder a speedy conclusion of the negotiations.

5. As early as the end of July 1868 Moustier proposed a scheme which was to provide the basis for the final settlement. The Commission would be divided into two sections: the Executive Section would be appointed by the Bey and if the Bey could not find three competent persons among his own subjects, "he might place a foreigner well versed in financial administration in this section"; the Section of Control would be composed of representatives of all the interests concerned.<sup>2</sup> As, in Moustier's mind, the foreign technician would obviously be French, the scheme met two essential requirements: it preserved the French control which the Decree of April 4 had instituted, and it gave Stanley satisfaction about the equal representation of the Powers.

When consulted by Stanley, Wood did not conceal his hostility to the scheme. He disliked the division of

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1. FO 102 115. Wood to Stanley, September 26.  
2. Ibid. Lyons to Stanley, July 31, 1868.

the Commission into two sections for the reason, which he did not state explicitly, that he feared that the Executive Section would be dominated by the European - very likely French - member, and would in its turn dominate the Section of Control. The Executive Section, he suggested should be composed of three Tunisians, and form "a compact working body" with the four European members of the Commission (one Frenchman, one Englishman, one Prussian and one Italian). Wood's main preoccupation was obviously to avert the establishment of too close European control in Tunis, and under cover of that control the strengthening of French preponderance.<sup>1</sup> The internal problems (dissolution of Parliament by Disraeli and preparation for the elections) probably diverted Stanley's attention from the Tunisian question, for de Moustier was obliged to reopen the discussion in October and to ask Lyons whether the Foreign Office accepted his scheme as proposed in July, with the precise condition this time that the third member of the Executive Section should be French. In the meantime de Botmiliau resorted in Tunis to the well worn tactics of the 'fait accompli' and tried to persuade the Bey to sign the Contract for a conversion of

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1. FO 102 115. Wood to Stanley, August 26, 1868.

the Debt, and appoint a French Civil Servant as a Financial adviser.

This time, however, the settlement seemed to be very near indeed. On October 13 Stanley replied to Moustier that he saw no objection to the proposed division of the Financial Commission into two distinct bodies. Stanley's slight hesitation about the European adviser (he would be glad to be informed "on what grounds it is considered necessary that the Administrative Section should include a foreign member")<sup>1</sup> was dispelled by de Moustier: the presence of a European was necessary to make sure that a real improvement would be effected; de Moustier suggested that he should be French because France could supply a financier specially suited for the post more easily than Italy or Great Britain, and because he would have "more weight" in Tunis; France, de Moustier concluded, had no idea "of exercising a predominant influence."<sup>2</sup> Stanley chose to trust de Moustier's assurances, and brushed aside Wood's misgivings and the objections expressed by the Italian Ambassador: He would not oppose the presence of a French financier, on the understanding that the "controlling section... should be invested with real powers of suspension and control."

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1. FO 102 115. Stanley to Lyons, October 13.
  2. Ibid., Lyons to Stanley, October 18.

If the Powers were unable to reach an agreement, all the creditors would equally be losers. Moreover, after the "complete failure" of the colonization of Algiers, Stanley did not believe that France was likely to desire to extend the French dominions in North Africa. "I looked therefore," Stanley concluded, "to the financial rather than the political aspect of the question."<sup>1</sup> The Italian Government again resigned themselves to a concession which they did not approve of in their heart of hearts, and they were inclined to regard Stanley's "understanding" as a mere acceptance of French views on Tunis.

6. A conjunction of circumstances, however, delayed the definitive settlement of the Tunisian financial question and merely brought it to nought. In Great Britain the formation of Gladstone's administration created some uncertainty regarding Tunisian affairs. Clarendon had to be informed of the progress achieved in respect of the Commission. At the same time the new Foreign Secretary proceeded to a careful study of the Tunisian problem: "Does the Porte still claim Tunis as a dependency? If so what authority does it exercise there? Is that authority recognized by the Bey? Does

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1. FO 102 115. Stanley to Herries, October 19, 1868



not France treat Tunis as independent?" he asked on January 21, 1869. Hertslet's answers were imbued with the traditional principles of British policy in Tunis since 1835: "Within the last few years," he concluded, "the British Government have laid down distinctly that the Bey is not an independent Sovereign, but that he governs under the Suzerainty of the Sultan."<sup>1</sup>

During the winter France appeared less anxious to conclude the negotiations. The Quai d'Orsay felt increasingly nervous about the Bey's attitude and Moustier was inclined to "show his teeth or (to speak more plainly) his cannons."<sup>2</sup> Britain's insistence that Prussia should be associated with or at least kept informed of, the negotiations also gave rise to obvious displeasure in Paris. It is possible that the Foreign Office thought of strengthening its hand in the negotiation by the addition of a Prussian partner; but it seems more likely that the British feared lest de Moustier's stubbornness should create a serious misunderstanding between France and Prussia. Prussian interests involved in Tunis were trifling indeed, but Bismarck appeared inclined to defend German rights in the Regency, probably to embarrass the French and to stir up a Franco-Italian rivalry in the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> When La Valette took de Moustier's

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1. FO 102 87. Memorandum. February 6, 1869.
  2. FO 102 115. Lyons, October 8, 1868.
  3. Chiala, Pagine di Storia Contemporanea (II) p. 345  
Newton I, p. 221.

place, at the close of the year, French reluctance seemed to increase: de Moustier's plan sanctioned the establishment of an international tutelage over Tunis which ran counter to French claim for predominant position in the Regency. In April 1869 La Valette told Lyons that "he was unable to anticipate any practical benefit from M. de Moustier's plan of administering the Finances of Tunis by means of an international Commission," and he concluded rather ominously that "he had not been able to come to any decision".<sup>1</sup>

We have already remarked that Italy had never shown much enthusiasm about de Moustier's scheme. She took advantage of the lull which occurred in the negotiations during the winter to state the grounds of her opposition to the presence of a French Administrator in the Commission and to try to obtain Britain's agreement for a joint refusal of the French scheme (January 2, 1869). Lyons gave a lukewarm reception to the Italian proposal: "I should at all times be reluctant to enter into any separate understanding with a third government," he wrote to Clarendon, "... I think that it will be difficult to recede now from [the] arrangement" already concluded with Moustier.<sup>2</sup> On the whole the Foreign

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1. FO 102 116. Lyons to Clarendon, April 8, 1869.
  2. Ibid., Lyons to Clarendon, January 9th.

Office rather shared the Ambassador's views, but a dead-lock had apparently been reached in April, and Lyons and Clarendon were induced to think that that Italian proposals might perhaps provide a basis for renewing the negotiations.

#### Creation of the International Commission.

7. At this juncture the Quai d'Orsay again took the initiative: hesitant as he was about the advantages of de Moustier's scheme, La Valette could not help seeing that, if it were to be abandoned, the Italian or any other plan, was likely to be even less favourable to French interests. On April 12 La Valette proposed to Lyons "that the two governments [should] complete the engagements for setting on foot the Financial Commission"<sup>1</sup>. Although Clarendon was not sorry to bring the matter to an end, he reminded the French of the principles which his government wanted to take as a basis for the proposed agreement: the action of the Commission should be "prospective, not retrospective", the authority of the controlling section should be real and effective, and all parties should be equally represented in it.<sup>2</sup> A

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1. FO 102 116. Lyons to Stanley, April 13, 1869.  
2. Ibid., Clarendon to Lyons, April 21, 1869.

last incident, however, threatened to impede an immediate settlement: On April 18 the Bey yielded to the pressure which had been brought to bear upon him and signed a contract of unification and conversion with the "Comptoir d'Escompte". It is not at all unlikely that the Quai d'Orsay had been kept informed of the negotiation, but the British reaction was so energetic, "any arbitrary arrangement at variance with those now existing in behalf of British creditors, will neither be accepted nor acquiesced in by the British Government" Clarendon telegraphed to Wood on April 24,<sup>1</sup> that La Valette assured Clarendon that Botmiliau had been "complètement étranger" to the Conversion scheme. De Botmiliau was later instructed to refuse to acquiesce in the Bey's decree, and La Valette even argued from the incident about the urgency of "hâter la constitution de la Commission".<sup>2</sup>

Of this the Foreign Office had long been convinced. Consequently the Italian counter project, which was communicated to Clarendon on April 24, and which provided a temporary Commission for an enquiry into

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1. FO 102 116, Clarendon to Wood, April 24. 1869.
  2. Ibid, La Valette to la Tour d'Avvergne, April 28, 1869.

the Bey's finances, was coldly received in London. On April 29, Clarendon wrote to Paget that the Commission which had for sometime been under consideration, "embodying an administrative and a controlling section, would be a preferable course of proceeding".<sup>1</sup> The disappointment of the Italians found an expression in Baron Castelnouve's bitter comment that the Foreign Office had declared that Great Britain "had no longer the same interest in the Financial question of Tunis and that Italy therefore could not count any longer upon her joint action and cooperation".<sup>2</sup> Castelnouve's statement was probably untrue, but Clarendon expressed a significant satisfaction at Loftus' report that the Prussian Government were not likely to insist on being concerned in the affair of the Commission.<sup>3</sup>

8. It only remained for France and Great Britain to have the agreement officially sanctioned by the Bey. Although the Bey was the one whom it primarily concerned

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1. FO 102 116. Clarendon to Paget, April 29, 1869.
  2. FO 102 117. Wood to Clarendon, May 25, 1869. Castelnouve appears to have been entrusted with a semi-official mission in Tunis.
  3. FO 64 657. Clarendon to Loftus, May 11, 1869.

he had not been invited to take any part in the negotiation, but he was not expected to offer resistance to any scheme the Powers should "propose". The only difficulty which arose regarding the formal issue of the decree came from a problem of procedure. With a view to concealing their set-back the French Government suggested that it should be a confirmation of the decree of April 4, 1868, embodying the modifications which met the requirements of the Powers. Lyons felt no enthusiasm about a procedure which he deemed ambiguous and Clarendon shared his misgivings, "Inconvenience may result from the coexistence of the two decrees .... The preferable course would be that the original Decree would be absolutely revoked, and that so much of its provisions as it may be necessary to retain should be incorporated in the new Decree". But, Clarendon added, if the French Minister stuck to his first proposal, Lyons should give British acquiescence.<sup>1</sup> In the event, the French did not yield with regard to procedure, and in the end they had their way: Clarendon was averse to opposing on a point of mere form, an agreement which on the whole he deemed satisfactory to British interests.

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1. FO 102 117. Clarendon to Lyons, May 22, 1869.

No attention was paid to the reticence of the Italians: to the formal protest of the Italian Government against the presence of a French Commissioner in the executive section and some secondary points "I consider no weight could be attached" Clarendon answered on June 15, "I did not conceal from Count Maffei my dissatisfaction at [his] communication: and I said that as far as Her Majesty's government were concerned the arrangement had been concluded, and that Count Menabrea must take his own course."<sup>1</sup> The only course open to the Italian Government was to accept the decree.

Wood entertained more than misgivings about the projected Decree but as the Bey expressed his fears lest the agreement should deprive him of his autonomy, he remarked with a severity which revealed his own uneasiness: "No blame could be attached to those who had not only foreseen and predicted the disastrous consequences that would ensue but had exhausted every argument and had exerted their utmost efforts to dissuade him and his ministers from persevering in a course of policy that could not but alter his position, sooner or later, by putting a limitation to the freedom of the action of his Government."<sup>2</sup> It was no doubt in order to placate the

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1. FO 102 117. Clarendon to Lyons, June 15, 1869.
  2. FO 102 118. Wood to Clarendon, June 1, 1869.

irritable Consul that Lyons accompanied the sending of the project of Decree with a clear warning: "It does not fall within our province to give opinions on the merit of the plan .... [It] is the result of communications between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Emperor, and our duty is to use our best endeavours to make it work satisfactorily."<sup>1</sup> Wood, however, ignored the hint and sent back some suggestions which aimed at improving a text which, he said, had aroused the consternation of the British, Italian and French creditors (Wood proposed to strengthen more explicitly the securities already given to some categories of creditors, and to make "more absolute" the functions of the Commission of Control).<sup>2</sup> This time Clarendon's answer came quick and sharp: "The draft decree having been finally agreed by the French Government," he telegraphed to Wood on July 4, "it is not necessary to criticize it. You will do your best to get it promulgated as it stands and to make it work."<sup>3</sup>

9. The "limited task" which Clarendon was thus assigning to Wood was in no way easy. After one year's

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1. FO 102 118. Lyons to Wood, June 8, 1869.
  2. Ibid. Wood to Clarendon, June 26, 1869.
  3. Ibid. Clarendon to Wood, July 4, 1869.



protracted and animated negotiations the actual working of the Commission was likely to offer serious difficulties. Clarendon was perfectly aware of the problem and had sent conciliatory instructions to Wood with a view to making international co-operation possible in Tunis: "It is very important that the Commission should proceed on the principle of effecting a fair and equitable arrangement as regards the interests of all parties concerned and should not seek to promote those of one party in preference of those of another.... The best practical security for the English and Italian creditors will be found in making their interests identical with those of France and [the government] deprecate the idea of any one Power acting independently of the others."<sup>1</sup>

This message of good will was not heard in Tunis, where the struggle for influence went on between the Consuls more fiercely than ever before. An unfortunate act of initiative by the French Representative caused a new explosion at the beginning of July 1869: although it had been suggested by Wood and Pinna that the three Consuls should see the Bey together, de Botmiliau managed to meet the Bey alone on July 5 and came to an agreement with him about some modifications to be introduced into the text which had been submitted to the Bey by the

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1. FO 102 118. Clarendon to Wood, June 4, 1869.

three Powers: the new preamble discarded the sentence which referred to the intervention of Italy and Great Britain ("Considérant que des difficultés se sont élevées sur la composition de cette Commission, désirant y faire droit..."); and a twelfth article was added ("Notre Premier Ministre est chargé de l'exécution du contenu des 11 articles qui précèdent") which was more satisfactory for the Bey's sovereignty, just as the modification in the preamble was intended to soothe French susceptibilities.<sup>1</sup> Wood, of course, was infuriated and remarked that de Botmiliau's manoeuvre justified the apprehensions he had expressed about the whole agreement.

Clarendon judged de Botmiliau's action rather severely: the British Government, he wrote to Lyons, had learned with extreme regret of the proceedings of the French Charge d'Affaires. They were convinced that La Valette would lose no time in repudiating M. Botmiliau: "if a course of conduct so contrary to all that is fair and just ... is not disapproved, it will be better at once to renounce the prospect of that joint action which was the only hope of equal justice being done to the subjects of the three Powers."<sup>2</sup> La Valette's position

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1. FO 102 118. Wood to Clarendon, July 6 and 8, 1869.  
2. Ibid. Clarendon to Lyons, July 19, 1869.

was one of embarrassment and confusion; while admitting that de Botmiliau had acted "very wrongly", he pointed out that the modifications were "unimportant" and rather "disadvantageous" to the position of France; and in spite of Lyons' logical remark that the conduct of Botmiliau, in making "any alterations important or unimportant, advantageous or disadvantageous to French views, without consulting his two colleagues, was wholly indefensible", the Quai d'Orsay was obviously reluctant to go back on the accomplished fact.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately Clarendon gave up the discussion and was content with the "positive instructions" which were sent to Botmiliau to act in entire concert with his English and Italian colleagues. But, as Lyons observed, "the instructions seemed to be very good, but the essential point was to secure their being obeyed."<sup>2</sup>

10. The Commission began to work in an atmosphere of recrimination and of suspicion. While Wood was keeping a sharp eye on Botmiliau, Pinna, on the Italian side, drew a very dark picture of the situation in Tunis; Anglo-Italian efforts were "thwarted by the French agents"; French policy was to accelerate dissolution and to prepare for the actual seizure of the Regency. The Italians

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1. FO 102 118. Lyons to Clarendon, July 19, 20, 21, 1869.  
2. Ibid, July 27.

were the more uneasy as they thought that the interest taken by Great Britain in Tunis "had latterly become less strong than formerly".<sup>1</sup> In Paris the Quai d'Orsay multiplied their accusations against Wood who was trying "to impede the success of the Commission", and regretted "that the French and English Agents at Tunis should have so little confidence in each other."<sup>2</sup> The struggle for influence, Lyons admitted, was unhappily only too frequent and too violent in Tunis and Wood "was a man likely to contend largely for victory". A new attempt was made to remedy a situation which endangered the good working of the Commission. While La Tour d'Auvergne sent instructions to this end to Botmiliau, Clarendon expressed his confidence that Wood's relations with the French Consul would be more cordial than they had hitherto been, and that both of them would earnestly co-operate in carrying out the Financial arrangement (September 20, 1869).<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime the Commission had been progressively built up: On the Bey's demand the French Government had appointed M. Villet, Inspecteur des Finances, who with Khaireddin (President) and Si Mohamed Khaznadar<sup>4</sup>

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1. FO 102 119. Herries to Clarendon, September 23, 1869
  2. Ibid., Lyons to Clarendon, September 14, 1869.
  3. Ibid., Clarendon to Wood, September 20, 1869.
  4. Minister of the Bey, Governor of the Sahel, to be distinguished from Si Mustapha Khaznadar, Prime Minister.

was to compose the Executive Section. The two British and Italian members of the Section of Control were elected during the summer in Tunis. It only remained for the French bondholders to elect their representatives to complete the Commission. At this stage, the first measure taken by the Commission gave rise to a new crisis: the Executive Section had hardly been completed when, on September 15, it invited the bondholders to register their claims within two months. Although the decision was in conformity with the Bey's Decree of July 5 and of a pressing necessity, it was perhaps hasty, as the Section of Control was still incomplete and might be interpreted as indicating a disregard of the Section of Control which was ominous for the future working of the Commission. Such was of course the construction Wood put on the event. Wood and Pinna in vain invited de Botmiliau to join in a common protest addressed to the Bey: his refusal, Wood considered, indicated the existence of a policy "that has for special object the total exclusion of Great Britain and Italy from any participation in Tunisian affairs."<sup>1</sup> Sadok Bey having, however, refused to take the successive notes into consideration, Wood concluded with the obvious over-

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1. FO 102 119. Wood to Clarendon, October 4, 1869.

statement that the Tunisian Government aimed at "the spoliation of its foreign creditors" and suggested that the three governments should address a "peremptory and conclusive" note to the Bey pressing for the execution of his promises.<sup>1</sup>

A controversy began between Paris and London, the Quai d'Orsay holding that the actual measure was legal and complaining of Wood and Pinna's isolated action, while Clarendon, deeply dissatisfied with the course of the events in Tunis, laid the emphasis upon the unity of the Commission which, he alleged, prevented the "Executive sub-Committee" from doing anything till the other sub-committee was duly constituted.<sup>2</sup> Clarendon actually proposed that the three Powers should present to the Bey a note calling upon him to carry out loyally and unreservedly the provisions of the Decree, but France, not unexpectedly, refused. Ultimately commonsense triumphed: Clarendon urged the Quai d'Orsay to hasten as much as possible the election of the French members of the Commission, while la Tour d'Auvergne advised the Bey to suspend the execution of the Note of the Commission until the completion of the Section of Control (November 10, 1869). But it had needed one month's bitter contention

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1. FO 102 119. Wood to Clarendon, October 19, 1869.

2. Ibid. Clarendon to Contades, October 19, 1869.

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and none of the two governments had abandoned any of their arguments. The stubbornness as well as the irritability of both parties, their conviction that their partner - or rather their opponent - had political objects in view in Tunis, presaged ill indeed for the future of the Commission.

11. To a certain extent the creation of the International Commission was a British diplomatic success: it was a major obstacle in the way of the exclusive influence which the French Government had tried to acquire with the first financial scheme in April 1868. But the experiment was not void of danger, as the internationalisation of the Tunisian financial problems was to multiply the opportunities for foreign intervention in the Regency. It is true that the governments were not represented as such in the Commission, as they were to be later in Egypt and Turkey, but they could not ignore it, as, from the beginning, it had become a battle ground for their rivalries.

From Wood's point of view, the spirit in which the Foreign Office had conducted the negotiations seemed open to criticism: Clarendon's moderation and prudence, his desire to avoid useless discussions had allowed France to have her way more than once in matters which, Wood thought, involved questions of principle. While

Wood had a deep distrust of French policy and wished to thwart it at every opportunity, Clarendon, and before him Stanley, expressed a confidence which was not always justified by the actual proceedings of the Quai d'Orsay or of the French Consul, and was contradicted by the ultimate objects of French policy in Tunis. This attitude accounted for the impression that England was less interested in Tunisian affairs, and even that she had given France a free hand there.

The French semi-failure was, however, partly counterbalanced by the presence of a Frenchman in the very heart of the Tunisian Government. In addition it so happened that the creation of the Commission turned out to the political advantage of France. The disaster of 1870 threatened to ruin the influence of France in the Regency and to open the country to her competitors; the existence of the Commission helped to check their manoeuvres until France recovered: "Cette Commission Internationale qui devait soustraire la Régence à notre influence exclusive," Constant commented, "arrive au contraire juste à point pour faire taire les ambitions éveillées chez nos rivaux par les premières nouvelles de nos désastres en Europe."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Constant, p. 54.



## XI. The Consequences of the Defeat of France (1870-1871)

The French defeat of 1870-1871 proved itself to be a decisive event for the Regency of Tunis. Confronted with the manifold consequences of the decline of their influence in Tunis and at the Porte; obscure German intrigues in Tunis during the summer of 1870, Italian aggressiveness during the winter, Turkish renewed interest in the fate of the Regency; the French Government confined themselves to a defensive policy, the aim of which was the maintenance of the status quo in the Regency. For the first time since 1835 France's immediate interests in Tunis happened to coincide with the traditional British Policy: a complete reversal of alliances was thus made possible. The forty-years-old Anglo-French rivalry in Tunis seemed to vanish, and Anglo-French co-operation began - but only for a time.

### Italian designs on Tunis (1870-1871)

Italian ambitions in Tunis went back to the beginning of the sixties, when the establishment of an Italian Kingdom had given a new impetus to designs which before 1860 had existed only confusedly. The new trends of Italian Policy had appeared in the open in 1863 and 1864, and the attitude of the Italian Cabinet during

the negotiations for the International Commission had clearly indicated that Italy was setting herself up as a rival to France in Tunis. The French military disasters provided the opportunity of asserting an active Italian policy: France was out of action; Great Britain had apparently shown little concern for Tunisian affairs in 1868 and 1869; the Italians thought they could go ahead in Tunis.

1. A first skirmish occurred in December 1870 about several Italian claims which Wood judged to be unimportant but which gave rise to energetic instructions by the Italian Government.<sup>1</sup> The affair of Djedeida was soon to provide a better pretext for action: The estate of Djedeida, which covered 1,800 acres and belonged to the Prime Minister, had been rented for 30 years to Baron Castelnuovo, who had founded a society for its exploitation, with a Capital of 500,000 francs. The results were, however, disappointing, and incidents occurred which, Wood suspected, aimed at obtaining financial compensation. The last one, the arrest of native labourers by the Bey's agents inside the estate, gave rise to a protest by the Manager of the Estate,

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1. FO 102 88. Wood to Granville. December 2, 1870.

and ultimately the Italian Consul demanded immediate redress. Without even waiting for the expiry of the twenty-four hours' notice he had given the Bey for a satisfactory answer, Pinna suspended his relations with the Tunisian Government (January 13, 1871).

Wood was well aware of the consequences which the incident, trifling as it was,<sup>1</sup> could lead to and when asked by the Bey to intervene officially for the amicable settlement of the misunderstanding he agreed to act as a mediator. At his earnest request the Bey consented to make concessions to Pinna; the Wakil who was responsible for the incident was to be moved and official explanations were to be given to Pinna. The Italian Consul accepted the proposal "at referendum". The character of the affair, however, changed completely when it was known that the Italian Government asked additional "guarantees" amounting to the Consul's jurisdiction over the landed property which the Italians possessed in Tunis, and joint jurisdiction over the Bey's subjects in their service. The Italian Government were obviously trying to reap a political advantage from a purely private incident. The Bey replied that if such a concession was given to the Italians, the other

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1. An Italo-Tunisian commission of arbitration<sup>w2</sup> to recognize later that Castelnuovo's accusations and claims were groundless.

foreigners would expect to benefit by it, and that ultimately he would lose his territorial Sovereign rights over a considerable part of his Dominions.<sup>1</sup> Wood shared the Bey's views: his answer, he reported on February 4, 1871, was based "upon grounds the fairness and soundness of which cannot be disputed". Acceptance of the Italian demands would soon reduce the Government to "complete impotency" and lead to the occupation of the Regency by some Powers desirous to procure a Colony.<sup>2</sup> As Pinna had ultimately broken off his relations with the Bey, Wood encouraged Sadok to send an Envoy to Florence in order to settle the matter directly with the Italian Government (February 7).

The irritation of Visconti Venosta found expression in complaints against Wood and de Botmiliau's action in Tunis and the threat to send ships of war if the Bey resisted the Italian demands. On the other hand, the Porte proposed its good offices and warned the Italian Government that the adoption of measures of coercion would be an infringement of the Sultan's sovereign rights, while France complained of Pinna's hasty decisions and suggested Franco-British co-operation in order to bring about a conciliation. In the meanwhile Granville

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1. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, January 28, 1871.

2. Ibid. February 4, 1871.

instructed Paget to try to temper Visconti Venosta's feelings and concluded energetically by expressing "the regret felt by Her Majesty's Government that the Italian Government have thought it necessary to put a pressure upon the Government of the Bey which does not appear to be warranted by the circumstances of the case."<sup>1</sup> On further consideration Granville's formula was deemed too harsh and another amended despatch was prepared but not sent, as Herries, who had apparently had the same feeling, had decided not to mention Granville's last paragraph. The failure of the Bey's envoy, General Hussein, however, decided Herries to act upon the whole despatch. The Italians expressed "not a little surprise and vexation"<sup>2</sup>; and Cadorna later bitterly complained of Granville's observation; but eventually toned down their demands so that a protocol was signed on March 5 by Hussein and Visconti Venosta which embodied the main Italian requirements with a stronger proviso securing the Bey's jurisdiction.

2. When the Bey was acquainted with the two protocols, he offered determined opposition to the one which gave the Italians privileges of jurisdiction "which interfered

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1. FO 45 178. Granville to Paget, February 13, 1871  
2. FO 45 180. Herries to Granville, February 20, 1871.

with vested rights as well as with the rights of himself and people." Wood's hostility to the Italian demands had not weakened since February and he could rely upon the complete support of his French colleague. It was then opportunely discovered that certain articles of the protocols signed in Florence alienated from the British and other Creditors the pledges which had been given to them: Wood and de Botmiliau conjointly requested the Bey to suspend the ratification of these articles and reported to their Governments (March 15). At the same time the Executive Section was mobilized against the protocols, and Villet and Khaireddin threatened to resign if the Bey accepted the articles in dispute. Wood stated "distinctly" that their retirement from the Financial Commission would "inevitably lead to its dissolution" and strongly supported them.<sup>1</sup>

The question whether the disputed protocol was really in contradiction with the rights of the creditors is an idle one. Visconti Venosta denied it emphatically,<sup>2</sup> but the point is that, confronted with Italian designs of a political nature, Wood had seized upon the arguments which were best suited to check them. The high-handed proceedings of the Italian Government in

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Granville, April 12, 1871.
  2. And Jules Favre admitted later that the apprehensions expressed by Villet "were somewhat exaggerated" (Lyons to Granville, May 13).

in Tunis gave rise to the same uneasiness in London and the Foreign Office was prompted to give up its somewhat passive attitude and to intervene with more energy in the Italo-Tunisian difference. Granville instructed Paget to obtain a suspension of the negotiations until he could "form an opinion on the point" (March 16)<sup>1</sup>. Visconti Venosta was adamant on that point; any postponement of the ratification, he asserted, would place Italy "in a false position at Tunis", but, at Paget's earnest request, strongly supported by the French Ambassador, Visconti Venosta agreed to give a formal declaration "that none of the stipulations [should] affect prejudicially the interests of British subjects or the action of the International Commission."<sup>2</sup> Granville was not completely pleased with the procedure; on March 18 he still insisted that it would be better to suspend the ratification, as "any objection which may occur... will be much more easily obviated if put forward before the ratification, but if urged and admitted after the ratification they may embarrass the Italian Government in its relations with the Bey"; but he nevertheless agreed to cease objecting to the ratification of the protocols.<sup>3</sup>

At this juncture the Italian Government tried to

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1. FO 45 178 Granville to Paget, March 16, 1871.
  2. FO 45 181 Paget to Granville, March 17, 1871.
  3. FO 45 178. Granville to Paget March 18, 1871.

play the game of the "fait accompli". On March 23 Paget was informed to his "utter amazement" that the ratification had taken place in Tunis without the declaration which Visconti Venosta had promised to make. Although Visconti assured him that the "omission" was "a matter of little importance" Paget replied that it was highly desirable that it should be clearly known in Tunis on what grounds British opposition to the protocols had ceased, and asked Visconti Venosta to give "positive instructions" to Pinna. Visconti Venosta was of course reluctant to give much publicity in Tunis to the limits France and Great Britain had set to his success, but, as Paget put it "we had a right to require that a special protocol should be signed".<sup>1</sup> Granville thoroughly endorsed Paget's energetic attitude with the full support of the French Government, who were feeling very uneasy about Italian proceedings in Tunis; Visconti Venosta's attitude, Favre told Lyons on March 31, could hardly be looked upon "as consistent with good faith".<sup>2</sup> The Italian declaration was signed in Tunis on March 30 and in Florence on April 10.

The Italian Government had scored a success in Tunis, but it was short-lived and rather detrimental to their interests, as the pressure they had brought to

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1. FO 45 181. Paget to Granville, March 24, 1871.  
2. FO 27 1859 Lyons to Granville, March 31, 1871.



bear upon the Bey for a trifling incident, and their singular methods of negotiation afterwards, had drawn the attention of the French and British Governments to their political designs in Tunis. The vigorous reaction of the Foreign Office prevented them from exploiting their initial advantage. At the same time the French Government were now fully aware of the "Italian danger", and, unable to counteract it alone, turned to Great Britain for co-operation in maintaining the existing situation in the Regency: France hoped, de Broglie said to Granville on April 29, "that the Consuls of the two Countries would receive orders to act together and watchfully against any intrigues having in view the change of our present financial relations with Tunis".<sup>1</sup>

The Firman of 1871.

3. It was the weakening of French influence in Tunis which had made the Italian attempt possible. For the same reason the Tunisian Government showed some anxiety about a possible Turkish operation against the Regency at the end of 1870, to a certain extent the temporary disappearance of France as a diplomatic factor accentuated

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1. FO 27 1851. Granville to Lyons, April 29, 1871.

the dangerous isolation of the Regency. But on the other hand, France had for some time lost the means of opposing the policy of rapprochement between the Porte and the Regency, as she had done so successfully in 1865. As early as November 1870 the Tunisian Government had perhaps thought of reaching an understanding with the Porte "to reconfirm and renew in a formal manner, her suzerainty over the Regency": Wood of course deemed that policy to be very sound but was unable to ascertain whether negotiations had actually taken place.<sup>1</sup> The incidents with Italy showed that a second competitor had entered the lists and that it was a matter of urgency to take advantage of the favourable circumstances "to place the Regency, through Turkey, under the safeguard of the Treaty of Paris, 1856". At the beginning of May 1871 the Bey decided to request the Porte to fulfil its long-delayed promise of a Firman confirming the status of the Regency as a part of the Ottoman Empire.

Wood warmly approved of a decision which fitted in so well with his Tunisian policy that it is hard to believe that he was only a passive spectator in the whole action. His letter of May 10 to Granville and Elliot resumed the arguments he had had many opportunities

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1. FO 27 1851. Granville to Lyons, November 26, 1870.

to set forth since 1856; circumstances rendered it more expedient than ever for the Turkish Government to adopt some decisive line of action in the matter; "their irresolution had greatly weakened the Suzerainty of the Sultan". The situation of the Regency, its geographical position, the necessity of preserving equilibrium in the Mediterranean, had induced Great Britain constantly to favour the 'rapprochement'. It was hopeless to expect "that so weak a government [could] long resist foreign moral pressure, much less aggression, unless they [were] supported by the Power to which they [owed] allegiance." Wood expected therefore that Granville would encourage the Porte to grant the Firman. Should the Porte "for reasons unknown disregard the Bey's application for the third time, it [would] produce a sentiment of discouragement", and lead ultimately to the destruction of the independence of the Regency.<sup>1</sup>

4. As soon as Granville was acquainted with the Bey's demarche, he "authorized" Elliot - "if you shall deem it advisable to do so" - to support it.<sup>2</sup> The apparent lukewarmness of the formula might suggest that Granville

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1. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, and FO 102 120, Wood to Elliot, May 10, 1871.
  2. FO 78 2171. Granville to Elliot, May 28, 1871.

was not willing to take the initiative. It seems more likely that, reluctant as he was to engage in quarrels abroad, Granville did not desire to be mixed up unnecessarily in the negotiation of the Firman if everything was going to go smoothly. The story of the negotiations shows that actually British diplomacy did not cease interfering in the matter during the summer of 1871, and that the Foreign Office's prudent but constant interest largely accounts for the ultimate success of the enterprise.

As it had been decided that the negotiations should remain secret until their conclusion, their first phase was limited, from the British point of view, to a double action in Tunis and Constantinople. It was Wood's duty repeatedly to dispel the Bey's apprehensions regarding the intentions of the Porte and to encourage him to persist in his endeavour. In the meanwhile Elliot used his influence over the Ottoman Government to dissuade them from making excessive demands: The preliminary condition of the Bey's demand had been that the Firman "should simply embody the conditions of the connection between the Regency and the rest of the Empire as agreed upon by the Ottoman Ministers and General Khair-  
ddin" (in 1864). The Bey was unlikely to accept any departures from the status quo and if the Porte should

try to force them upon him, the Powers (at least France and Italy) would seize the opportunity for intervening and opposing the settlement. But the Ottoman Government were of course tempted to take advantage of the circumstances and Elliot had to redouble his warnings: to do more than make the Firman a record of the principles agreed upon in 1864 would be "a most undesirable course" he told Server Pasha in August; the condition of the agreement was Ottoman willingness "scrupulously to respect the privileges which had been granted to the semi independent rulers".<sup>1</sup> And after Khairaddin had been sent to Constantinople for the final negotiation, it was again incumbent on Elliot to impress upon Server Pasha that "the best and most prudent course for the Porte to adopt would be simply to issue the Firman in accordance with the engagements of the vizarial letter."<sup>2</sup>

The Porte was, however, hard to convince, and Wood, at the beginning of October, sent an anxious telegram to Granville: the Porte was formulating demands - Sovereignty instead of Suzerainty, cessation of direct diplomatic intercourse with the Powers, annual tribute - which were likely to discourage the Bey and provoke France's intervention.<sup>3</sup> Granville's reaction was energetic: he

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1. FO 78 2176. Elliot to Granville, August 2 and 3.
  2. FO 78 2177 Elliot to Granville, September 23.
  3. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, October 3 and 10.

immediately instructed Elliot to point out to the Turkish Minister "the inexpediency of attempting to introduce any alteration in the relation now existing between the Porte and the Bey .... as any attempt of the kind .... may lead to complications with Foreign Powers and give rise to questions which may involve much trouble to the Porte."<sup>1</sup> Elliot's intervention appears to have proved decisive; the Porte gave up the disputed clauses and on October 23 an agreement was reached between Khaireddin and the Porte.

The Firman was proclaimed in Tunis on November 18 "to the inexpressible satisfaction of the Mussulman inhabitants", Wood reported. It stated that the Vilayet of Tunis " qui fait partie des Etats composants notre Empire" was "confié [au Bey] avec le privilège de l'hérédité" under certain conditions - investiture by the Sultan, prayers and coining in the Sultan's name -, and with privileges - internal autonomy and foreign relations, - which merely reproduced the Stipulations of the memorandum of 1864. It made it clear, however, that "la stipulation de traités politiques et militaires, modifications de frontières ou autres actes pareils ... sont du ressort de nos [the Sultan's] droits souverains et sacrés"; in the event of war the Bey would send

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1. FO 27 2172. Granville to Elliot, October 11, 1871.

a military contingent "en proportion de ses moyens". It was also clearly understood that the Bey's internal administration should be "conforme aux prescriptions du Charaa glorieux, et aux lois de justice dont les exigences des circonstances et de l'époque feraient reconnaître la nécessité et qui seraient propres à garantir la sécurité individuelle des habitants, leur fortune et leur honneur."<sup>1</sup>

5. Long before the actual conclusion of the agreement in Constantinople, Great Britain had had to deal with French misgivings about Turco-Tunisian relations. As the Bey and the Porte had carefully kept the secret of the negotiation, the French were only vaguely informed about what was going on but their uneasiness was the greater for that very reason. Their recent misfortunes in Europe increased their irritability about the East, as Granville remarked in October, and they were prone to suspect that "everybody wished to encroach upon them."<sup>2</sup> The British, when questioned by French officials in London, Paris or Constantinople, were, however, careful not to give the slightest hint about the negotiations, and at the end of October Granville still assured the

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1. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, November 25, 1871.
  2. Granville Papers, PRO 30 29 116. Granville to Elliot October 26, 1871.

French Chargé d'Affaires that "Sir Henry Elliot had received no instructions from Her Majesty's Government who had not been informed that the question was likely to be raised."<sup>1</sup>

It became, however, increasingly difficult to hide the facts, specially after Khaireddin's departure for Constantinople. The British then endeavoured to soothe French displeasure with assurances that no change was contemplated in the status quo in Tunis. At last the news broke out and was followed by an outburst of anger in Paris: "Le firman," Engelhardt asserted some years later, "tendait à anéantir l'indépendance souveraine de la Régence et à placer son chef héréditaire au rang d'un simple gouverneur général."<sup>2</sup> The French Chargé d'Affaires in London appealed to Granville, drawing his inspiration from the moving accents of de Remusat's instruction to the Duc de Broglie: "Quant à nous ... ce rôle de gardiens vigilants de l'indépendance politique de la Tunisie est le seul que nous ayons jusqu'ici recherché et le seul qui nous convienne encore aujourd'hui ... Nous ne voulons nullement toucher nous mêmes au status quo;

1. FO 27 1853. Granville to West, October 25, 1871. It was very likely in order to corroborate this official version of the facts that Elliot's despatch of September 23 was slightly amended in the F.O.: Khaireddin "who is charged with a mission from the Bey to the Porte" instead of "whose departure from Tunis charged with a mission ... has been reported to your Lordship by M. Wood." (FO 78 2177).
2. Engelhardt II, p. 95.



mais nous ne pouvons pas non plus admettre qu'on y porte atteinte ... Nous aimons à espérer que le Cabinet de Londres n'encouragera pas un dessein manifestement contraire à nos intérêts."<sup>1</sup> Granville was not convinced by the French arguments and replied with a complete statement of the British doctrine about Tunis. The British Government were likewise desirous that the status quo should be maintained in Tunis; they considered Tunis, however, as a dependency of Turkey, subject to the suzerainty of the Sultan; consequently it appeared "difficult for the French Government to resist the issue of a Firman by the Suzerain to his vassal, when both desired it". The news of the issue of the Firman was not "improbable" but Elliot had advised the Porte to issue it in accordance with the Vizierial letter of 1864, advice which seemed to Granville "moderate and judicious". As the French had expressed misgivings about the ambitious views of Italy regarding Tunis, the strengthening of the Bey's authority would benefit their interests and it would likewise be advantageous for the security of Algeria. Even if the French views of the relations between the Porte and the Bey were more accurate than Granville's, "what objection could be made to two independent Sovereigns arriving at a voluntary arrangement?"<sup>2</sup>

1. Documents Diplomatiques français, Première Série, De Remusat to the Duc de Broglie, October 9, 1871.
2. FO 27 1853 Granville to West, October 25 and 26.

The French position was indeed difficult. As Elliot remarked "what they dislike is rather the Firman itself than what it contains."<sup>1</sup> Their legal arguments were not very strong and a policy of intimidation was impossible. Under these circumstances the discussion with the Foreign Office stopped short. A strong irritation prevailed in Paris and was expressed with some bitterness in Tunis but the French Government refused to contemplate establishing a French protectorate in Tunis as de Botmiliau<sup>2</sup> then suggested: the Consul was instructed to avoid "avec grand soin tout ce qui pourrait être interprété comme une menace pour l'état de choses actuel à Tunis", and to keep to a waiting policy, seizing upon "les occasions d'un rapprochement, s'il est possible, avec l'Agent d'Angleterre."<sup>3</sup> But the French Government made it clear that they would not recognise the Firman<sup>3</sup> and would continue to carry on their relations with Tunis upon the same footing as before. The Italian Government adopted the same attitude but were more prudent in their comments about the Firman.<sup>4</sup>

1. G.P. 116. Elliot to Granville, November 14, 1871
2. D.D.F.I, Remusat to de Botmiliau, January 10, 1872.
3. "Obtenu à l'ombre de nos malheurs" Barthelemy St Hilaire wrote in 1881.
4. In 1874 Visconti Venosta remarked that he was not enthusiastic about the Firman but that "if he had to chuse (sic) between the French and the Turks at Tunis, he could of course have no hesitation in accepting the latter" (FO. 45 239. Paget to Granville January 6 1874).

6. "I respectfully venture to hope that Your Lordship will be pleased to view with satisfaction the successful accomplishment, after many years of patient and unremitting perseverance, of the policy of Her Majesty's Government with reference to Tunis and Turkey."<sup>1</sup> It was with these triumphant words that Wood greeted a political achievement which brought to a happy conclusion 35 years of British diplomacy about Tunis. This settlement had been regarded from the start of the "Tunisian question" as the fundamental condition for the strengthening of the Regency, when exposed to French and later Italian ambitions. It is in reference to this aspect of the problem that one must assess the importance of the Firman of 1871 and of its consequences.

From this point of view the agreement reached in 1871 had two serious shortcomings. Firstly, although Wood had always considered that the Tunisian question needed an international solution, which meant an international guarantee, the two Powers whose policy was the most dangerous for Tunis, Italy and France, refused to recognise the Firman as an international **act**, binding upon them. This attitude seriously affected the practical significance of the Firman. At the same time it

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1. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, November 18, 1871.

remained to be seen whether Turkey was in a position to serve as a protectress for Tunis; this assumption, which had underlain British policy towards Tunis for 35 years, was not warranted by the political decline of the Ottoman Empire. If so the "Turkish solution" came too late, at a time when the opening of Tunis to European competition made any kind of external guarantee illusory.

## XII. British economic penetration (1871-1874)

### The Powers and the Financial Commission.

Considered as a financial body, the Commission gave the European Powers the supreme control over the finances, the economy, and the internal administration of the Regency, through the creditors and the Consuls who supported them; this situation was bound to bring about an increase of the economic and financial penetration which had slowly begun before 1868. From a political point of view the creation of the Commission had only been the outcome of an unstable equilibrium between the antagonistic policies of the Powers; there had been nothing like international co-operation and it appeared unlikely that the Commission, once constituted, would be able to work on purely technical bases.

1. The position of the Executive Section of the Commission was, from the start, a very difficult one. As agents of the Tunisian Government its members were bound to come into conflict with the Creditors who composed the Controlling Section, and the Consuls, who were pushed forward by the European residents.<sup>1</sup> The divergence

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1. Constant, p. 55.

between the interests involved in the Commission appeared as soon as a general settlement of the debts was contemplated, the Executive Commission trying to reduce the Government's liabilities while the creditors demanded the complete fulfilment of the Bey's obligations (January 1870). Another source of conflict arose from the fact that the Executive Section, faithful trustee of the Bey's interests that it was, was to show an increasing hostility to the policy of concessions which the European residents advocated but which had been obviously detrimental to the Regency, from the Aqueduct of Zaghounan to the Concession of Djedeida. In this respect the Executive Section was in some way to play the part which the Supreme Council had played from 1860 to 1864: With Khaireddin as president of the Commission the Party of Reform was again in power.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission suffered from a heavy handicap: French influence was very strong in that body and, although the French Inspectors appeared to be generally inclined to put their duties of Tunisian public servants

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1. Khaireddin had become "Directing Minister" with the supreme control of the Interior Foreign and Financial departments in January 1870 with Wood's wholehearted support. For Villet's position with regard to the concessions see his declaration during Rochefort's trial (December 1881) "J'ai toujours tenté de protéger Tunis. Les spéculations privées soutenues par M. Roustan ont fourni une excuse pour notre établissement là-bas" (Broadley I, 260).

in front of the requirements of French policy in Tunis,<sup>1</sup> the Consuls, especially the Italian representative, never concealed their jealousy of the dominant position the French Inspector had acquired in the Executive Section. That attitude was in conformity with the principles which guided the Consuls in Tunis: they considered that they represented their governments not so much for the maintenance of amicable relations with the Regency, as for the development of their national interests. They made unending claims, "threatening conquests and destruction if they were not satisfactorily recognized". The Consuls were generally unable to admit that there might be a Tunisian interest which was not in exact conformity with the interests of the Power they represented. For that reason their reports generally tended to exaggerate the facts, and the same Minister who was described as "le plus vorace des oppresseurs" by the French party because he was a partisan of Great Britain, became for this same reason an "honest gentleman" in Wood's correspondence.<sup>2</sup>

The French attitude towards the Commission was

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1. The French inspectors, Wood remarked in 1879, acted "with an independence and an impartiality which have secured for them the entire confidence of the Tunisian Government and of its creditors" (FO 102 124 Wood to Salisbury, February 12, 1879.
  2. Safwat, Tunis and the Great Powers, pp. 64-66.

somewhat contradictory. The part which France had played in its establishment, the part which Villet played in the Executive Section induced the French Government to support the Commission. But as Constant rightly remarked, between Botmiliau "protecteur attitré de nos nationaux" and Villet "exécuteur impitoyable des décisions de son comité", difficulties were bound to arise: "Leurs missions sont contradictoires, l'un s'attachant à conserver à ses nationaux des privilèges que l'autre arrive précisément pour faire cesser".<sup>1</sup> But the "Italian offensive" and Wood's policy contributed to delay the explosion of these contradictions.

2. On the whole the British Government had shown a conciliatory attitude towards the Commission, and, in their dealings with Wood and the French, a sincere anxiety to ensure its peaceful working. The Foreign Office had expressed more than once its desire to promote a friendly understanding between the three governments and its fear lest the Consuls at Tunis should transform the Commission into a new battle-field for the rivalries of the Powers. But Wood quite soon had adopted

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1. Constant, p. 59.



a very different attitude towards the Commission; he was unable to reconcile himself to it because he considered that it was an instrument for French penetration into the Regency. He had constantly criticised its organisation; he showed the same hostility to its action. The Commission was being used by the Bey for obtaining "the virtual abrogation of his contracts with his local Creditors", Wood remarked in 1869 after the incident of the registration of the bonds.<sup>1</sup> And again after the signature of the Act of Settlement of Tunisian Debts (March 23 1870): "We cannot divert ourselves from the impression that the Tunisian Government would see with pleasure the disappearance of the Commission now that it has attained ... the diminution of the annuities upon its debts".<sup>2</sup> In May 1870, in connection with the creation of a Board of Management of the debt, Wood involved the Executive Section as well in his suspicions: the creation of the Board superseded "the action and attributions which were expressly assigned to the Section of Control" and prepared its extinction.<sup>3</sup>

Wood was thus heading for a condemnation of the Tunisian Government, the Executive Section, and French policy, "en bloc". The Tunisian Government, he wrote on

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1. FO 102 119. Wood to Clarendon, November 25, 1869.
  2. FO 102 120. Wood to Clarendon, March 31, 1870.
  3. Ibid, May 13, 1870.

July 9, 1870, were trying to avail themselves of the concessions made by the creditors to withhold the securities which they had given to obtain those concessions; the French Inspecteur des Finances had "coalesced with the Government" and had "become the advocate of the views and policy of the Tunisian Government"; since the signature of the Contract the French Government appeared "less disposed .... to assist in maintaining the Commission .... in all its integrity". The only solution, Wood suggested, was direct diplomatic action by the three Governments, by means of an "identical but stringent note". Wood concluded with arguments of violence which struck a new note in his correspondence: "Asiatic and African Governments cannot appreciate forbearance; they attribute it to other than friendly motives and are encouraged thereby to place themselves and others in an embarrassing position, which can only be averted in their own interest by a timely check and admonition."<sup>1</sup> Wood did not show more understanding for the difficult position of the Tunisian Government than his colleagues.

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Hammond, July 9, 1870.

3. The solution of the questions which were thus arising in Tunis was, however, delayed by the Franco-German war. We have already remarked that in Tunis the Djedeida affair brought about a temporary rapprochement, between Wood and the Commission, on the ground of common British and Tunisian interests and of common fear of Italian encroachments. The Consul likewise backed Khaireddin's policy towards the Porte during the summer of 1871: The Bey could not find "a more intelligent and a fitter agent", he wrote to Elliot, when Khaireddin was sent to the Porte in September.<sup>1</sup> But at that time the rupture between Wood and the Executive Section was already an accomplished fact.

The occasion for the outbreak of the antagonism was the somewhat obscure affair of the Tunisian Mint, which was very significant of the new tendencies of Wood's policy in Tunis. The Concession for the Mint had been granted by the Bey to Si Hamida ben Ayad who was a British protégé<sup>2</sup> and at the same time a partisan of the Khaznadar. Some irregularities in the working of the

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Elliot, September 6, 1871.
  2. Si Hamida ben Ayad was the nephew of the famous Mahmud ben Ayad and had been granted British protection in 1846-1847 when family quarrels had set the pro-French Mahmud ben Ayad in opposition to his pro-British father, Mohammed ben Ayad.

Mint were seized upon by Villet and Khaireddin as a pretext for the abrogation of the Decree of concession. Wood alleged that Villet and Khaireddin were actually moved by political motives and were trying to eliminate the personal friends of the Prime Minister in order to isolate and weaken him, and ultimately to put Khaireddin in his place. This was no doubt true but it is only fair to remark that the accusations of corruption brought against the Khaznadar and his partisans by Villet and Khaireddin were wholly justified; in addition the principle which had set the Executive Section in action - that concessions involving financial problems came under its jurisdiction - appeared to be indisputable, and in the light of the events of the ten previous years it was undoubtedly prudent to restrict the Bey's freedom in that field.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Bey ultimately maintained Ben Ayad's Concession, Wood drew serious political conclusions from the incident. The Executive Section, he reported, was endeavouring "to create itself with an authority superior to that of the Bey and his government." Villet was trying "to substitute his personal authority for that of the Government" although the Executive Section

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Granville, August 21, 1871.

was nothing more than a governmental department.<sup>1</sup> The first object sought by Villet was to overthrow the Khaznadar and to put in his place Khaireddin who possessed "great intelligence" but was a man of "inordinate ambition" and was an instrument in the hands of the French. Should they succeed, France would virtually administer the Regency and provoke the "subversion of the supremacy of the Tunisian Government".<sup>2</sup> The affair of the Mint was thus giving rise to an international conflict for the seizure of political power in Tunis: in this conflict Wood sided with the Bey and the Khaznadar, while Khaireddin was supported by Villet and the French Government. Wood's choice was rather unfortunate and was inconsistent with the policy he had pursued in Tunis for 15 years and which aimed at strengthening the Regency internally as well as externally. His preference for corrupt and weak - but amenable-partners, would be incomprehensible indeed, if one did not take into account the very peculiar outlook of the Consuls in Tunis, to which we have already called attention.

This incident of the Mint had been brought before the Foreign Office by Favre in June 1871 before Wood had even sent a report about it, and although Granville endorsed the attitude of the Consul, he entirely agreed

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Granville, July 31, 1871.  
2. Ibid, August 3, 1871.

in Favre's remark "as to the importance of discouraging rivalry between the Representatives of the European Powers at Tunis."<sup>1</sup> It was decided that instructions should be sent by France and England (and later Italy) to their respective Consuls to the effect that harmony should prevail among the members of the Financial Commission and among the Representatives of the Powers. Granville's despatch conformed to the pattern suggested by the Quai d'Orsay; he dwelt more particularly, however, on the necessity "that no action on the part of His Highness should be submitted to by the Commission or countenanced by the Representatives which is in any way calculated to defeat the object for which the Commission was established".<sup>2</sup> That insistence perhaps indicated that the Foreign Secretary was not entirely pleased with Wood's attitude in the affair of the Mint and with the encouragement he had given to the Bey's growing hostility to the Executive Section. However that may be, Wood ignored the hint and the struggle between Wood and the Executive Section was soon to gain in intensity.

Wood and the policy of economic penetration.

Under the shadow of the affair of the Mint another problem, much more important and pregnant with incalculable

1. FO 102 120. Granville to Lyons, July 6, 1871.

2. Ibid. Granville to Wood, October 3, 1871.

consequences, was taking shape, that of the "concessions"; and that consideration no doubt explains Wood's sharpness in defending Ben Ayad's rights. What Wood resented most in the denial of justice which Ben Ayad had suffered was "the intolerable inconvenience of seeing the favourable decisions of the Bey in British affairs set aside by himself and M. Villet".<sup>1</sup>

4. The idea of developing the economic resources of the country by the introduction of foreign (that is to say British) capital and enterprise had been one of the key-conceptions of Wood right from the time of his arrival in Tunis. The Consul had not only struggled to obtain concessions for British contractors but had taken a personal part in some of them. These first attempts had, however, met with failure, owing to the difficulties which the social and economical state of the country put in the way of such endeavours, and to lack of support in the money market of Great Britain. The Convention of 1863 had removed some of these obstacles but the revolution of 1864 had again hindered Wood's initiative. The creation of the Commission of the debt gave a new lease of life to the policy Wood had

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1. FO 102 120. Wood to Granville, August 3, 1871.

so long advocated: the Europeans now had the central government under their control; the creditors regarded the Commission as an instrument which was to be used for the development of their interests in the Regency; the resistance the Bey and the Khaznadar offered was somewhat weak because they feared international complications, and because their amenableness was a way of asserting their independence towards the Executive Section, whose attitude was very critical towards the policy of the concessions. As Italy (1868) and France (1871) now enjoyed the benefits of the Convention of 1863, everything was ready in Tunis for the development of an economic influence which the overflow of European capital made possible after 1870.

The attitude of the British Government hardly kept pace with the vast expansion of British capital overseas after 1870 - The liberals pursued a policy of disinterestedness with regard to colonial problems which led them to abstain, as far as possible, from acquiring new lands: "The lust and love of territory," Gladstone had said as early as 1855, "have been among the greatest curses of mankind".<sup>1</sup> It was indeed true that the initiative of frontiersmen, missionaries, traders, diplomatic representatives set at nought Gladstone's

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1. Knaplund, Gladstone and Britain's imperial policy  
p. 81.



wish to check imperial expansion, but on the whole the liberal statesman remained faithful to his principles. With regard to investments abroad, the liberal Administration tried to maintain the traditional attitude of the British Governments before 1870: there was to be as little official interference as possible in these matters, the intervention of the government being often felt through informal channels. In spite of the increasing pressure which the interested parties brought to bear upon the government, the resolution not to intervene was maintained during the decade of the seventies, except in places where political interests were at stake (as in Turkey and in Egypt) - and they were not at stake in Tunis.<sup>1</sup>

Wood's conceptions and action went much farther than the rather timid outlook of the liberal administration. With a view to solving the lasting financial difficulties of the Regency, Wood persistently suggested a policy of economic development to the Bey and the Foreign Office: the country was already overloaded with taxes, Wood remarked in 1872, and the only solution was to increase its "rich but dormant resources" by the "introduction of Foreign capital and energy". The construction of public works and particularly of railroads

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1. Herbert Feis, Europe the World's Banker, p. 105.

would open up the interior of the Regency and bring about the improvement of agriculture and the development of mining exploitation.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Wood perseveringly applied himself to improving the bases of economic penetration. He proposed in 1871 to negotiate a new Commercial treaty with the Bey, avowedly to "benefit the Regency by the removal of restrictions and abuses which impeded the development of its resources" and permit of "the introduction of the European element and, with it, the germs of a nascent civilisation". The projected Treaty which Wood submitted to the Foreign Office embodied the main clauses of the Convention of 1863: The people of the contracting parties should have the right "to establish in each other's country commercial, industrial and banking companies" (Article 11), "to exercise in each other's country any art, profession and industry; to establish manufactories and factories and to introduce steam machinery or machinery moved by any other power" (Article 12).<sup>2</sup> At the same time Wood favoured the creation of a Mixed Commercial Tribunal which had been proposed by the Tunisian Government in 1871, because the increasing importance of European enterprise and population in Tunis made such an institution more and more necessary,

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1. FO 102 121. Wood to Granville, September 5, 1872 - FO 102 94, Wood, November 19 - FO 102 93. Dec. 10, 1872  
2. FO 102 103. Wood to Granville, September<sup>1</sup> 1871.

5. Wood was the first to realize the economic benefits which might be drawn from the creation of the International Commission, and his initiative gave Great Britain the lead in the international race for concessions in Tunis. As early as October 31, 1868 Wood obtained the concession for the lead mines of Djebel Ressay for a British contractor, Lindo, who had long tried, with Wood's help, to secure mineral concessions in the Regency.<sup>1</sup> In April 1869 Wood reported that "British capitalists and others" were negotiating for the construction of a Railway from Tunis to Bona (in Algeria); but it was not until August 1871 that Wood could obtain a grant from the Bey for the construction of a railway joining Tunis to the Port of the Goulette and the Bardo. The Pickering Concession, the first of its kind in the Regency was "a commencement in the right direction", Wood concluded, and would eventually lead to "other enterprises with British capital of equal public utility."<sup>2</sup> In April 1872, Pickering's concession was extended to the Marsa, and indeed Wood was so keenly interested in the affair that the Company asked Granville to authorize the Consul to accept the office of Director, a suggestion which was rejected by the Foreign Office: "I should decidedly refuse; our agent in Tunis should have nothing

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1. FO 102 82. Wood to Stanley, October 31, 1868  
2. FO 102 90. Wood to Granville, August 1871.

to do with a trading Company with reference to which he may have occasion officially to interfere" Hammond commented.<sup>1</sup> Again in April 1872, Wood obtained fifty years' concession for William Lefevre on behalf of a Company for the construction of Gas works in Tunis, a success which appears to have given rise to less satisfaction in London than in Tunis: "How far such a concession," the Foreign Office inquired, "might be objected to by other Foreign Powers on the grounds of its establishing a monopoly?"<sup>2</sup> Lastly in November 1872 Wood obtained from the Bey the grant of the Concession for the construction of a Railway joining Tunis to Bizerte, Mateur, Beja, the Kef, Sousse, and Kairouan; the concession given to Pickering was to remain valid for one year, and would be cancelled if it was not acted upon within the required time.<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary to dwell upon the importance of a Concession which gave a British Company the quasi-monopoly of the Railroads in the Regency.

At this stage Wood's policy of economic penetration had already come up against the Executive Section of the Commission. The Bey, the Prime Minister, and "the great majority of his Government" were favourable to

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1. FO 102 94. Wood to Granville, April 16, 1872.
  2. Ibid, April 27, 1872, Granville to Wood, May 16, 1872
  3. FO 335 126 3 Decree of November 2, 1872. Nothing came of that concession.

British undertakings, Wood alleged; but he had now to fight against the influence of the Executive Section which "on pretence of watching over the interests of the Tunisian Government intervenes to check the growth and development of those of Great Britain".

The struggle for the direction of the Government.

6. The cycle of Wood's policy since 1869 was now complete. Political motives had first prompted him to oppose the Executive Section which he alleged to be an instrument of French policy in Tunis. Now British economic undertakings were threatened by Villet and Khaireddin - Political and Economic interests were involved in questions which had internal as well as external aspects, and the key figure of the drama was Mustapha Khaznadar, the Prime Minister. For the French, of course, the Khaznadar played the part of the villain; their accusations of robbery and malversation rested on the solid ground of the Minister's indisputable corruption and all their influence in Tunis was used in favour of Khaireddin whose qualities Wood could not easily deny but whose "French proclivities" he resented above any other consideration. The Khaznadar had long been Great Britain's friend and client, and, in order to consolidate a somewhat shaky position, he was bound to favour British interests even more. As the Bey

continued to support his Minister, largely because he resented the existence of the Financial Commission and feared Khaireddin's strong hand, Wood's attitude was coloured with an appearance of legitimacy. But the decisive point for Wood was that "the formation of a ministry virtually under the influence of a French Inspector General of Finances .... would greatly militate against the development of foreign interests, particularly against British interests."<sup>1</sup>

Wood's attitude in the matter seemed to give weight to the impression that an active policy of economic penetration was incompatible with the existence of an honest and watchful administration in the Regency. The situation of 1859 - 1864 seemed to have arisen again. But while at that time Wood had broken with those of the Consuls who fought against the Supreme Council, on this occasion he depended on a statesman of questionable honesty, but one more manageable than Khaireddin and the executive section. As for Khaireddin's "French proclivities", Wood himself helped to strengthen them by his stubborn hostility to the Tunisian reformer, who could only rely on French support to carry into effect the policy he had long contemplated and first of all to eliminate the Maznadar. Wood's policy was so questionable that the Foreign Office's first coolness

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1. FO 102 121. Wood to Granville, October 8, 1872

with regard to Wood's policy of economic expansion and to his active intervention in the internal affairs of the Regency could not but increase. As soon as February 1873 an independent and clear-sighted British observer A.M. Broadley, who had just established himself in Tunis as a barrister, and a journalist, expressed misgivings about the soundness of Wood's policy: "At a moment I am striving to develop British Enterprise in this Regency," Wood complained in March 1873, "he has not only taken up cases against British interests... but he has likewise transmitted.... articles against some of the members of the Tunisian Government". Broadley, Wood alleged, had proposed "to a prominent Tunisian Functionary the publication of a newspaper at Malta for the express purpose of attacking [him], with a view to [his] removal from Tunis in order to deprive the Prime Minister and others of [his] moral support and render thereby easier their disgrace."<sup>1</sup>

7. Wood's difficulties with the Executive Section began in connection with the conditions of the concession granted in 1871 to Pickering for the construction of a railroad from Tunis to the Goulette: the concession stated that all materials for the construction, working

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1. FO 102 95. Wood to Granville, March 10, 1873.

and maintenance of the Railway should be admitted into the country free of duty. The Executive section decided in December 1872 that as the Bey had given the customs duties to the Commission, as a guarantee for the payment of the debt, he was not allowed to exempt any produce from the import duties. The matter was one of great importance, as the Bey had just concluded an agreement with Pickering for the creation of a railway system in the Regency (November 2 1872). One can guess that, apart from the financial implications of the problem, the Executive Section was not sorry to set a limit to the Bey's hitherto absolute right of granting economic concessions. It was precisely that aspect of the question which provoked Wood's vigorous intervention in favour of the Bey's rights: "The most important question in the matter directly involves the free exercise by the Bey of his inherent right to grant concessions", Wood commented on December 10, 1872, "with such stipulations as will operate as an inducement to capitalists to undertake them."<sup>1</sup> And some days later, when Khaireddin complained to the Bey of the Prime Minister's activities, Wood made it quite clear to Sadok Bey that he did not approve of Khaireddin's personal ambition, and concluded unambiguously that he "saw no person better qualified

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1. FO 102 121. Wood to Granville, December 10, 1872.



on account of his long experience ... than his Minister to be at the head of the administration."<sup>1</sup> The British Government however, did not allow themselves to become involved in Tunisian internal politics. With regard to the question which Wood had raised, discussions with the French Government led them to consider that "however much they might desire to facilitate the endeavours of the Bey to open out the resources of his Dominions", they were not inclined to dispute the right of the Commission to oppose the remission of the import duties.<sup>2</sup>

The affair of the import duties had scarcely been concluded by a decision which was tantamount to advising Wood to use prudence, than the Consul became involved in a second discussion, which raised much the same problems. The conflict between the Executive Section and the Bey originated from the grant of some mines in the region of Tabarka by the Bey to the Prime Minister without the sanction of the Executive Section and from the Bey's assumption of the right of appointing the Farmers of the taxes independently of the Executive Section. The discussion again turned on the subject of the right of the Bey to grant concessions and "to issue such Decrees

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1. FO 102 93. Wood to Granville, December 23, 1872
  2. FO 102 121. Granville to Wood, April 15, 1873.

as he deemed useful in the exercise of his political and administrative functions". This time Wood was completely isolated, as de Botmiliau and Pinna were united in the defence of the Commission's principles, an unfortunate symptom indeed: but, he explained to Granville, he could not join in any action to deprive the Bey "of his undoubted right to grant concessions, because [he] conceived that its surrender or destruction would be most injurious to British interests and enterprise in this country;"<sup>1</sup> and <sup>Wood</sup> gave Granville to understand that the main issue of the discussion was a Franco-British competition for the mines of Tabarka.

Whatever may have been the ulterior motives of Villet, the case of the Executive Section was again very strong. It was convincingly defended by the French Government; the Law Officers, when consulted by Granville, gave as their opinion that the Decree of 1869 was intended to surrender into the hands of the Commission the whole revenues of the Kingdom for the purpose of administration, and that this object could hardly be obtained if the Bey had still the power of farming out any part of these revenues without the control of the Commission.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 102 121. Wood to Granville, April 20, 1873.

2. Ibid, Law Officers to Granville, June 23, 1873.

Granville agreed with this opinion and despatched instructions accordingly to Wood. But nothing short of a clear rebuke could stop the action of the British Consul, as the struggle for economic penetration and political domination had now reached its last and most critical stage in Tunis.

8, Negotiations had been entered into with the Bey for the creation of a Bank in 1872, Wood serving as an intermediary between the Tunisian Government and a British Banker, Ranking. Ranking's first project was rejected by the Bey who was particularly reluctant to grant the exclusive privilege of issuing bank-notes which were to be received as legal tender. The Prime Minister ultimately communicated the conditions under which Ranking was authorized to create "the London Bank of Tunis": the Bank was to be private, it was to receive "the assistance and the preference on the part of the Government, as much as it lays in its power" (Article III), and<sup>it</sup> would be protected by the Tunisian authorities "if necessary" (Article IV); the Government did not guarantee the bank-notes issued by the Bank (May 19, 1873)<sup>1</sup>

This new success in Wood's campaign for concessions provoked an immediate and strong opposition in Tunis.

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1. FO 102 122. Wood to Granville, May 31, September 15 November 10, 1873.

The French and Italian Consuls gathered the Consular Body and proposed to protest against the concession: Wood having withdrawn from the meeting, the foreign representatives, with the sole exception of the American Consul, agreed to make a collective demarche on the ground of the privileges which the Act of Concession granted to Ranking's Bank. At the same time the Financial Commission expressed its opposition to the "prerogatives officielles ou semi-officielles" of the Bank and to the right which it had been granted to issue bank-notes as legal tender.<sup>1</sup> The concession raised manifold problems: the Executive Section, as has been remarked already, was averse to leaving the Bey free to grant concessions; in the particular case of the Bank this position met with the complete approval of the Section of Control which remembered the disastrous experiment of Ben Ayad and had but little confidence in the financial undertakings of the Government. In addition, there is no doubt that Wood's repeated successes in the economic field had excited much jealousy, and that the rivalry between the Consuls largely accounted for the co-operation between the French and Italian Consuls against the scheme.

Wood brought strong pressure to bear on the Bey for the confirmation of the Concession, on the ground that since the Bank was private and unconnected with the

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1. FO 102 122. Wood, May 31, 1873, and November 10.

government, it was a matter purely of British interest. At first the Bey held out against the representations with which he was besieged and asserted "his right to grant such concessions as he [might] deem conducive to the prosperity of the Regency."<sup>1</sup> However, the discussion soon assumed a political character and gave a new impetus to the struggle for power which set Khaireddin and Mustapha at loggerheads. The rumoured nomination in Tunis of a new French Consul, Vicomte de Vallat, as "Minister plenipotentiary on an Extraordinary Mission", seemed to indicate that the French Government had decided to bring matters to a head in the Regency. At the same time Wood's attempt to bully the Bey into executing the Concession was not devoid of danger. It exposed the Bey to the almost unanimous protests of the Consuls, and strengthened the isolation of the Khaznadar at a moment when his prestige was being slowly sapped by Khaireddin Villet and de Botmiliau. The disclosure of the Khaznadar's past extortions, and the growing influence of the new favourite, General Si Mustapha ben Ismail, added to the difficulties which the Bey experienced in the matter of the Bank, justified the decline of Mustapha's influence and power. The Bey, Wood reported in September, was perplexed how to act", and the Prime Minister no longer

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1. FO 102 122, Wood to Granville, June 30, 1873.

enjoyed his entire confidence. The Tunisian officials were now divided into two camps and a crisis seemed unavoidable. Wood had unsuccessfully tried to bring about a reconciliation between Khaireddin and the Khaznadar and concluded gloomily: "I should see with apprehension any change in the Tunisian cabinet unfavourable not only to the existing British interests but also to their future development."<sup>1</sup>

In mid-September Wood's position became somewhat awkward, for the Khaznadar, who seemed about to fall into disfavour, intimated to the Consul that the authorization given to Ranking in May would have to be confirmed by a Decree issued by the Bey. Wood replied that the concession was valid and encouraged the Bey "to defend [his] own incontestible and inherent rights against encroachment from whatever quarter it may come."<sup>2</sup> But the Bey had obviously made up his mind; the new French Consul, Vallat, had scarcely arrived in Tunis (September 1873) when he attacked the proposal for a Bank and asked the Bey to put a stop to it; the Bey shifted the responsibility on to the Khaznadar, and, a few days later, yielded to French pressure: on September 30 he issued a circular Note prohibiting banks with limited liability.

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1. FO 102 95. Wood to Granville, September 8, 1873.
  2. FO 102 122. Wood to Granville, September 14, 1873.

The controversy between Wood and the Tunisian Government dragged on, becoming more bitter every day: Wood described his "painful impression", regretted that the Bey should have yielded to intimidation, and complained that he had been led "to the edge of a precipice where [the Bey] has left [him] to the mercy of [his] opponents."<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, when the Khaznadar alluded to Wood's "defective memory", the Consul replied sharply that "however defective it might have become from mental decrepitude consequent on a long residence in this country it (was) yet retentive enough not to easily forget the lamentable treatment [he had] experienced... at the hands of the Tunisian Government".<sup>2</sup> Wood had had the last word, for on October 21 the Bey dismissed the Prime Minister.

9. During the first stage of the Bank question, the Foreign Office had given Wood full support in what appeared, from Wood's somewhat incomplete reports, to be a new French attempt to impair the development of British interests in Tunis. "Unless it was intended that the Finance Commission should take the whole Government of Tunis into their own hands, which I much deprecated,

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1. FO 102 122. Wood to Granville, October 4, 1873  
2. Ibid., October 20, 1873.

I saw no principle which could justify their intervention in this matter", Granville wrote to Lyons on July 29.<sup>1</sup> The Bey had full competence to grant a concession which seemed "unobjectionable enough": the only serious objection about the third article of the concession, seemed to be so well disposed of by Wood's comments that on October 1, after Wood's report about de Vallat's proceedings, Granville angrily remarked: "I think it is a matter for consideration whether the time is not arrived for speaking plainly to the French Government about their pretension to interfere with a legitimate English enterprise."<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of the Foreign Office, however, underwent a radical change at the beginning of October, when further reports by Wood showed that he was meeting with increasing difficulties from the Tunisian Government themselves. The Foreign Office was impressed, too, by the forcible arguments put forward by the French, particularly by the assertions that Wood had at first asked for very extensive privileges for the Bank, and that the Ranking concession had met with the opposition of the whole Consular Body and of the Controlling Section (a circumstance which Wood had failed to report

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1. FO 102 122. Granville to Lyons, July 29, 1873.  
2. Ibid. Note, October 1, 1873.



to Granville). These arguments, Tenterden remarked on October 18, gave "a different colour to this transaction". And although Granville still considered, on October 17, that French arguments did not affect the question whether France "by something like menace", had a right to oppose a permission given by the Bey to Englishmen to establish a Bank,<sup>1</sup> serious doubts were being raised in London about the soundness of the cause. On October 18 Gladstone expressed his "misgivings": Wood's language to the Bey savoured "as much of dictation and pressure, as anything we know of the French agents"; he was accused by De Broglie of having sought the concession originally for himself; the Consuls and the European traders had addressed unanimous remonstrances to the Bey; the stipulation for "preference" was "strange... ominous and inauspicious". In conclusion, Gladstone asked for a thorough examination of the question: meanwhile it would be wise to refrain from "peremptory action of any kind."<sup>2</sup>

Explanations were immediately asked for from Wood: while the Consul emphatically denied having asked wither for the Concession for the Bank, or for any other Concession whatsoever, in his own name, his answers to

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1. FO 102 122. Granville to Tenterden, October 17, 1873  
2. G.P. 62. Gladstone to Granville, October 18, 1873.

the doubts raised by the French, were deemed "rather vague" and more information was asked for (November 6, 1873). On November 10, 1873, Wood at last sent the first complete account of the affair: "M. Wood ought to have sent us these papers before and not left us to ask for them on an allusion in the Duc de Broglie's note verbale", Tenterden angrily commented on November 21... "By not letting us know the whole circumstances of the case originally (he) has placed Her Majesty's Government in a very false position." Under these circumstances the Foreign Office appears to have been embarrassed concerning the adoption of a line of conduct: "What is to be done next?" Tenterden asked on November 21. The Finance Commission was "far from having no valid ground for objecting to the Bank"; Wood asserted that they were wrong and that it was a French intrigue; nevertheless the fact remained, and very much weakened the British case against the French Government.<sup>1</sup> Granville and Tenterden ultimately concurred in the opinion which Gladstone had expressed as early as November 7: The third article of the Concession was "quite indefensible" and its withdrawal might provide a reasonable solution of the difficulties, with an explanatory statement on the part of the British

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1. FO 102 122. Tenterden, November 21, 1873.

Government making it clear that they considered that the notes should have no special government protection. As far as the Foreign Office might have placed itself "in any false position in supporting Wood's remonstrances on the spot", the note of November 22 concluded, it could if necessary "fairly plead insufficiency of information.... if it (was) considered desirable to retreat to any extent from (its) present position."<sup>1</sup> The question was then transmitted to the Law Officers for advice and temporarily dropped.

The position of the Foreign Office with regard to the dismissal of the Khaznadar was of course affected by its increasing doubts about the soundness of Wood's policy of intervention in Tunis. At first Wood's suggestion that he should give the ex-Prime Minister British protection provoked the comment that the Khaznadar had "of late been of much service" and that the situation was very similar to the situation of 1864 and 1865 (when the Foreign Office had contemplated granting British protection to the Minister should the French obtain his dismissal.)<sup>2</sup> But the gradual discovery of the entanglement of political and economic affairs in Tunis brought about a change in Granville's views on

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1. FO 102 122. Notes of November 21 and 22 1873
  2. FO 102 95. Wood to Granville, October 21 - Note October 22, 1873.

the matter: "I do not see what Her Majesty's Government ... have to do with these Tunisian intrigues and speculations". And in spite of Wood's moving picture of the fallen Khaznadar's misfortunes Granville decided, at the end of November, that the Government could not afford British protection to the ex-Prime Minister; Wood was only allowed to join his colleagues in urging the Bey unofficially not to treat his late Minister unjustly. And on December 6, Granville significantly warned Wood not to let himself be drawn "into a position of rivalry with (his) French colleague."<sup>1</sup>

10. Quite unexpectedly the London Bank of Tunis which had been the occasion of the political storm of 1873, outlived the crisis; the ill feelings cooled down during the winter; the political struggle had come to an end with the dismissal of the Khaznadar and the nomination of Khaireddin as Prime Minister. In March 1874 Wood reported that the Bank continued its operations; the Law Officers had just given as their opinion that the concession was valid and did not infringe the Decree of 1869 (February 21 1874). But that belated justification did not lessen in any way the extent of Wood's failure in his Tunisian Policy.

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1. FO 102 95. Wood to Granville, December 6, 1873.

In Tunis his defeat was complete: his main support in the government had been eliminated and political power had fallen into the hands of an honest and able statesman, with whom Wood had once entertained friendly relations, but whom he had alienated by an incomprehensible error of judgment. . Khaireddin had fallen back on French support, and his accession to power seemed to be an overwhelming French political success. The dismissal of the Khaznadar, and the strengthening of the influence of the Commission on the Bey which was likely to follow Khaireddin's and Villet's political success, were also of a kind to affect British economic interests, as Wood had based his policy of penetration on the support which the Bey and the Khaznadar gave him against the Commission.

In London, although there had been no official expression of disapprobation on the part of the Foreign Office, Wood's activity had been implicitly disowned by his government. His methods of intimidation, his active support of economic and financial enterprises, his entanglement in the internal affairs of the Regency had met with the dissatisfaction of a government which wanted their agents to confine themselves to a prudent reserve in these matters. But Wood had set a dangerous mechanism in motion by his politico-economic initiative, and it was to be feared that other Powers, more

interested in the fate of the Regency, would not hesitate to pursue the policy which the Foreign Office was reluctant to endorse in Tunis.

### XIII Wood and the Khaireddin Government (1874-1877)

The reconciliation between Wood and Khaireddin

1. The political change in Tunis provoked serious internal and external consequences which were to lead Wood to reverse his attitude towards Khaireddin.

Khaireddin's accession to power could not but benefit the country, and it was not likely that the man who had written the "Réformes nécessaires aux Etats Musulmans", and negotiated the settlement of 1871, would be content to be a mere puppet in the hands of the French; as soon as Wood recognised his error, a political reconciliation was bound to take place between them. But his nomination as Prime Minister could not but appear, for a time, to mean the establishment of a complete French control of the Tunisian Government.

Not unexpectedly the Italian Government was the first to give the alarm. The Rome Cabinet was perhaps stirred, not only by the Khaznadar's dismissal, but by the mission of General Hussein, who was sent to Paris at the beginning of December 1873 with the official object of congratulating President MacMahon on the vote of the law of the septennate, but, it was rumoured in Tunis, with the secret object of obtaining the abolition of the

Firman of 1871. However that may be Visconti Venosta acquainted Paget with his uneasiness: General Khairaddin was supposed to be a creature of France and even to be prepared to place the Regency under French protectorate and to cede one portion of the country to Algeria.<sup>1</sup> The Porte was likewise affected by the possible consequences of the political change in Tunis and Rashid Pasha assured Elliot that should the Bey's explanations prove unsatisfactory, "the matter would be looked upon by the Porte in a very serious light".<sup>2</sup> Lastly Bismarck seized upon the matter for reasons of his own: it does not appear that he really cared much for the affairs of the Mediterranean but his intervention may have been part of the policy of bullying which he was then following towards France.<sup>3</sup> On December 29 the German Ambassador asked Tenterden whether there was anything in the rumoured French designs on Tunis.

That the Foreign Office took the matter very seriously is attested by a memorandum of December 30 about "Tunis and France" which stated that it was "well known that the French had determined sooner or later to acquire, if not the whole of the Regency of Tunis, at any rate that

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1. FO 45 220. Paget to Granville, December 17, 1873.
  2. FO 78 2273 Elliot to Granville, December 25 1873
  3. Coolidge. The origins of the Triple Alliance p. 201



portion of it which lies between their frontier of Algeria and the Medjerdad river".<sup>1</sup> Re-assurances were immediately asked for in Tunis, where the Bey absolutely denied any project of placing Tunis under the suzerainty of France, and in Paris:Decazes assured Lyons that no proposal had been made by the Bey and that there was "no question of any change in the political status of the Regency".<sup>2</sup> Granville's suspicions, however, were not completely allayed: "The Duke only contradicted the rumour as to a French protectorate", he telegraphed to Lyons on December 31, "Try and clear this up".<sup>3</sup> The alleged project of rectification of the frontier was immediately denied in Paris in the most explicit manner.

It is more than likely that there was no truth whatsoever in the reports which had given rise to the short crisis of December 1873 but Bismarck was determined to turn it to the best account: At the beginning of January 1874 Count Arnim rather abruptly intimated to Duc Decazes that the German Government would not tolerate the assumption by France of the suzerainty of of a Protectorate over Tunis.<sup>4</sup> The vigour of the German

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1. FO 102 97.
  2. FO 102 95 Lyons to Granville, December 28, 1873
  3. FO 27 1976 Granville to Lyons December 31, 1873
  4. Newton, II, p. 60.

reaction was so obviously out of proportion to the incident, that the tension between France and Germany gravely disquieted Granville and the Queen who made a personal appeal to the Emperor's judgment and moderation. At the beginning of February the crisis was over: "In leaving office," Odo Russell wrote to Granville on February 24 1874, "you have the satisfaction to know that you have calmed down Bismarck in regard to France."<sup>1</sup> The development of the crisis and the formal pledges ultimately given by France to Great Britain and Germany, however, indicated that France could not disregard the clearly expressed opposition of the Powers to an eventual French move in Tunis: that opposition was soon given a concrete expression by the somewhat ostentatious visit of warships in Tunisian waters, Prussian in February, British in April, Turkish in June and October 1874. On the other hand, Khaireddin was now more at liberty to pursue an independent course of policy towards France in Tunis.

2. Wood was wise enough to avoid clinging to his prejudices against Khaireddin: it was <sup>the</sup> more urgent to make peace with Khaireddin as it was the only way to wean him from the exclusive influence of the French which Wood's

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1. Fitzmaurice: Life of Granville II, pp. 114 to 116.

own policy had contributed to strengthen. "Some divergence of opinion had formerly existed between us," Wood said to Khaireddin shortly after his promotion, "...But as our friendship was based on personal esteem, I had the conviction it would be lasting."<sup>1</sup> Khaireddin's straightforward attitude made the 'rapprochement' easier: while admitting that he had been obliged by circumstances to side with Villet, he assured Wood that now that he was at the head of the Administration, "he would only act in conformity with his own views and opinions" (January 1874).<sup>2</sup> In the meanwhile the French Government, by removing Villet from his post (February 1874) recognized that permanent French interests in Tunis and Villet's policy had coincided only for a time: "Les fonctions de m. Villet, " Constant states quite plainly, "devaient forcément mettre aux prises en lui deux sentiments qu'il avait rendus inconciliables, le patriotisme et le devoir professionnel; il lui fallait opter entre sa nationalité et son mandat".<sup>3</sup> The collaboration between Khaireddin and Villet, sincere as it had been, had been based upon a certain obscurity about the real aims of French policy in Tunis, which Villet's departure partly dispelled.

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- 1.. FO 102 95. Wood to Granville, November 25, 1873
  2. FO 102 99. Wood to Granville, January 20, 1874
  3. Constant, p. 70.

The clumsiness of the new French Consul, de Billing - de Vallat had been recalled from Tunis in February, after the termination of his mission - quickened the rapprochement between Khaireddin and Wood. De Billing, like the Italian Consul, but in contradiction to the instructions of the French Government, sided with the partisans of the ex-Prime-Minister. Under these conditions Khaireddin was ready to listen to Wood's warnings regarding the traditional policy of France and to his encouragements to act with independence, and could not disregard the support Wood could afford him. The Tunisian Prime Minister manifested ever greater independence towards, if not distrust of, French interests and on the contrary repeatedly emphasized his good will towards those of Britain. Finally, recognizing that the French and Italian Consuls "were averse to the introduction of improvements and ameliorations in the Regency", he assured Wood in September that the Bey "had resolved to lean on Great Britain for countenance and support. With this object in view (he) would adhere to the policy of Her Majesty's Government and would encourage all English enterprises and undertakings."<sup>1</sup>

Wood's answer, that Khaireddin could count upon his services in case of necessity, was no exaggeration.

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1. FO 102 99. Wood to Derby, September 15, 1874.

The Consul had already taken into consideration the new direction of Khaireddin's feelings and had begun to support him efficiently against his opponents. Owing to Britain's long tradition of resistance to French encroachments in Tunis, the Foreign Secretary was not unnaturally chosen as a confidant of the misgivings to which Khaireddin's accession to power had given rise. The hostility of the Italian Government to the new Minister had in no way been lessened since December 1873 and they repeatedly drew Derby's attention to French designs on Tunis, as well as to Khaireddin's secret designs: Khaireddin had "very strong French proclivities", and might be looked upon "as a creature of the French Government", Visconti Venosta asserted, according to Pinna's reports.<sup>1</sup> The Turks expressed exactly the same misgivings about the French undertakings, which were allegedly given full support by Khaireddin.<sup>2</sup> There was enough in these converging warnings to give rise again to serious uneasiness in London: the rumour of a projected French railway from Algeria to Bizerta, the proposed digging of the port of Carthage by a French Company, De Lesseps' proposal to create an interior sea in the south of the country had "reopened the long-standing question

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1. FO 45 242 Paget to Derby, December 3, 1874
  2. FO 102 106 Minister for Foreign Affairs to Musurus Pasha, August 25, 1874

of French designs on Tunis" Hertslet stated in a Memorandum of October 23 1874.<sup>1</sup>

Wood's answers to the Foreign Office's inquiries were, however, increasingly reassuring. Whatever might have been Khaireddin's views when he had taken the Khaznadar's place, they had since "undergone a notable change" he wrote on October 12 1874<sup>2</sup>. None of the projects attributed to the French was to be carried out; on the contrary the Tunisian Government had positively assured Wood that it was their policy not to grant, as far as possible "any concession to Foreigners other than British capitalists, who gave no trouble".<sup>3</sup> Wood vigorously criticised Italian policy in Tunis; the Italian Government regarded Khaireddin as a warm partisan of the Turkish policy and consequently a serious obstacle to the execution of their own designs; it would have been wiser for Pinna to avail himself of Khaireddin's favourable disposition and to co-operate with him, in order to "withdraw the minister from his irksome position and place him in an independent one". There was no just cause to fear, Wood concluded, "that the proceedings of General Khaireddin tend to establish the predominant influence of France..... (He was) far too intelligent and far too patriotic to pursue such a policy."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Gladstone Papers, 44622
  2. FO 102 106 Wood to Derby, October 12, 1874
  3. Ibid., August 31, 1874
  4. FO 102 101 Wood to Derby, February 6-, 1875

3. Assurances had been repeatedly given during the summer of 1874 that the Tunisian government would "give a decided preference to British over other Foreign enterprises" because the "loyalty, integrity and good faith of Englishmen" contrasted with the unfriendly attitude of the other foreign Agents.<sup>1</sup> The sincerity of these promises was soon confirmed by the granting of substantial advantages to British contractors in Tunis. While the ambitious but, Wood alleged, politically dangerous French schemes failed to materialise, the British Consul actively negotiated the concession of a railway from the Goulette to Beja with the London Bank of Tunis and the Tunis Railway Company. At the end of November 1874 Wood was able to announce that Ranking (already director of the London Bank) had been authorized to build a railroad from Tunis to Beja; at the same time the Tunisian government gave him the concession of the lead mine of Gebba.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to overrate the importance of the western railroad concession: as Roustan was later to remark: "cette concession élevait d'un côté entre Tunis et la frontière une barrière infranchissable pour le raccordement de nos chemins de fer de l'Algérie, et mettait ... entre les mains des Anglais toute la Tunisie

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1. FO 102 106. Wood to Derby, August 31, 1874

2. Ibid, November 26, 1874.

de l'ouest c'est à dire la partie la plus fertile du pays et la plus importante pour nous au point de vue politique."<sup>1</sup> It had the same value as an economic asset and a check on French penetration from Algeria. At the same time it completed the already important network of British economic interests in the Regency and raised it to its highest pitch of development. Towards the end of 1874 all the Companies existing in the Regency were English, with the sole exception of the Italian concession of the lead mine of the Djebel Ressay (obtained in 1868), and British capital held all the existing or projected railroads, which were so important for the political and economic control of the country. This British paramount influence received unmistakable confirmation with the signing of the Anglo-Tunisian Commercial Treaty in July 1875; on this occasion the Bey made the characteristic declaration "that he would sign blindfolded any Treaty with Her Majesty's government."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Upsetting of the Equilibrium in Tunis (1875-1876)

4. The years 1874 and 1875 saw the establishment of a kind of equilibrium in Tunis. The internal situation of

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1. D.D.F. T.II. Roustan to Decazes, May 9, 1876
  2. FO 102 103. Wood to Derby September 27 1875. It is proper, however, to remark that this declaration came after two years' earnest discussion about the privileges of jurisdiction of the Foreigners.



the Regency was undoubtedly improved by the energetic (if dictatorial) activity of General Khairaddin; in April 1875, the European Residents of Tunis publicly expressed their satisfaction with and support of, his enlightened administration: "La justice et la régularité dans l'administration, l'agriculture, le commerce, l'instruction publique, les travaux utiles; toutes les conditions du bon gouvernement se ressentent déjà ... de l'active énergie de Votre Excellence."<sup>1</sup> The respective pressures of France, Great Britain and Italy had meanwhile cancelled each other, partly on account of the indisputable economic preponderance of the one of the three Powers which did not entertain political designs on the Regency, a situation which had saved Tunis from the effects of too vigorous an economico-political rivalry.

This equilibrium, however, was soon in danger of being upset by radical changes in the relative attitudes of the Powers interested - Italy changed from an attitude of passive distrust towards Khairaddin, to one of active hostility. France, after having maintained from 1871 to 1874 an attitude of reserve, owing to her defeat in 1870 - 1871 and her diplomatic humiliation in 1873 and

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1. FO 102 101. Wood to Derby, May 5, 1875

1874, was contemplating pursuing a more active policy, which received Bismarck's encouragement as early as 1874 and 1875.<sup>1</sup> The recall of the inept de Billing and the nomination of Roustan underlined these new tendencies of French policy in Tunis. Roustan was young, active, and resourceful; he had made his career in the Near East in Smyrna, Cairo, Alexandria, and Beyrut, and he was to endeavour to give back to France her lost dominant position in the Regency: the year 1875, Roustan's first year in Tunis, witnessed a great drive on the part of France for economic and political dominance in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Lastly British predominance was seriously shaken, and the relative self-effacement of Great Britain provoked an intensification of Franco-Italian rivalry. At this critical juncture the beginning and development of the Oriental crisis weakened the international position of the Regency and seriously increased the difficulties of its government.

1. Wood reported in 1874 that Bismarck had suggested to the French that they look for compensation (for Alsace-Lorraine) "in the annexation of the Regency of Tunis and even that of Tripoli" (FO 102 99 Wood to Derby August 11, 1874). And in January 1875 Bismarck wrote to Hohenlohe: "Ce n'est pas pour nous ... un désavantage, ni une tendance à combattre, que la politique française cherche dans l'Afrique du Nord ... un champ pour son activité." (Politique Extérieure de l'Allemagne, T.I, Bismarck to Hohenlohe January 10, 1875.
2. Safwat, pp. 110-115.

5. We have already remarked that the rapprochement between the traditionally antagonistic French and English points of view in Tunis was primarily due to the weakening of French influence after the war of 1870-1871; the necessity of keeping a door open for the future and the fear of immediate Italian designs led France temporarily to share Britain's desire to maintain the status quo in Tunis, and to look for British support there. After Khairuddin's accession to power, the two Powers were again united in the support which both of them gave to the new Prime Minister, for quite opposite reasons: France because she retained the hope that Khairuddin would serve French policy in Tunis, Great Britain because she expected and encouraged the gradual emancipation of the Tunisian statesman from exclusive French influence. Roustan's arrival in Tunis did not affect that line of policy: the new Consul adopted a very prudent course of action and he made obvious efforts to conciliate Wood from the beginning.<sup>1</sup> The hope which Derby expressed on January 7 1875 that Wood's relations with the new French Consul might be "of the most cordial and friendly character" thus happened to be gratified to the full in 1875: this was so rare an occurrence in Tunis that it is worth mentioning.

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1. It was on Roustan's suggestion that the functions of Doyen of the Consular Body were created, and attributed to Wood (Wood, March 1, 1875).

Italian policy in Tunis soon provided a favourable field of action for this mutual good-will. Pinna continued to attack Khaireddin and to favour the re-establishment of the Khaznadar with a bewildering obstinacy, and the Italian Government continued to endorse Pinna's action with a perseverance which was the less understandable as Visconti Venosta recognized the shortcomings of his agent and assured Paget at intervals of his intention to recall him from Tunis. During a journey in the Sahel, in June 1875, Pinna's public utterances exceeded all bounds: he criticized the acts of the Government and of the Commission,<sup>and</sup> made it quite clear that he would refuse to recognize the Mixed Court which was then under discussion with the Powers: the French and English agreement on this point was, he said, "une cochonnerie" which he explained by the fact that Wood had to deal "with a set of Indians" - he meant the Maltese.<sup>1</sup>

The hostility of the Italian Government had largely contributed to wreck the project of a mixed Tribunal which had been under consideration for more than four years. While France and Great Britain had ultimately accepted the formation of a "Provisional Commission" with a view to paving the way for the future constitution

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1. FO 102 101. Wood to Derby. August 2, 1875.

of a regular Tribunal, and to lighten the burden which fell on the Foreign Representatives in Tunis (Wood estimated the number of cases in which Englishmen were plaintiffs at 560 per year); Italy remained adamant in her opposition (July 1874): the motives she put forward had been severely criticized by Wood who had concluded that the Italian government had "no sincere desire to see the introduction of judicial reforms and improvements in the Regency", but preferred a system which allowed the Consuls to turn private disputes into diplomatic conflicts.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1875, the British made a new effort to allay Italian suspicions: In April Wood invited the Consuls to meet in order to elicit from them the nature of their instructions. While Roustan suggested to "proceed with celerity in the adoption of the proposed judicial Reforms", Pinna answered that the subject "required too much reflexion to be proceeded with lightly".<sup>2</sup> Derby then called the attention of the Powers interested to the matter in order to bring the question to an end. While a prudent answer came from Paris, Visconti Venosta again expressed his opposition (June 25 1875): the project had not been "sufficiently maturely studied", he said, and "the confusion of judicial questions with matters which are

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1. FO 102 106. Wood to Derby, September 22, 1874  
2. Ibid, April 27, 1875

treated diplomatically certainly offers inconveniences which may however be an inevitable consequence of the imperfection of the actual conditions of Tunis."<sup>1</sup> Wood reacted in a rather strong way and advised Khaireddin to take "a more direct action in the question" and to ask the Powers "either to respect (the Bey's territorial) rights and to reciprocally carry out ~~their~~ Treaty stipulations, or to come to an immediate understanding with him to remedy an intolerable state of things."<sup>2</sup> But the deadlock admitted of no solution except waiting for more favourable circumstances.

A trifling incident between the Tunisian authorities and an Italian subject; it amounted to the violation of an "Italian domicile", actually inhabited by a Tunisian trustee, by the Sub Governor of Djerba, - and Pinna's attempt to make capital out of it (August 1875) reminded Wood and Roustan of the dangers to which Italian economic penetration exposed the Tunisian Government. The two Consuls agreed that the government would be well advised to limit the development of Italian concessions as far as possible "in order to remove every cause of fresh difficulties between the two governments". If there was one point upon which the French and English

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1. FO 102 106. Paget to Derby July 6, 1875
  2. Ibid. Wood to Derby, September 7, 1875

representatives could reach a complete agreement in Tunis, it was obviously on the dangers which were involved in the economic undertakings of the third Power - As a first step Khaireddin decided to redeem Baron Castelnovo's Concession of the Tunny Fishery of Monastir, at great cost: but, Wood commented, "however great the sacrifice it will save the Tunisian Government from still greater ones."<sup>1</sup> The ulterior objects of Italian policy in Tunis appeared the more alarming as in October Pinna incidentally referred in a conversation with Khaireddin to the possibility of recognizing the neutrality of the Regency. Rouston and Wood again agreed about the undesirability of any change in the political status of Tunis, and Wood pointed out that the guarantee the Regency enjoyed by the Firman of 1871 was "far more efficacious" than any it could hope to obtain from a neutral status.<sup>2</sup> Whatever might have been the secret aims of the Italians, they were so likely to meet with a resolute opposition of France and Great Britain that - as had been the case in regard to France in 1873 - no action could be contemplated at least for the time being.

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1. FO 102 101. Wood to Derby, August 24, 1875
  2. Ibid, October 12, 1875

6. In the long run the hopes which Wood had set on the development of British enterprise in Tunis were partly disappointed, and that failure was to give rise to serious consequences. The difficulties met with by the Companies which Wood had spared no pains to create in Tunis had general as well as local origins. After a period of rapid expansion of financial investments from 1870 to 1873, the persistent financial stringency and uneasiness which followed the world-wide crisis of 1873 provoked a sudden cutting down of the export of British capital; Herbert Feis estimates that while from 1870 to 1874 British investments had reached the figure of £61,000,000, from 1875 to 1879 they fell to £1,700,000.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this growing scarcity of capital in England serious difficulties presented themselves in Tunis. The exploitation of Tunisian economic resources had given rise to excessive hopes, which the British Consulate in Tunis had perhaps encouraged with obvious political motives; but the actual results of the exploitation were sometimes disappointing. As early as 1874, while Wood was negotiating for the concession of the Tunis - Beja Railway, Balfour, an English capitalist, endeavoured, after an enquiry on the

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1. H. Feis, p. 11.



spot, "to discourage the Tunisian Government from prosecuting Works of Public utility by representing that, as the resources of the Regency (were) insufficient to render them remunerative, the Tunisian Government exposed themselves to the risk of claims being proferred against them.... by unbonied men who were induced to undertake bad speculations."<sup>1</sup> The sometimes exaggerated risks taken by the concessionaires (the Tunis-Goulette had cost £80,000 and was sold in 1875 for only £40,000), and local mismanagement also contributed to the financial troubles which, after 1874, threatened the existence of the main British undertakings in Tunis.

The "Foreign and Colonial Gas Company" created in 1871 was unable to complete the works and was compelled to cede the concession to the New Gas Company and to liquidate (1876)<sup>2</sup> The life span of the "London Bank of Tunis" was even shorter: as early as 1876, "owing to the failure of Mr. Ranking" the Directors decided to go into liquidation, after less than three years' working.<sup>3</sup> The London Bank was unable to undertake the construction of the Tunis-to-Beja railroad and the exploitation of the Djebba lead mine: the concessionaires considered

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1. Balfour (Tunis Railway) reproached Wood with the failure of these excessive expectations (FO 102 100 Wood to Derby, October 31, 1874 - Wilkinson to Wood, October 27, 1874).

2. FO 102 105 Wood to Derby, April 10, 1876

3. FO 102 123 Wood to Derby July 31, 1875

that the project would not be remunerative except with a governmental subsidy of £100,000 which the Bey was of course unable to give; the concession granted in 1874 (and renewed for 6 months in 1875) expired in May 1876 and, as we shall see, was transferred to a French Company.<sup>1</sup> The Tunisian Railway Company which exploited the Tunis - Goulette - Marsa railroad (T.G.M.) was much disappointed by the scantiness of the traffic, and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a new agreement with the government and then to obtain a subsidy: ultimately it seized on the pretext of the construction of the Tunis - Beja line to protest against the alleged violation of its Concession, aiming, as Wood bluntly put it, "to establish a claim for consequential damages" (which it estimated at not less than £32,996).<sup>2</sup> The attitude of the Tunisian Railway Company and its systematic search for incidents with the government proved that in spite of the Bey's confidence in and support of British undertakings, they were in no way devoid of the dangers which, Wood had repeatedly remarked, were involved in French and Italian enterprises.<sup>3</sup>

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1. FO 102 106. Wood to Derby, May 15, 1876
  2. FO 102 109 Wood to Derby April 30, May 1, 1877
  3. Ibid, July 31, August 6, 14, 18, 31, 1877.

Wood and the Foreign Office, however, refused to intervene in the matter, and declined to give even the appearance of official support to the wholly indefensible claims of the Company. This attitude was in perfect agreement with the then prevailing policy of non-intervention of the British Government, at least in the countries where there was no decisive political interest. But on the whole it appeared that the success or failure of economic undertakings in Tunis largely rested on the amount of official or unofficial support which the European Governments decided to give to their nationals; the reserve of the Foreign Office was thus tantamount to resigning itself to the partial failure of British enterprises. British self-effacement opened the door wide to France and Italy, who had played a somewhat modest part in the economic penetration before 1875 but who entertained very precise political ambitions in the Regency. The Concession to the London Bank had hardly come to an end when it was transferred upon the same conditions to the Société des Batignolles (May 1876): the French project was very comprehensive since beside the main line from Tunis to Beja, branch lines with Jenduba and the Kef, it contemplated connecting the Tunisian line with the "Chemin de fer de Bône" which was to reach Souk Ahras on the Algerian side of the frontier. The political and economic implications

of the project were so obvious that Wood strongly advised the Bey to refuse his sanction on the ground that "the prudence of increasing the means of a powerful neighbour to exercise paramount influence was doubtful." The Bey complied with Wood's suggestion but the matter was of such importance for the French, and Roustan brought such pressure to bear upon the Bey, that the Tunisian resistance could not be expected to last very long.<sup>1</sup> Franze had now again taken the initiative in Tunis<sup>2</sup> and the affair of the Tunis - Beja railway foreshadowed the aggravation of the struggle for political influence in the Regency.

7. The transfer of the Tunis-to-Beja railway to a French Company seemed to indicate a sudden change in Khairaddin's policy with regard to European investments: it was partly explained by the repercussions of Oriental events: "J'ai cru m'apercevoir," Roustan remarked, "que la situation actuelle de l'Empire Ottoman avait modifié sensiblement les idées de Khaireddine au sujet du lien de vassalité qu'il semblait se complaire à resserrer sous l'inspiration de l'Angleterre."<sup>3</sup> At

1. Fo 102 106. Wood to Derby May 15, 1876, FO 102 104 Wood June 29.

2. With Bismarck's blessing; the concession, he wrote to the German Consul, Tulin, "lui paraissait devoir produire d'excellents résultats pour les deux pays limitrophes". Tulin was accordingly instructed to "marquer son intérêt pour l'oeuvre qui va être entreprise." (D.D.F. T.II. Roustan, June 6, 1876)

3. Ibid, Roustan to Decazes, May 9, 1876

the same moment Wood reported that the Turkish difficulties in the Balkans had "seriously impaired the prestige of the Ottoman Empire".<sup>1</sup> This new situation had perhaps led Khairaddin to look to France for support. According to Roustan Khairaddin had gone very far indeed in the pledges which had accompanied the conclusion of the Concession of the Tunis - Beja Railway: "Je vais remettre entre vos mains tout l'avenir industriel, commercial et même politique de ce pays, car vous devez bien comprendre qu'il n'y aurait plus être question sérieusement aujourd'hui d'Anglais ni d'Italiens." Although there was some exaggeration due to bias in Roustan's statement, the grant of the Concession had a political significance which Wood could not overlook. Under the new conditions which were created by the Concession of the Beja Railway, Wood could not but re-examine the bases of his policy towards the Khairaddin Government. Already a victim of the Italian hostility, Khairaddin could no longer rely upon the whole hearted support which Wood had persistently given him for two years.

Khairaddin's position was also weakened by the internal consequences of the Turkish Revolution. The

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1. FO 102 104 Wood to Derby May 31 1876

Bey had only reluctantly agreed to appoint Khaireddin as his Prime Minister in 1873; ever since he had resented the absolute control which his Minister had exercised in State Affairs. Khaireddin's very efforts to improve the working of administration and to suppress corrupt practices were such as to give rise to conflicts with the Bey, particularly when the Minister's investigations were turned upon the acknowledged favourite Si Mustapha ben Ismail.<sup>1</sup> The Sultan Abd el Aziz' disposition could not fail to make a painful impression on the mind of the Bey: obviously, Wood remarked, it was a precedent dangerous for all Mohamedan Princes. In June 1876 Sadok Bey openly complained of Khaireddin's "ambitions designs in connivance with Turkey and... with a leaning towards France," and some weeks later acquainted Wood with his intention to "strike a great blow," with a view to securing the moral support of Great Britain, should France interfere in the matter.<sup>2</sup> Although the Consul was not wholly pleased with Khaireddin's recent attitude he could not but observe that if Khaireddin were to be dismissed it would be difficult to find a successor for him; the accusations of "French proclivities" had "no reasonable ground" and a Minister

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1. FO 102 104 Wood to Derby June 26 1876  
2. Ibid July 31, 1876

less energetic and less independent than Khaireddin would have to conciliate France, more than Khaireddin, in order to gain her friendship and good will.<sup>1</sup>

In these circumstances Wood endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between the Bey and his Minister: Khaireddin's "unbending character" did not make Wood's efforts easier, and the Consul had to intervene several times during the summer to prevent a crisis and to dissuade the Minister from giving in his resignation. "I asked him," Wood reported on one occasion, "whether for personal considerations he deemed himself justified in betraying both the native and foreign interests which he had been so readily and willingly confided to him and which he had promised to protect".<sup>2</sup> The antagonism between the conceptions of the Bey and of the Minister, however, were so strong that Wood proposed a plan for reconciliation which, for the Consul, offered the advantage of bringing forward the long-standing problem of the reforms. He proposed, in June 1876, "to re-establish the Council of State or National Meglis with a view to the renewal of the Ahd el Aman."<sup>3</sup> To the Bey Wood pointed out that the institution of the Council of State would "free (him) from his utter dependency

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1. FO 102 104. Wood to Derby, August 12, 1876

2. Ibid August 14 1876

3. Ibid June 26 1876

upon a single individual whom he justly or unjustly mistrusted"; to Khairaddin that his dictatorial measures had disappointed those who expected that "he would have carried out the principles of Government he had so ably defined... in his remarkable Pamphlet instead of adhering to the system of his Predecessors", and that the division of the political authority would help to settle his differences with the Bey.<sup>1</sup> Though he remained silent on this point, it is very likely that Wood hoped also that the proposed Council would provide a barrier against eventual French encroachments in case Khairaddin had actually decided to side with France.

As Roustan feared Khairaddin's dismissal he was not likely to oppose any scheme<sup>aiming</sup> at a reconciliation with the Bey. With a view to forcing the reforms upon the Bey, Wood thought that the Porte could take advantage of the provisions of the Firman of 1871 to send an Irade demanding the creation of the institution he suggested. This course was the more natural as these reforms were in accordance with the new spirit which seemed to inspire the Turkish revolution and had reached Tunis itself: The introduction of Arabic newspapers, Wood remarked, had greatly influenced the minds of the educated classes of Tunisians who were no

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1. FO 102 104. Wood to Derby, July 31, 1876



longer "biased by ideas belonging to a former period, but (were) in a position to form and to give a liberal tone to public opinion".<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the Porte was no longer able to take in hand Tunisian affairs at a time when it was faced with alarming internal and external developments: Serbia had declared war in June and Abd ul Hamid had taken Murad's place as Sultan in August 1876. Its answer was completely discouraging: the Porte, Safwet Pasha told Elliot in October, was "disinclined" to take the initiative suggested by Wood, as, in its opinion, it would be "an infraction of the provisions of the Firman by which complete administrative independence had been guaranteed to the Beys."<sup>2</sup> Under these conditions, this new, and last, 'avatar' of the idea of reform, was bound to prove a failure. This disappointment, however, was only the first of the serious affects which the Oriental crisis was to have in Tunis.

#### The Oriental crisis and the fall of Khaireddin (1876-1877)

Far from being in a position to give the Regency political assistance, the Porte was about to require all the support Tunis was able to lend it if war should

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1. FO 102 104. Wood to Derby June 26 1876
  2. FO 78 2466 Elliot to Derby October 31 1876

become general in the East. That situation was to force upon Khaireddin a difficult choice between contradictory French and British suggestions, and to place him into the position he had described to Wood as early as July 1876: "Without the moral support of the foreign representatives, he did not see how he could maintain his position."<sup>1</sup> Once he was deprived of his external supports, nothing could save Khaireddin from the Bey's hostility.

8. In July 1876, when contemplating the probable Turkish demand for military assistance in case of war, Khaireddin and the Bey had decided (on Wood's advice) to offer a financial subsidy, to be raised by public subscription. The problem however, still remained open to discussion. In spite of Wood's unremitting efforts to reassure them ~~that~~ "in the event of a war,<sup>he said,</sup> Great Britain would experience no difficulty in enlisting 500,000 Mahomedans in India in support of the Sultan"<sup>2</sup>—the Bey and Khaireddin showed an understandable anxiety about the fate of the Empire. Besides their financial difficulties which precluded their active participation in the war, they feared lest if Turkey were partitioned,

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1. FO 102 104. Wood to Derby July 31, 1876  
2. FO 102 104 Ibid, October 31, 1876

Tunis should be involved in that operation as a result of its intervention. On the other hand they more or less shared, and had to take into account the wide-spread feeling of Moslem solidarity which led most Tunisians to consider that Turkish affairs "directly interested every Musulman" and that they were bound to defend the Sultan.

The conflicting conceptions of the Consuls served to increase Khaireddin's hesitations. The rather mild compromise arrived at about the subscription had already provoked the displeasure of some Consuls, who accused Khaireddin of carrying out a "Turkish policy" with Wood's co-operation. During the winter the attitude of the Italian and French Consuls became more explicit; they alluded to the "neutrality" of the Regency and to the prudence of not exposing Tunis to an attack in the event of a war between Turkey and Russia. Wood replied that Roustan's attitude was in accordance with the traditional French policy of weakening the relations between the Bey and the Sultan; the future of the Ottoman Dominions was of prime importance for the Regency; the Bey could not withhold the assistance he owed to the Sultan without rousing a strong feeling of indignation among the people; in conclusion Wood expressed his confidence that the Bey "would act as heretofore with

reference to Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Under these conditions Khairuddin's position soon became untenable.

9. Wood's energetic attitude and stubbornness in winning acceptance for the policy traditionally advocated by Great Britain without being encouraged to do so by his government, was partly responsible for the dismissal of Khairuddin, just as in 1873 he had involuntarily brought about the fall of the Khaznadar in very similar circumstances. The Russian declaration of war (April 24 1877) precipitated events in the Near East, at the beginning of May the Bey's government were confronted with a formal invitation to send a contingent of troops to Turkey. The Government showed some perplexity; ultimately Khairuddin again resorted to a half-measure; it was decided to open a second voluntary subscription in aid of the Turkish armies. While admitting the soundness of the excuses which the government were putting forward - the utter penury of the Treasury, the persistent drought, the extreme weakness of the army - Wood strongly urged upon Khairuddin's attention "the necessity of assisting the Sultan by every means in the power of the government".<sup>2</sup> A close struggle then began between the Foreign Agents

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1. FO 102 108 Wood to Derby February 12, March 22, 1877  
2. Ibid, May 7, 1877

who almost unanimously advised the Bey to maintain his neutrality in the war, Roustan being of course the most resolute, and Wood who harassed the Tunisian Government to obtain clear declarations of identification with and support of the Ottoman cause. Although Khairaddin endeavoured to formulate the Tunisian position with the utmost prudence, (in June 1877 he typically declared to Roustan "that the aid (Tunis) could furnish was so limited indeed that it could scarcely have been less had the Regency declared its neutrality"<sup>1</sup>)- the mere assertion that Tunis felt bound to side with the Ottoman Empire was bound to rouse a great irritation in Paris against Khairaddin. At the same time Wood was deeply disappointed by the tergiversations of the Tunisian statesman.

The Bey seized upon this opportunity to get rid of the Minister whose disgrace he had long meditated. On July 24, Khairaddin having presented a set of conditions upon "the acceptance or refusal of which his retention of office would depend" the Bey answered "that he was perfectly able to govern the country without his assistance" and appointed General Mohamed as Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Fe 102 108. Wood to Derby, June 21, 1877  
2. Ibid, July 24, 1877

There was no reaction whatsoever on the French side: "Comment soutenir (Khairéddin) avec énergie au moment où sa manie turque l'entraîne de nouveau contre notre gré?" Constant commented later.<sup>1</sup> The explanations which the Bey presented to Wood gave a different view of Khairéddin's dismissal, but were calculated to please the Consul in the extreme: Khairéddin was suspected, he said, "of having yielded to the exigences of the French Chargé d'Affaires, by endeavouring to persuade His Highness to declare his neutrality in the war."

In truth Khairéddin was probably neither "Turk", nor "anti-Turk", neither "French" nor "English" but his attempt to pursue a "Tunisian" policy had come up against the rival policies of the Powers. The occurrence inspired but little comment by Wood who had for some time found Khairéddin too lukewarm with regard to the Turkish policy which he advocated, and too conciliatory towards French policy. The Consul only remarked that Khairéddin "whatever his personal faults might be" was an able and intelligent minister and did not merit the allegations that had been preferred against him, "though he probably endeavoured recently, in the uncertainty of the fate that awaited Turkey, to conciliate France by a not too overt opposition to her counsels."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Constant, p. 76

2. FO 102 108. Wood to Derby July 24, 1877

His indifference is once more to be ascribed to the very peculiar way in which European Representatives viewed Tunisian questions. In fact Khairaddin's dismissal was to prove a decisive event; to some extent he had been able by his unquestioned authority and obvious qualities of statesmanship to set limits to the consequences of the competition between the Powers for supremacy in Tunis; no Tunisian statesman was able to take his place and the impotence of the Tunisian Government could not but encourage these economic and political enterprises which were to lead to the destruction of Tunisian independence. As early as January 1878 the Tunisian Government authorized the junction of the Algerian and Tunisian railroads. Their resistance was weakening in front of an increased French and Italian pressure.

10. After Khairaddin's fall, Wood pursued the realization of his objective with a stubborn energy which arose from his persistent confidence in the destinies of the Ottoman Empire as well as from his desire to check French influence by a clear assertion of Turkish suzerainty over the Regency; the latter consideration might explain why, from October 1877, Wood gives the Bey the

somewhat strange title of "Regent" in his correspondence. But it appeared that the reticence of the Government had not been lessened by Khaireddin's dismissal, and that the same objections remained against the project of a direct assistance to Turkey. In October 1877 the Consul renewed his assertions in favour of the sending of a contingent of troops, in reply to the Porte's reiterated demand. As the Bey was putting forward his usual excuses, Wood remarked that the Bey "should not allow it to be said hereafter that he had failed, in a moment of public danger, to support his suzerain" and concluded with an open threat: if the Bey refused to carry out his obligations, and if the Sultan concluded an honorable peace "his position would not only become irksome towards the Porte, but the interests of his family might be seriously compromised."<sup>1</sup> This time the Bey yielded and decided to send 4,000 infantry to Turkey (beginning of November).

As was to be expected, the French and Italian Consuls expressed very strong objections to a decision which, Roustan asserted, compromised the Bey's position and exposed him to an attack by Russia. Diplomatic skirmishes followed in Tunis with the further complication

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1. FO 102 108. Wood to Derby October 15, 1877



of alleged movements of the Russian Fleet towards the Mediterranean which filled the Bey with apprehension and put him in a very awkward position: while notifying the breaking off of diplomatic relations to the Russian Consul, because "as a vassal Prince he was called upon to fulfil his obligations towards his Suzerain", the Bey expressed the hope that the Emperor would "continue to entertain for him the same friendly feelings as heretofore."<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the Foreign Office received French complaints against the decision taken by the Bey, and while it approved of Wood advising the Bey to fulfil his obligations towards the Sultan, it remarked that the Consul had never been instructed "to take the decided line" he had adopted in the matter: "It will be better for you", Derby wrote to Wood on October 29 (and again on November 23) "to refrain from recommending the particular form of material assistance to be rendered."<sup>2</sup> The signing of the peace treaty of San Stephano (March 3 1878), while making the Tunisian contingent useless, appeased French apprehensions and relieved the Foreign Office of the uneasiness to which Wood's high-handed diplomacy had given rise.

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1. FO 102 108. Wood to Derby. December 4, 1877
  2. Ibid., Derby to Wood, October 29, 1877

Conclusion.

11. Though the situation of Tunis in 1877 showed some resemblance to that of 1855, since in both cases Turkish suzerainty had just been reasserted on the occasion of an Oriental crisis, the possibilities of action for British diplomacy were more narrowly limited on the eve of the Berlin Congress than twenty years before: the Foreign Office had successively failed in its attempt to create a rapprochement between the Porte and the Regency, and in its policy of Reform; lastly Wood's endeavour to increase British economic influence in Tunis had not been more successful.

The creation of the International Commission, far from preparing for international co-operation in Tunis, had given the signal for a hard struggle between the Powers for economic predominance. Wood had been the initiator of that policy and his efforts had, at first, given Great Britain an undisputed supremacy in that field. But his triumph had been short-lived on account of the reluctance of his government to give British financial and economic undertakings in Tunis an active support which was not justified by any precise political ambitions in the Regency. British self-effacement did not, however, bring to an end the movement which Wood had launched: it left face-to-face the two other

competitors, who only considered the search for economic concessions as an aspect of the struggle for political domination and a means to attain it. To be sure, Wood had only preceded France and Italy in a process from which there seemed to be no escape; but the energy (to say the least) of the methods which a hitherto moderate Consul had used for the furtherance of the economic interests of a Power which was free from political ambitions, gave a general idea of the bitterness of the struggles which were to come after,

In spite of the apparent success which had been achieved in 1871, the problem of the international position of the Regency was no nearer a satisfactory solution. Neither France nor Italy had acknowledged the Firman, and subsequent events were to show that Turkey was unable to assume the functions of protectress which the Firman of 1871, and British policy assigned to her. Wood was not responsible for a situation whose causes he had analysed as soon as he had arrived in Tunis: we have already seen that the alternative solutions which he had more than once suggested had not been accepted and that the Foreign Office had stuck to the traditional policy of the "Turkish solution" in spite of its difficulties. On the other hand the Consul was wholly responsible for the energetic diplomatic action

which had aimed at reasserting Turkish suzerainty over Tunis by the sending of a contingent to Turkey in 1877. That success, which had been obtained at the cost of very strong pressure had no more significance than the one of 1855 which had been obtained in somewhat similar circumstances. It had no practical consequences since the Tunisian contingent was not sent owing to the end of the war in the East, but its political consequences were momentous. By placing Khaireddin in a hopeless position between contradictory demands of France and Great Britain, Wood facilitated the dismissal of the Minister on whom rested the last hopes of internal reform. Secondly the irritation and uneasiness of the French Government were such that they were induced to strengthen their action in Tunis and in Europe to protect their positions and keep off their possible rivals in the Regency. Lastly at a moment when the Powers were preparing the settlement of the eastern difficulties by surgical methods, it was awkward and inopportune to associate Tunis with the fate of the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from the negotiation about the International Commission which the Foreign Office had pursued without Wood's participation, and on the whole in opposition to his wishes, the Foreign Office had played only an

indirect part in the shaping and working of British policy in Tunis: its action was often limited to merely ratifying the initiative, which the Consul had taken on the spot. However, an increasing discrepancy had appeared between the policy of active political and economic intervention which Wood advocated and implemented with energetic methods and the limited objects which the London Cabinet set before itself in its Tunisian policy. In 1873 and 1877 these differences of views had given rise to successive restatements of British policy which though not openly disowning Wood's action, had put a stop to his policy. The Foreign Office had not defined a positive policy, but its moderating and negative action tended to sketch a line of policy reacting against the extreme tendencies of Wood's "interventionism". A policy which claimed as its sole object the maintenance of the political existence of the Regency and refused to be mixed up in the internal affairs of the country and in the rivalries of the Powers for predominance, could not but give the impression that the Foreign Office accepted British effacement in Tunis; by openly acknowledging that Great Britain entertained no political ambitions it seemed to leave France and Italy a clear field. This was obviously the interpretation which the Italian Government and some Tunisians had drawn quite soon; it seems likely that Wood had come to the

same conclusion in 1868.

British prestige and influence in Tunis, however, remained unique; while the attitude of France and Italy in the seventies had become increasingly hostile, the conciliatory behaviour of England and her readiness to assist the Bey in his difficulties, confirmed the traditional disinterestedness of English policy. Wood, who had been Consul in Tunis for more than twenty years, remained a much appreciated adviser of the Bey and his followers, with whom he entertained intimate relations.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the part which Great Britain played as the centre of resistance to the exclusive preponderance of another Power in Tunis remained decisive; Great Britain had played this part quite successfully in 1869 when she had secured the triumph of the internationalisation of the Commission over French exclusive ambitions; in 1871 when, in association with France she had obstructed Italian designs; in 1873 when the Foreign Office had obviously been the centre of the agitation which the fall of the Khaznadar had provoked in Europe; and in 1875 when, again with French help, Wood had struggled against Italian manoeuvres. As long as Great Britain held fast to the traditional policy which

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1. Safwat, pp. 98-99.

Palmerston had defined in 1835, an equilibrium was possible in Tunis between the three Powers, and neither France nor Italy could seriously contemplate the establishment of their exclusive influence.

From the very beginning of the Oriental crisis rumours respecting projects of partition involving Tunis had been in the air and had reached Tunis. In 1876 Wood reported the uneasiness created by rumours about the intention of Italy to take possession of the Regency if events in the east should lead to the partition of the Turkish provinces in Europe by Russia and Austria. And in December 1877 the French Consul likewise alluded to a German project to transfer Bizerta to Germany or Italy. These reports were however rather conjectural and even if there were some signs that Germany was favouring such schemes of partition, there was no indication at the end of 1877 that Great Britain had in any way changed her traditional policy towards Tunis.

#### XIV. Berlin

The fate of the Regency was sealed during the Oriental crisis of 1875-1878; Tunis had never been directly concerned with the international difficulties which were confronting the Ottoman Empire, but the decisions which affected her were a kind of "by-product" of the settlement of the crisis. Two sets of causes explain how the Great Powers came to involve Tunis ultimately in their diplomatic game: Firstly the Bismarckian policy of "compensations" which aimed at solving the European difficulties at the expense of Turkey by a peaceful redistribution of some of the Ottoman dominions between the Powers interested, and especially between the then most antagonistic Powers, Russia and Great Britain. Secondly the British policy of the "place of arms" which was conceived by Disraeli as a part of his pro-Turk and anti-Russian policy, but which Salisbury was later to change into something not very different from the Bismarckian policy of compensations.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This account of the Oriental Crisis is mainly based upon Seton-Watson, Disraeli Gladstone and the Eastern Question, William L. Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, and for the Tunisian point of view upon William L. Langer, The European Powers and the French Occupation of Tunis (1878-1881) in American Historical Review.



IV. From Berlin to the Bardo (1878 - 1881)

"La Tunisie est peuplée par environ deux millions de Musulmans; serait-il juste de les laisser devenir à une époque plus ou moins éloignée la proie d'une nation professant un autre culte et ainsi détruire le principe de l'Islam dans cette partie intégrale de l'Empire Ottoman?"

(Sadok Bey 1871)

"Prenez Tunis si vous voulez, m'a dit Lord Salisbury; l'Angleterre ne s'y opposera pas et respectera vos décisions. D'ailleurs, a-t-il ajouté, vous ne pouvez pas laisser Carthage aux mains des Barbares."

(Waddington 1878)

Derby and the offers of the "honest broker".

1. From the first appearance of the Oriental difficulties Bismarck had been thinking of the best ways to avoid an extension of the war in Europe; if the Powers did not agree to maintain the territorial status quo, the German Chancellor considered that they should work together to maintain the peace of Europe "by amicably settling what should be done with Turkey to satisfy the Powers concerned, instead of going to war about it."<sup>1</sup> "La Turquie tout entière," he wrote to Schweinitz in October 1875, "ne veut pas que des peuples civilisés d'Europe se détruisent mutuellement pour elle."<sup>2</sup> The problem was to persuade the Powers, and particularly Russia and Great Britain whose policies were most likely to clash in the Balkans and the Near East, to reach a compromise and to accept a settlement based on partition of the Ottoman Empire. Such a policy of partition had been first sketched at Reichstadt in July 1876 when Austria and Russia had provided for a possible partition of the spoils, in case Turkey should be defeated by Serbia and Montenegro. But Bismarck's ideas went much further and tended to involve all the great Powers in the territorial redistribution; his first offers to

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1. Langer, *European Alliances* .... p.80; Russell to Derby, February 19, 1875
  2. Quoted by Bardoux, Quand Bismarck dominait l'Europe, p. 70.

Great Britain (Autumn of 1876) were vaguely formulated and sometimes contradictory. While the shares of Russia and Austria were clearly to be respectively Bessarabia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Chancellor only suggested the creation of a British zone of influence in Syria and Egypt (possibly with French co-operation).<sup>1</sup> But he had obviously not yet made up his mind whether France or Italy were to take part in the redistribution, and if so where; although he had begun in 1874 and 1875 to think of directing French action towards colonial enterprises especially in Tunis,<sup>2</sup> he was anxious to avert the possible opposition of Italy to Austrian designs in the Balkans and had joined with Andrássy in the offer of Tunis to Italy (in August and October 1876).<sup>3</sup>

Bismarck's successive offers, however, met with a cold reception in Great Britain; besides Derby's insuperable suspicion and his fear of being duped by Bismarck, a feeling which was shared by many European statesmen at that time, the Foreign Secretary was apprehensive lest such a policy should end in the breaking-up of the Ottoman Empire, an event which British diplomacy, still

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1. Bardoux, p. 71.

2. See FO 102 99, Wood to Derby, August 11, 1874, and Politique Extérieure de l'Allemagne, T.I. Bismarck to Hohenlohe, January 10, 1875.

3. Langer, The European Powers, p. 60.

clinging to the policy of the status quo in the Near East, refused to contemplate. In these circumstances, whenever a feeler was put out in Berlin about a policy of compensations, Derby invariably ignored it. Bismarck's first serious proposal was made in November 1876 when Salisbury passed through Berlin on his way to Constantinople where he was to attend the International Conference about the Balkan crisis. The Chancellor was not confident of the success of the Conference and, Salisbury reported, was "only occupied with settling what shall be done when the Turkish Empire comes in pieces; Bosnia and the Herzegovina for Austria; Egypt for us; Bulgaria possibly for Russia."<sup>1</sup> Salisbury "ne repondit que par le silence" to Bismarck's suggestion. As for Derby, he was above all preoccupied by the effect which Bismarck's proposals were likely to have in France: "It is evidently useless to say that we don't want Egypt and don't intend to take it" he wrote to Lord Lyons on December 6, 1876, "I have no doubt that everybody out of France would be glad that we should seize the country. Russia would like it, as making us an accomplice in her plans. Germany would like it still more, as ensuring our being on uncomfortable terms with France for some years to come."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cecil, Life of Salisbury, II, p. 97. See also Bourgeois, Manuel de politique étrangère, III, p. 806.
  2. Newton, II, p. 106.

The Foreign Office made the same reserved answer to Nuber Pasha's overtures about the sale of Egypt by Turkey in April 1877<sup>1</sup>; Bismarck, however, took advantage of these offers to renew his overtures on a much larger scale. The Chancellor, Odo Russell reported on May 19, 1877, wanted to divert the thought of the Powers from Germany and awaken their interest in the redistribution of power in Turkey: "To England he has already recommended the occupation of Egypt ... he has since expressed his anxious hope that England may be some day induced to add Syria, Crete, Cyprus etc ... to her eastern possessions. To Austria he has said in confidence that she would do wisely to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina ... Italy he is not much inclined to favour but would not object to her acquiring a portion of Tripoli if necessary. France, he says, has already taken possession of her inheritance in the shape of Algeria, but he would help her to add Tunis if France would divert her thoughts from Germany and revenge for the next few years."<sup>2</sup> Bismarck's policy was probably less tortuous than was commonly thought; deeply concerned by the prospect of a Russian-English clash, the Chancellor sincerely desired to avert

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1. P.E.A. T. II. Herbert de Bismarck to de Bulow. Seton Watson, Disraeli, Gladstone...., p. 226
  2. Winifred Taffs. Lord Odo Russell, p. 194

it and bring about an understanding.<sup>1</sup> But once more the Foreign Office did not appear to listen to his suggestions; the deepest suspicion continued to prevail in London and above all Disraeli feared lest an attack on the status quo in Egypt should lead to a lengthy estrangement from France.<sup>3</sup>

2. Meanwhile, with the failure of the Constantinople Conference, the rejection by Turkey of the London protocol (March 31, 1877), and ultimately the Russian declaration of war on Turkey (April 24), the situation in the east had greatly worsened. This deterioration, to Bismarck's mind, was likely to hasten the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which would clear the way for the programme of partition which he regarded as the most satisfactory solution of the entire problem.<sup>3</sup> But for the moment it provoked a stiffening of Disraeli's attitude: the Cabinet, in spite of its internal dissensions,

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1. *Larger European Alliances....* p. 123. Bismarck, however defined it at the same time as an object of his policy to "séparer l'Angleterre de la France par la question de L'Egypte et de la Méditerranée." (Memorandum June 15, 1877 quoted by Ceraglio "La politique des Grandes puissances.....", p. 21.
  2. "Prince Bismarck would probably like us to seize Egypt as it would be giving a great slap in the face of France." Victoria wrote on July 17, 1877. "What we intend to do we shall do without Prince Bismarck's permission." (The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series, vol. II, p. 550).
  3. *Larger, European Alliances....*, p. 117.

decided that war should be declared on Russia if the Russians occupied Constantinople (July 31).

In the general framework of Disraeli's policy of resistance to Russian advance towards the Straits it had appeared quite early that Great Britain needed a centre of action from which she could efficiently defend Constantinople. Colonel Heme, who had been sent to Constantinople in 1875 to observe the works of defence, had suggested in January 1877 that the Dardanelles or Cyprus would be a suitable place of arms for that purpose.<sup>1</sup> The Russian declaration of war and in the autumn the Russian advance in the Balkans and Asia Minor, strengthened Disraeli's position and the military preparations which the Cabinet undertook impressed forcibly upon the Ministers the desirability of occupying a place of arms in the Levant where British forces could be gathered in safety. In November 1877 Disraeli broached the subject with Layard, connecting it with the possibility of consenting to a loan to the Turkish Government; "Some assistance might be afforded to the Porte, if we could contrive to purchase some territorial station conducive to British interests." - Disraeli's choice was not yet fixed; "Anything in the Mediterranean might excite general jealousy" and a Port in the Black Sea would create difficulties because of

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1. D. E. Lee, Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention, pp. 37-38.

the Straits Treaties, he wrote to Layard.<sup>1</sup> But by the end of 1877 all the elements which were later to lead to the acquisition of Cyprus had been introduced. The final choice would be determined by diplomatic considerations, and by the desire to establish a commanding position from which both the Dardanelles and the Suez Canal could be watched and guarded.<sup>2</sup>

While the idea of the place of arms was thus gaining in precision, the influence of Lord Salisbury was increasingly felt in the management of foreign affairs - so much so that it gradually superseded that of the titular Minister, the timid and inactive Derby. Salisbury brought with him new conceptions which were gaining ground in the Cabinet. The collapse of Turkey was inevitable: "That the machine here can stand very long, I believe to be impossible," he wrote after the Constantinople Conference. "Even if Russia does not invade, it will crumble of itself."<sup>3</sup> - Under these circumstances there was no point in clinging any longer to Palmerston's outmoded policy: "The old policy .... of defending English interests by sustaining the Ottoman dynasty has become impracticable," he wrote to Lord Lytton on March 9 1877, "I think that the time has come for defending

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1. Buckle, The Life of Disraeli, VI. Disraeli to Layard, November 22, 1877, p. 203.

2. D. E. Lee, p. 68

3. Seton-Watson, Disraeli, Gladstone....., p. 137



English interests in a more direct way by some territorial rearrangement."<sup>1</sup> To some extent Salisbury agreed here with Disraeli's preoccupation of securing a place of arms for Great Britain, but he started from opposite premises and the views at which he arrived in 1877 were not very different from Bismarck's policy of compensations.

3. The notion of a general redistribution of territories at Turkey's expense was thus finding new supporters, but its practical realization still came up against great difficulties at the end of 1877. Bismarck's suggestion of Egypt to Great Britain raised serious objections because of French opposition; and a Mediterranean partner remained to be found.

At first sight Italian claims for participation seemed to be more consistent than French; while the French Government remained faithful to the policy of "recueillement", and appeared to be averse to any far-reaching modification of the status quo in the East, Italy had already offered herself as a candidate. The offers made by Austria after the Reichstadt conference had been received with reserve in Rome, but they had given rise

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1. Cecil II, p. 130.

to persistent rumours about the intention of Italy to take Tunis in the event of a partition of Turkey-in-Europe by Russia and Austria.<sup>1</sup> During the autumn of 1877 Crispi made a tour of the European capitals, probably to sound the opinion of the various Foreign Offices with regard to possible Italian compensation in the Eastern question. Crispi was not altogether successful in Berlin; Bismarck resented the irredentist tendencies of the Italian Government and refused to contemplate an arrangement in the Alps (Trentino, Iстри). "Take Albania", he said and added that he was "ready to treat (with Italy) against France, but not against Austria."<sup>2</sup> In London Crispi was given the same hint; "Take Albania," Derby said, and Crispi further reports that the Foreign Secretary raised no objection when Crispi alluded to the Italian claim to a compensation in the Alps if Austria should occupy a Turkish province.<sup>3</sup> All this was still confused and not altogether satisfactory for the Italians, whose interest was focused on the Italian provinces which were still in Austria's hands; but it is interesting to note that when in December 1877, Derby denied any intention

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1. Langer, *European Alliances...*, p. 156. FO 102 104. Wood to Derby, October 31, December 11, 1876.
  2. Crispi, *Memoirs of Francesco Crispi*, II, pp. 35-36 and 44.
  3. Crispi, p. 75. Seton-Watson (*Disraeli, Gladstone...*, p. 477), however, states that "from Derby (Crispi) received the warning that Italy must not hope for compensation in the Eastern Question."

of annexing Egypt, he remarked that "Italy would see it a precedent and a justification for seizing Tunis" which seems to indicate that in Derby's "forecast of international brigandage Tunis ... was allotted to Italy", and not to France.<sup>1</sup>

The last stages of the Russo-Turkish war, the rapid advance of Russian troops towards the Straits, and the signature of the Protocol of Andrinople (January 31, 1878) brought the plans which had been under consideration in 1877 to maturity. Convinced that war was nearly unevitable Disraeli undertook to strengthen the British position in the face of Russia by finding partners on the Continent and going ahead with the project of a place of arms. In January overtures were made to Austria, who refused to commit herself, and to France. The moment seemed to be appropriate for a move in Paris; the Dufaure Cabinet, formed in December 1877, had brought to the Quai d'Orsay Waddington who favoured a rapprochement with Great Britain and Germany.<sup>2</sup> The proposal which was made by the Foreign Office to come to an agreement about Oriental questions met, however, with reserve in Paris<sup>3</sup>; the French government kept the attitude of caution which had been maintained since the beginning of the crisis. It

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1. Newton, (II), p. 105.

2. Bourgeois and Pagès, Les origines de la Grande Guerre p. 181

3. Emile Bourgeois, III, p. 808

is also very likely that in spite of Derby's and Disraeli's repeated denials in December 1877 and January 1878 the French Government still felt suspicious about British designs on Egypt. It is, however, perfectly true that if the idea of occupying Egypt had been contemplated by Disraeli, he had now given it up: When the problem of the place of arms was raised in the Cabinet at the end of February 1878, and the decision taken "provisionally" to occupy a station in the east of the Mediterranean in the event of any action (March 8), the points suggested were Mytilene, Saint Jean d'Acres, or a port on the Persian Gulf.<sup>1</sup>

At this stage, Disraeli brought before the Cabinet a project of a "Mediterranean League", which was to play the part which the Foreign Office had unsuccessfully ascribed to Austria and France in January. "The Cabinet will launch the League with Italy and Greece alone, if the other Mediterranean Powers decline", Disraeli wrote to Queen Victoria on March 8, 1878. "We count on such France and Austria. If the league is floated, they will soon join."<sup>2</sup> On March 13, Derby accordingly instructed Paget to sound the Italian Government whether they would be willing to enter into an understanding with Great

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1. Buckle VI, p. 253.

2. Ibid., p. 255.

Britain for the maintenance of "their commercial and political interests in the Mediterranean and the Straits."<sup>1</sup> According to Giolitti the price of Italian co-operation was to be Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the Depretis Cabinet, which had appeared favourable to an agreement with Great Britain, had just been overthrown on March 9, 1878; the Cairoli and Corti Government which took its place were mainly preoccupied with their claims north of the Adriatic and disliked the idea of getting into trouble with France by an expansion in the Mediterranean. Derby's offers met with a plain refusal in Rome: The Italian Government, Corti explained to Paget, were "most anxious to act with Her Majesty's Government as far as possible in support of their mutual interests", but they wanted "to avoid if possible being mixed up in complications" and they would not be willing "to bind themselves by any engagement which might perhaps lead them into war."<sup>3</sup>

By this negative answer Italy withdrew from the diplomatic game which was to lead to the partition of the Turkish spoils. In the meanwhile, Bismarck had likewise arrived at the conclusion that it was impossible to rely on the hesitant Italian policy: the Italian Government which had just rejected new Austrian offers

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1. FO 45 533. Derby to Paget, March 13, 1878
  2. Giolitti, Memoirs of my Life, p. 119; and Crispi, II, p. 98
  3. FO 45 537. Paget to Derby, March 28, 1878.

of co-operation (with Tunis as a compensation for Italy)<sup>1</sup> and were falling back into the deadly sin of irredentism, could not be a partner to Germany. On the contrary the Dufaure-Weddington Government gave unmistakable proofs of their desire to favour a rapprochement with Germany.<sup>2</sup> As early as the end of February 1878, Bismarck again suggested to the Prince of Wales to "take or occupy Egypt and perhaps Crete" and assured him that he would "find means" to prevent France from quarrelling with England about Egypt.<sup>3</sup> In the course of March 1878 Germany and England were thus similarly led to contemplate making a deal with France and not Italy; but it remained to find the means of inducing France to give up her attitude of "recueillement" and to take an active part in the settlement of European questions. Derby's resignation on March 27 and Salisbury's accession to the Foreign Office gave the British Government the means to resolve a diplomatic situation which had now become much clearer.

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1. L. Chiale, II, p. 346, and Giaccardi, La Conquista di Tunisi, p. 43.
  2. The nomination of Saint Vallier as French Ambassador in Berlin marked the beginning of the "détente" (Bourgeois and Pagès, p. 181).
  3. Sir Sidney Lee, King Edward VII, I, p. 432.

Salisbury and the policy of compensations.

4. Salisbury had actually co-operated in the implementing of British Foreign Policy from the beginning of February 1878 while Derby, depressed by the development of a policy which he disliked, was more and more thinking of resigning and was confining himself to negative action. Salisbury had overcome his first hesitation and given full support to Disraeli's energetic policy towards Russia; but Salisbury was above all anxious to avert war, and to find the way towards an agreement with Russia. As Disraeli's faith in the integrity of Turkey had been seriously shaken, Salisbury suggested not questioning the whole San Stefano treaty but concentrating on the problems which were of direct concern to Great Britain; limitation of the Slav States to the Balkan Mountains, freedom of passage through the Straits, and acquisition of two naval stations (Lemnos and Cyprus)<sup>1</sup> - a policy which on the whole was not so far from Gladstone's. With Salisbury in the Foreign Office, a general arrangement on the bases which had been repeatedly suggested by Bismarck since 1876 and successively rejected by Derby, was now possible.

Salisbury first solved the problem of the occupation of a "piece of arms" which had caused Derby's resignation.

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1. Cecil, II, p. 214. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, March 21, 1878
  2. Vlad Caragiale, pp. 22 to 30.

Disraeli had suggested the occupation by Indian troops of two positions in the Levant (probably Cyprus and Alexandrette).<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of April Salisbury informed Layard that a new policy was under discussion regarding an eventual compensation. Egypt (or Syria) was impossible on account of the opposition which France had expressed again and again very clearly (most lately in Waddington's circular note of March 7, 1878). Cyprus was definitely chosen between April 18 and May 10, probably on the basis of Colonel Home's Memorandum which concluded in favour of the occupation of the island.<sup>2</sup> "If Cyprus be conceded to Your Majesty by the Porte," Disraeli wrote to Queen Victoria on May 8, 1878, "and England, at the same time, enters into a defensive alliance with Turkey, guaranteeing Asiatic Turkey from Russian invasion, the power of England in the Mediterranean will be absolutely increased in that region, and Your Majesty's Indian Empire immensely strengthened. Cyprus is the key of Western Asia."<sup>3</sup> On May 10, Salisbury wrote to Layard about a project of defensive alliance with Turkey on two conditions: internal administrative improvements and cession of Cyprus if the Russians should keep their Armenian conquests.<sup>4</sup> Should Turkey refuse

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1. Buckle, VI, pp. 262-263.
  2. Lee (D.E.) pp. 77-80.
  3. Buckle VI, p. 291.
  4. D.E. Lee, pp. 82-83.



Salisbury wrote on May 34, Great Britain would abandon her "and the capture of Constantinople and partition of (the) Empire (would) be the immediate result." In the meantime Salisbury had started conversations with Shuvalov in order to settle Anglo-Russian difficulties before the opening of the Congress, and on May 7 Shuvalov left for Russia with British proposals.

5. If Italian inability to provide a suitable partner in March 1878 had made England feel the need of obtaining French co-operation very strongly, Salisbury's large-scale plans made it even more important. Waddington appeared willing that France should play an important part in European diplomacy, but, owing to his hostility to any breach of the Mediterranean status quo, it was to be feared that British projects would meet with some opposition in France. In fact, Disraeli's first overture to d'Harcourt ("Nous pouvons être obligés de prendre certaines mesures pour la protection de nos intérêts," he told him on April 4, "Nous espérons que la France ne s'en inquiètera pas") though accompanied by a formal assurance regarding Egypt, was received with reserve<sup>1</sup> - France, Waddington answered on April 8, was above all anxious to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean and would

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1. D.D.F. II, D'Harcourt to Waddington, April 5, 1878

regret "une prise de possession quelconque" which would modify it.<sup>1</sup>

Salisbury's second step was a decisive one. On April 12 he met Münster, the German Ambassador, and reminded him of Bismarck's proposal "that England should find her compensation for the Russian advance in Egypt"<sup>2</sup>; financial difficulties and French opposition, Salisbury continued, "would make such a mode of restoring British influence inadmissible". Münster made no difficulties about giving the answer which Salisbury was apparently looking for; the difficulties were exaggerated; France, he asserted "wished only, or at any rate chiefly, for the harbour of Bone in Tunis, the ancient Carthage" (sic), "The conversation was not pursued", Salisbury concluded<sup>3</sup>; there was no need to say more; the two interlocutors had understood each other "à demi-mot". Salisbury knew that Bismarck's previous proposals remained valid, that on these bases he would look for an agreement with Russia (this was the object of a second conversation with Münster on April 18), and that the French "indemnification" would be secured at the expense of the Bey of Tunis.

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1. D.D.F. II, Waddington to d'Harcourt, April 8 1878
  2. It is worth remarking that the idea of taking Egypt as a compensation had already been given up in England; Salisbury was playing an underhand game with Bismarck who for his part continued to offer Egypt to England, perhaps to embroil her with France (Coolidge p. 197, and W. Telfs, pp. 218-220).
  3. FO 64 899. Salisbury to Odo Russell, April 12, 1878

There is no doubt that towards the middle of April 1878 Salisbury had made up his mind and that he had decided upon abandoning Tunis to France if necessary, as her share in the system of compensations to which the settlement of the Oriental crisis was going to give rise. This meant giving up the Tunisian policy which the Foreign Office had pursued for 50 years and which was primarily based upon the protection of the Regency against French designs. In the absence of any written evidence<sup>1</sup> one may suppose that having given up the Palmerstonian policy regarding the Ottoman Empire, Salisbury had no scruples about repudiating the traditional British attitude in Tunis, which was part of it, as far as such a sacrifice, which cost Britain nothing in the Regency, where she had no political interest, was needed for the furtherance of British major interests in the Near East, - as Salisbury understood them. The repeated German proposals had made the idea of a system of compensation involving Tunis a very natural one. The abandonment of Tunis was the result of a calculated study of the Mediterranean question and the conclusion of a logical sequence of events which had begun in 1876 and culminated in April 1878 with the

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1. The Salisbury papers when available will perhaps reveal whether there was some kind of discussion inside the Foreign Office or the Government about the "new Tunisian policy".

decision to occupy Cyprus. On the other hand, the history of Tunis since 1830 and Roustan's increased activity since 1876 proved that a suggestion about the Regency was not likely to be ignored by the French Government. Ultimately Salisbury probably found some kind of consolation in the thought that his move would only anticipate, and make political profit out of, an event which, in the state of acute Franco-Italian rivalry in the Regency, appeared merely irreluctable. It was not even impossible that France might have some difficulty in availing herself of a gift which was not without its drawbacks, as she would have first to overcome Italian opposition. Even if accepted by the Foreign Office as an unavoidable issue, the destruction of Tunisian independence was not perhaps going to be seen in the near future.

6. On May 11 1878 (the day after his letter informing Layard of the proposed Anglo-Turkish agreement) Salisbury wrote to Lyons and suggested possible compensations to soothe French feeling against the Mediterranean bargain which was in preparation: Was there any truth in the rumour (alluded to by Münster in April) that the eyes of French statesmen were turned towards Tunis? "It is of course an extension of French territory and influence of which we should not have the slightest jealousy or fear".

But, Salisbury cautiously added, "I am not assuming in any way that the Porte would wish to give it up. I should only like to have your opinion how far France would wish to have it."<sup>1</sup> Lyon's answer was somewhat sceptical; "I have never found that the acquisition of Tunis recommended itself to French imagination... (The French) certainly desire that the status quo may be maintained in the Mediterranean." The weight of the Ambassador's reserve was, however, greatly lessened by the fact that it was based on the assumption that Salisbury was suggesting exchanging Tunis for Egypt ("I don't believe (Tunis) would be taken as anything like a set off against English acquisitions in Egypt or Syria")<sup>2</sup> which was no longer the case.

Anyhow, it was now too late to retreat; Shuvalov had come back from Saint-Petersburg on May 28 and a protocol had been agreed upon as early as the 24th, foreseeing the Russian acquisition of Bessarabia, Kars and Batum, which made it "necessary" for England to protect the Ottoman Empire by a British guarantee of all the Asiatic provinces of Turkey - Cyprus was the price of that guarantee, Salisbury telegraphed to Layard on May 24; the Anglo-Turkish Convention was accordingly

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1. Cecil II, p. 269, and Newton II, p. 139

2. Newton II, p. 139

signed in Constantinople on June 4. "Thus the policy which had been slowly formulated by Beaconsfield, Rose Layard and Salisbury was put into effect almost overnight."<sup>1</sup> The agreement which had been concluded with Austria completed Salisbury's network. Whatever trouble might be expected from the French, the successful conclusion of the Berlin conference which rested largely on the satisfactory working of Salisbury's secret agreements had to be considered first; Salisbury was ready to run the risk and at all events he felt confident that the use of the Tunisian bait at the right time would be enough to silence the possible scruples of the French delegation.

#### Bargaining at Berlin.

7. All was ready for the Congress; the major decisions had been made beforehand, and in many cases the delegates would only have to ratify what had previously been agreed upon secretly. The Congress, however, was not to be a mere "farce".<sup>2</sup> The very multiplicity of Salisbury's agreements exposed him to the danger of "technical incidents", as for instance the premature disclosure of the Anglo-Russian agreement (on June 14). In addition

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1. Lee, p. 85

2. Langer, European Alliances.... p. 153.

Salisbury had to cope with two unknown factors. The attitude of Italy was dubious<sup>1</sup> and it was not clear what would be the French reaction to the Cyprus Convention. These uncertainties account for manifold secret dealings which it is often difficult to describe because some basic documents are still lacking (especially the Salisbury Papers), while the available testimonies are often biased and contradictory.<sup>2</sup>

It is very likely that at the beginning of the Congress the British and German negotiators agreed formally that a free hand in Tunis would be the French compensation for Russian, Austrian, and British acquisitions;<sup>3</sup> at all events it was only a confirmation of the contacts already taken in April and May. German agreement was perhaps given during Bismarck and Disraeli's first interview on June 11, 1878. It appears that Bismarck again suggested to Disraeli that he "take Egypt"; France would not be so vexed as might be imagined, and "in any case Tunis or Syria might be given her as an equivalent". Bismarck obviously was still "in the dark" as to the Cyprus Convention.

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1. In actual fact the Italian Government had instructed Corti to abide by the policy of "clean hands" and to refrain from seeking compensations, except if Austria should annex Bosnia-Herzegovina.
  2. This is especially the case with the Italian witnesses who laid stress alternately on the offers which were made them, and on the virtuous conduct of the Italian delegation in the Berlin game of grab.
  3. Langer, *European Alliances*, p. 160.

Disraeli, however, did not correct his mistake and gave no answer to his suggestion; but it was out of the question for the British to seize Egypt. At all events Bismarck was soon informed of the agreement about Cyprus and warmly approved it: "You have done a wise thing," he said to Disraeli, "this is progress. It will be popular."<sup>1</sup>

Though Bismarck may have made the first direct offer of Tunis to the French delegates<sup>2</sup> it seems more plausible that Salisbury, as the author of the Cyprus Convention brought forward the proposal which was to square France; in any case, Bismarck's suggestions about Tunis were no news, and his encouragements could not have the importance which Salisbury's subsequent promises were bound to have for the French. At the beginning of July the critical moment drew near for Salisbury: the Cyprus Convention depended upon Russia's retention of Kars, Ardahan or Estum; the discussion about the Asiatic territories took place on July 5. On the following night Lord Salisbury wrote a long personal letter to Waddington explaining the Convention and the circumstances which had made it necessary; Salisbury tried to sugar

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1. Buckle VI, p. 342. Buckle's assertion that "on the suggestion that France should have free scope in Tunis, (Disraeli) seems to have hesitated", is contradicted by the facts. The hesitations (if there were any) came before Berlin.
  2. Deudet in La Mission du Comte de Saint Vallier (p. 86) and Bourgeois and Pagès (p. 193) express that view.



the pill by remarking that England had refused to take Egypt or Syria in consideration of French opposition, and added that Cyprus would be given back if the Russians abandoned their Asiatic conquests.<sup>1</sup> It was high time to inform the French, for on July 8 the "Daily Telegraph" gave the news of the Convention.

The French did not confine themselves "to epigrams" as Salisbury had for some time hoped. While the Convention was giving rise to a burst of indignation in Paris, Waddington had an interview with Salisbury on July 7 and expressed his emotion. The time had come for Salisbury to make the sacrifices he had long been prepared for. In the course of a conversation which turned upon the whole Mediterranean problem, the British statesman told Waddington: "Prenez Tunis si vous voulez, l'Angleterre ne s'y opposera pas et respectera vos décisions" and during another interview "Vous ne pouvez pas laisser Carthage aux mains des Barbares."<sup>2</sup> A summary which Salisbury made some months later confirmed the

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1. D. E. Lee, p. 100, Newton II, p. 149, Eaton-Watson, p. 457.
  2. Waddington's version was first given in Waddington to Hecourt, July 21, 1878 (D. E. P. II). Salisbury tried later to accredit a version attenuating the vigour of his Berlin utterances but never denied the accuracy of Waddington's recollections.

general drift of his suggestions to Waddington, minus the flashes of style; "With respect to Tunis, I said that England was wholly disinterested and had no intention to contest the influence which the geographical position of Algeria naturally gave to France." If the Turkish Empire were to fall to pieces, Salisbury added "as to Tunis.... England would not hold herself bound to interfere with any course which France in such event might choose to take."<sup>1</sup> The presence of Disraeli at some of the interviews, and his approval of Salisbury's language as well as Bismarck's repeated assurances that Germany gave her total acquiescence in the proposal, gave more weight to declarations which were in themselves perfectly clear, even if (as Salisbury insisted later) allusions were made "to the rights and claims of other powers, Turkey and Italy especially".<sup>2</sup> Waddington's first surprise (and perhaps hesitation)<sup>3</sup> passed off, the French plenipotentiaries decided to bring a motion before the Congress; but the French Government expressed their opposition to this step and the matter was temporarily shelved.<sup>4</sup> But Waddington

1. Cecil II, p. 332. Salisbury to Layard, October 1878
2. Newton II, p. 158. Salisbury to Lyons, July 24, 1878
3. According to Freycinet (Souvenirs, p. 54) Waddington refused to listen to "ces démons tentateurs".
4. Hanstaux Histoire de la France contemporaine, IV. pp. 387 and 388.

was so obviously reassured by Salisbury's declarations that it was thereafter quite out of the question for him to show any opposition to, or even to express reserves about, the Anglo-Turkish Convention.

8. If the French delegation appeared satisfied, there was still an Italian problem to solve. Strictly speaking the solution which had been given to the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the mere "occupation" by Austria) did not justify an Italian demand for compensations, but the Italian delegates could not but feel uneasy about the unexpected Cyprus Convention of which Corti learnt in the newspapers on July 8<sup>1</sup>, and fear the reaction of Italian public opinion when they returned to Rome with clean but empty hands. It was probably to soothe this disappointment that Bülow, the second German plenipotentiary, after the publication of the Convention, told Corti: "L'Angleterre à Chypre, pourquoi ne prendriez vous pas Tunis en vous arrangeant avec l'Angleterre?" (July 8).<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that Bismarck was informed of this offer (and Bülow perhaps did not know of the understanding between the Chancellor and Salisbury about Tunis); the Chancellor always asserted that he had played a straightforward game with France in Berlin,

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1. Chisla, p. 91.

but Bismarck, while encouraging France to seize Tunis, obviously aimed, among other things, at creating friction with Italy,<sup>1</sup> and would have been perfectly capable of offering Tunis to the French and at the same time proposing it to Italy through Bülow, the more so as Waddington had at first received Salisbury's offer with reserve.<sup>2</sup> At all events Corti's answer was negative; "Vous voulez donc nous brouiller avec la France?"

British offers to the Italian plenipotentiaries are shrouded in the same mystery. According to Count de Launay, second Italian delegate, the question of the cession of Tripoli to Italy was ventilated during a conversation which he had with Salisbury; De Launay expressed his regret that Italy was not informed of the Cyprus Convention before its publication; Salisbury, de Launay reported, "did his best to explain the circumstance, and allowed me to infer, from his veiled utterances, that Italy might dream of expansion in the

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1. Knaplund, Letters from the Berlin Embassy, p. 135
  2. Corti was convinced that Bismarck was informed of Bülow's proposal (Gwynn and Tuckwell The life of Charles Dilke, p. 383). The French categorically denied that any offer had been made (Freycinet to Say, June 10, 1880, in D.D.F. III). Langer, European Powers, p. 71, remarks also that Bismarck only spoke to Waddington about Tunis on July 13, in consequence after Bülow's offer to Corti and Corti's refusal; but there had been a preliminary agreement between Salisbury and Bismarck about France and Tunis. It is difficult to reach a conclusion for want of satisfactory evidence.

direction of Tripoli or Tunis. I was not authorized to enter upon a discussion on this point" de Launay concluded. The accuracy of de Launay's recollections about "Tunis" may be questioned, but it seems that "Tripoli" was actually mentioned by Salisbury in his conversations with Corti; "Lord Salisbury advised me to take Tripoli", Corti told Dilke later.<sup>1</sup> There is at least some evidence that in the course of the discussions about Tunis, Waddington mentioned the possible opposition of Italy and that Salisbury suggested "that Italy might seek compensation in Tripoli".<sup>2</sup> The actuality of the suggestion seems indisputable; it is more difficult to reach a conclusion about their exact significance. One cannot but concur with Dilke's conclusion that "the labours of the Berlin Congress, or its festivities so confused the minds of the plenipotentiaries, that they have never been clear who offered what to whom; but it at least seems plain . . . that a great deal of offering of other people's property took place."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, p. 382. But Corti in May 1881 emphatically denied that such a conversation had ever taken place "either at Berlin or elsewhere" (Crispi II, 114 and G.P. 162). Dilke, however, was very sceptical about a denial which was intended to clear Italy of any participation in the Berlin bargainings at a time when France had just seized Tunis in consequence of Berlin proposals.
  2. G.P. 143, Lyons to Salisbury, July 19, 1878.
  3. Dilke, p. 27.

9. The free hand given to France in Tunis by Salisbury was only one of the acts of "international brigandage"<sup>1</sup> perpetrated in Berlin, others being the deal about Cyprus and the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the three cases the European diplomats had done what Salisbury was afterwards to try to acquit himself of doing, and had "given away other people's property without their consent."<sup>2</sup> Several considerations, however, made the Tunisian bargain less defensible than the other Berlin arrangements. While in the case of Cyprus and Bosnia the Porte had given its consent (not without strong pressure) it had never been contemplated that there should be any kind of regard for its rights of suzerainty in Tunis. The Regency, too, was not a mere Ottoman province liable to be separated from the Porte in expiation of Turkish errors, but a wholly autonomous principality. A totally Moslem country, Tunis presented none of the national and religious problems which could in other regions of the Ottoman Empire serve as a pretext or an excuse for annexation by the Powers. Lastly, the case of Tunis was unique owing to the fact that there was a well-established British policy there which had tended precisely to prevent France from seizing the country, a policy which had been completely reversed in Berlin.

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1. Newton, II, 105.

2. Cecil, II, p. 333.

That startling but calculated change in British policy towards Tunis originated in motives which as we have already remarked, largely went outside the limits of Tunisian problems: the Regency had only appeared in Berlin as "small change" which was used to balance the transactions made by the Powers. As had constantly happened since 1830, British "great policy" in Europe, and relations with France and Turkey, had taken precedence over Britain's traditional attitude in Tunis.

The search for the responsibility for "this act of flagrant immorality"<sup>1</sup> is fruitless. There is no doubt that Bismarck had taken the initiative in the matter and undertaken to tempt the Foreign Office with gilded prospects of compensation. But it is none the less obvious that Salisbury had eagerly availed himself of the offer when it had appeared that for the realization of his plans for the settlement of the Oriental Crisis Tunis could be used as a suitable compensation for France. Lord Newton's thesis that it is unjustifiable to make Lord Salisbury responsible for the Tunis affair on the ground that "all that he had done was to intimate that he had heard that the French were extremely anxious to go to Tunis, that if they did so British interests would not be endangered"<sup>2</sup> is indefensible; Bismarck was perhaps

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1. Newton, II, 250.

2. Ibid., pp. 250 and 251.

"the real instigator of the Tunis expedition", but for the French Government it was the British authorization which really mattered since Britain, not Germany, had successfully stopped their advance in the Regency since 1830.

Salisbury probably thought firstly that this was the price of European peace; it had been Bismarck's thesis from the beginning and his programme had been finally adopted by the Powers<sup>1</sup>; secondly that as anyhow Tunis seemed destined soon to fall into the hands of some European power it was to Britain's interest to reap as much practical profit as possible from the inevitable destruction of Tunisian independence - But experience was to show elsewhere (in Persia and China for instance) that such a result was in no way inevitable and that the rivalry of the Powers could give rise to some kind of equilibrium through which the independence of the country concerned was preserved, with difficulty but lastingly. By destroying that equilibrium in Tunis Salisbury threw the Regency into a peril which was to lead, fatally, to her political annihilation.

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1. Langer, European Alliances, pp. 164-165  
2. Coolidge, p. 199.



XV. Salisbury and the Berlin engagements.

The Berlin promises are set down in writing.

1. The Berlin engagements were the less ambiguous in that they corresponded to a change in British policy and met precise diplomatic necessities, and were the outcome of very clear discussions with Germany. Nevertheless, when the time came to confirm them and to put them on record, the Foreign Office became unexpectedly reticent.

The reactions to the Cyprus agreement had been very hostile in Paris; "Furious cries were raised.... that England was threatening French influence in the Mediterranean as well as in Egypt" and some newspapers had advocated the rejection of the convention by the French delegation at Berlin.<sup>1</sup> The French Government were afraid of the opposition of the Chambers and somewhat divided on the question of Tunis on account of the difficulties which were likely to arise with Italy<sup>2</sup>. Once in Paris

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1. Sir Sidney Lee, I, p. 366, and E. Malcolm Carroll, French public opinion, p. 77
  2. According to Hanotaux (IV, p. 368) President MacMahon was particularly violent, "ils veulent nous f.... l'Italie sur le dos, maintenant.... J'aurais je ne consentirai; je ne veux pas qu'on nous jette dans une nouvelle querelle."

Waddington considered that the only way of defending his policy was to act immediately upon Salisbury's promises and to bind the Foreign Office by an engagement more official than the informal conversations of Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

Waddington overcame the reticences of his colleagues and persuaded them to take advantage of the "carte blanche" given in Berlin. On July 19 he wrote to Roustan that France could "être amenée sous peu à affirmer son protectorat sur la Régence de Tunis" and that Roustan could consider "le consentement de l'Angleterre et de l'Allemagne comme acquis" but that "il fallait tenir compte du mécontentement de l'Italie".<sup>2</sup> At the same time Waddington met Lord Lyons on the 18th, and informed him of assurances given by Salisbury and Beaconsfield that H.M. Government would make "no objection whatever" if it suited France to take possession of the Regency of Tunis and of Salisbury's suggestion that Italy might seek compensation in Tripoli. France, Waddington went on, did not intend to take "absolute possession of Tunis" but could exercise "a preponderant and exclusive influence there"; for the time being, in order to reconcile public

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1. "Il serait fort possible que dans trois mois d'ici les Anglais aient changé d'avis" Waddington wrote to d'Harcourt on July 21 (D.D.F. II).
  2. D.D.F. II, Waddington to Roustan, July 19, 1878.

opinion, Waddington was anxious to be able "to produce these explanations and assurances in a written, official and so to speak binding shape."<sup>1</sup>

2. Waddington's straightforward request placed the British Government in an embarrassing situation. On the one hand it was difficult to receive French overtures with coldness; the promises made in Berlin were undeniable, and Salisbury probably did not regret them. But on the other hand as the Cyprus Convention had met with serious criticism from the opposition and from some elements of public opinion, it was likely that the disclosure of the Tunis agreement would have given rise to a storm of protests; Salisbury was also too well aware of Italian dissatisfaction with the Berlin Treaty to face the irritation which was likely to arise in Italy, not to mention the reactions of the Porte.<sup>2</sup> Salisbury's answer to Lyons on July 30, reflected these difficulties: The British Government were desirous to answer Waddington's demand in a way calculated to maintain their good relations with France and to make his own personal task easier. The subject of his interview with Lyons, however, was "difficult to make the subject of binding assurances..."

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1. G.F. 143, Lyons to Salisbury, July 19, 1878  
2. Safvet, p. 228

If France occupied Tunis tomorrow we should not even remonstrate," Salisbury continued, "But to promise that publicly would be a little difficult," as Great Britain could not give away "other people's property" nor overlook Italian probable objections. Under these conditions Salisbury suggested that Waddington in his despatch "should avoid putting categorical questions which we would not be able to answer precisely as he wishes", but should make a statement of the points of the African Coast in which France took an interest, "leaving us to make such assurances as we think we can properly give."<sup>1</sup>

Waddington's first letter to d'Harcourt (July 31) was far from meeting Salisbury's requirements; it was full of blunt references to "the barbarians", and asked for the formal assent of the British "à tout ce qu'il nous conviendrait de faire à Tunis y compris l'annexion" in short, for a "certe blanche" in Tunis. This vigorous terminology caused a flutter in London; Waddington had given rein to his "dramatic instinct"<sup>2</sup>, and although the general tenor of his recollections was quite accurate "his vivacious French" by no means rendered the tone of Salisbury's communications "and what (was) of more importance" overlooked the rights and claims of other Powers,

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1. Newton II, 154 and 155; and Cecil, II, p. 333

2. Letters of Queen Victoria, II, Salisbury to Victoria, July 25, 1878.

Turkey and Italy especially. "He makes me talk of Tunis and Carthage as if they had been my own personal property and I was making him a liberal wedding present.... What I told him, Salisbury concluded, was that if a state of things should arise in which there was no other obstacle to his occupying Tunis but our objection, that objection would not be made." Salisbury then again suggested that Waddington should put his quotations in a more diplomatic form.<sup>1</sup> Waddington ultimately complied with Salisbury's suggestion and sent an account of the discussions which could be put before the Cabinet without difficulty (July 25).<sup>2</sup>

The tenor of Salisbury's despatch of August 7 was discussed in the Cabinet; it gave a final statement of the "significance of British engagements towards France, and although "secret" it was meant for British and French archives. Besides the reticence which Salisbury had already expressed about the expressions which were attributed to him - this reticence amounted to an effort to attenuate the significance of his promises - the

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1. Newton II, pp. 158 and 159. Salisbury to Lyons, July 24 1878, private. The "official despatch" (FO 27 2300, July 24) is even more prudent and Salisbury therein carries out the tour de force of not using the word 'Tunis' although constantly speaking of it.
  2. D.D.F. II, Waddington to d'Harcourt, July 25 and 26, 1878.

despatch put in strong terms restrictions which had underlain his previous communications with Waddington. The British Government had witnessed "with lively satisfaction the success of the experiment conducted by France in Algeria"; her presence on those shores, "supported as it (was) by an imposing military force" gave her "the power of pressing with decisive force upon the Government of the neighbouring province of Tunis"; this was a result which the British Government had "long recognised as inevitable and... accepted without reluctance. England (had) no special interests in this region which could possibly lead her to view with apprehension or distrust the legitimate and expanding influence of France." Salisbury, however, had not "foreboded an early fall of the existing government of Tunis" and his information rather led him to expect that if it was disturbed by no external shock it might "last for a considerable time." Lastly Salisbury had drawn Waddington's attention to the interest which Italy took in the Tunisian question; as no communication had been made with the Italian Government on this matter, the British Government had not arrived "at any opinion upon the position which Italy (might) take up in reference to the region under discussion."

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1. Affairs of Tunis, I. Salisbury to Lyons, August 7, 1878

Salisbury had come very far indeed from the "barbarians" and his despatch contained no more than a promise of neutrality, with some thorns attached.

Salisbury and the Franco-Italian rivalry in Tunis.

3. From the tone and arguments used by Salisbury, it was clear that the Foreign Office wished for nothing so much as a lull in Tunis which would defer the moment when France would avail herself of the "carte-blanche" which she had been given. This result could be achieved through the resistance of Italy which the conclusion of the despatch of August 7 foreshadowed.

News about the Tunis agreement had begun to leak out immediately after the conclusion of the Congress,<sup>1</sup> and had reached Tunis and Italy before the end of July. Wood was of course deeply disturbed by these rumours and as early as July 23, 1878 asked for authorization to give them a formal denial "in order to remove the impression which (they were) calculated to produce upon the mind of His Highness as well as of the population."<sup>2</sup> Salisbury gave an answer which in the light of the prudent despatch which he had sent to Lyons on the same day, was not

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1. "La Liberté" (Paris) and Montagsblatt (Vienna) had printed it on July 16.

2. FO 102 111. Wood to Salisbury, July 23, 1878.

altogether inaccurate but was at least misleading: "No offer of the annexation of Tunis to France has ever been made by Her Majesty's Government to the French Government" he wrote on August 7.<sup>1</sup> Wood was left in complete ignorance of what had really happened in Berlin; Salisbury's laconic answer, however, did not lend itself to a lengthy treatment, and Wood had to use Disraeli's speech of July 18, 1878 in the Lords, and his references to the preservation of Turkish territorial integrity in support of British traditional policy in Tunis.<sup>2</sup> The lack of indications received from the Foreign Office thus allowed Wood to continue a dangerous struggle against French policy in Tunis.

In Italy, the uneasiness which was felt about Tunis was added to the disappointment and irritation of public opinion after the Berlin settlement.<sup>3</sup> In August General Menabrea, the Italian Ambassador, attacked the question of Tunis with Salisbury. The answer was again wholly ambiguous: Salisbury did not think it "likely" that France should want to interfere with the existing government of Tunis; but at the same time he indicated that, outside the problem of freedom of trade, "the question

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1. Safest, 236, FO 102 111. Salisbury to Wood, August 7, 1878.
  2. FO 102 111. Wood to Salisbury, August 12, 20 & 23, 1878.
  3. Safest, pp. 247-248. See also Crispien II, pp. 98 and 99 and Chisla, p. 103.



of the occupation of Tunis by France was not a question of a character to cause serious anxiety to Her Majesty's government."<sup>1</sup> The Italians would have been wise to take into consideration the veiled warning which was included in Salisbury's words; but nearly at the same time Macdonell gave in Rome a much more categorical denial to the rumours about Tunis. "Whatever the French Government may think, Macdonell told Corti, (Corti) certainly would not for a moment suppose that Her Majesty's Government could offer to dispose of that which was not theirs to dispose of."<sup>2</sup> It was enough to reassure the Italian Government and encourage them to continue an active policy in Tunis which was to bring them in opposition with France. In August Mussi, on special mission in Tunis, proposed to the Tunisian Government an agreement with Italy about Bizerta, and in September opposed the renewal by the Bey of de Sancy's agricultural concession, at the risk of provoking a Franco-Tunisian incident as we shall see later. For this situation, Salisbury's not altogether straightforward game was partly responsible.

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1. FO 45 334. Salisbury to Macdonell, August 21, 1878  
2. FO 45 340. Macdonnell to Salisbury, August 26, 1878

4. Waddington was fully aware of the obstacles which stood in the way of France in Tunis, and especially of the Italian problem which Salisbury had raised in his despatch of August 7. While announcing a plan for a Treaty of protectorate to Lyons, Waddington tried to sound the Ambassador about Italy and suggested the possibility of conciliating her by the offer of Tripoli. Although Lyons remained reserved and suggested rather an expectant policy of waiting in Tunis in order to avoid any "action d'éclat" which would arouse Italy's hostility, Waddington stuck to his idea; "There was something very attractive in the idea of introducing civilization into the countries of the South and East of the Mediterranean," he told Lyons, "... As a means to this end might be regarded the occupation of Tunis by France and of Tripoli by Italy, the joint action of France and England in Egypt, and the position taken up by England with regard to Asia Minor."<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of September in the course of two interviews with Salisbury (September 2 in Dieppe and September 4 in Paris), Waddington resumed the question. But Salisbury was not more encouraging than Lyons and declined to give any kind of encouragement to the idea of obtaining from Turkey the cession of Tripoli to Italy.<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 27 2312. Lyons to Salisbury, August 17, 1878.

2. Langer, *The European Powers...* p. 73. FO 27 2356  
Salisbury to Adams, September 10, 1878.

It was certainly largely because of that lack of support in London that on September 5 Waddington informed Roustan that the affair of the protectorate was to "subir un temps d'arrêt qui pourra être long".<sup>1</sup> Several reasons were given for the postponement of the project (the problem of compensation for Italy and the necessity of neutralizing Wood's action) but they had the same British source and originated in Salisbury's "subtle but systematic revisionism" which was actually obstructing French action in Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand Salisbury renewed his indirect warnings to Italy nearly verbatim at the beginning of October<sup>3</sup> in order to incite her to prudence. Any unconsidered Italian action was likely to provoke an immediate, and perhaps decisive French riposte, and thereby break the fragile equilibrium which he was trying to maintain in Tunis; "A war between France and Italy," Salisbury wrote to Wood in September, "would almost certainly result from the acquisition of territory or special privileges in Tunis" by Italy.<sup>4</sup> At the same time Salisbury reacted to Waddington's complaints about Wood's aggressive language and attitude, by urging of prudence

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1. D.D.F. II, Waddington to Roustan, September 5.

2. Giaccardi, pp. 55 and 56.

3. FO 45 334. Salisbury to Macdonell, October 5, 1878

4. FO 102 111. Salisbury to Wood, September 18, 1878

on the Bey, thus completing the arrangements he had made to avert an explosion of the Tunisian question; it was the Bey's interest to live at peace with France and Italy and "to avoid giving to either Power any legitimate cause of complaint. If such a policy (was) carefully observed.... there (was) no reason to anticipate that neighbouring Powers (would) form any wishes inconsistent with his security."<sup>1</sup> Salisbury undoubtedly expected that Wood would read between the lines and turn this advice to the best account for his own conduct. But we have already seen that Wood could ignore such hints when they run counter to what he considered to be British interests.

Salisbury gives more pledges to France.

6. The double trust of Italy and France, and the de Sancy affair were soon to break the lull which Salisbury had hoped to prolong by his prudent attitude and the restraint he had tried to put on the competition of both Powers for preponderance in Tunis. The crisis ultimately led him to give France more substantial pledges than he had perhaps first expected to do.

In spite of Salisbury's and Waddington's warnings, Italy definitely adopted an active policy in Tunis,

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1. FO 102 111. Salisbury to Wood, October 19, 1878

especially after the constitution of the Depretis ministry in December 1878. Maccio's nomination as Agent in Tunis (that "very energetic" Consul had been on bad terms with Roustan when his colleague in Cairo and in Syria), his resounding installation in his new post (40 sailors of the Aviso "Rapido" presented arms at the Consulate)<sup>1</sup> showed that Italy was resolved not to tolerate the seizure of Tunis by any other Power and to continue the struggle for predominance in Tunis, a policy which the French Government thought to be unacceptable, and precluded by the Berlin agreements.

At the same time the outbreak of the De Sancy affair was interpreted in Paris at the first outcome of Italian intrigues, locally supported by Wood. It was the exact counterpart of the Djedida affair some 8 years earlier; De Sancy, a French gentleman, had obtained the concession of 3000 acres of land in 1868 for the purpose of breeding a specified number of horses and cattle; the concession had been afterwards extended to 12,000 acres. It had, however, appeared in 1878 that de Sancy had not the number of animals provided for by the Contract and the Bey had decided to cancel the Concession, with the assent of the Commission of Control which had been created ad hoc

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1. FO 103 111. Wood to Salisbury, October 8, 1878 and December 31, 1878.

and which comprised a Tunisian Official, the Austrian Consul and Queillé, the French Inspecteur Général. The matter came to a crisis when Roustan intervened and opposed the commission's entering in the Sidi Tebet estate on the pretext that it was a "French ground" (Dec. 1876). There is no doubt that the Bey was within his right; the attitude of Queillé, which was deemed "strange" in Paris<sup>1</sup> is quite clear in this respect and Roustan himself admitted that the Bey might be "strictly in the right", but he made the matter one of prestige for his government and laid claim to such privileges of jurisdiction for French enterprises in Tunis as were not likely to be accepted by the Bey more easily than similar Italian pretensions in 1871. But while in the conflict which had arisen between the Bey and Italy about the Djedaida estate, Great Britain had co-operated with France to limit Italian demands, this time the Foreign Office retired from the field.

The French government took precautionary measures; as they were to do at each important stage of the Tunisian question they first turned to Bismarck with an account of the de Sancy affairs, the Italian intrigues and Wood's alleged hostility, and asked for fresh

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1. FO 27 2318. Lyons to Salisbury December 29, 1876; Queillé was immediately recalled to Paris and explanations were asked from him about his "ranging (himself) in opposition to the flag of his country".

assurances of support.<sup>1</sup> The answer was as satisfactory as it could be: "Je crois que la poire tunisienne est mûre et qu'il est temps pour vous de la cueillir", Bismarck told Saint Vallier. Bismarck also informed the French Ambassador that he had warned the Italians that "à (ses) yeux Tunis (était) compris dans l'orbite français"<sup>2</sup> and that Andrassy had disavowed the action of the Austrian Consul. What was still better, the Chancellor had entered into communication about Tunis with Disraeli whose "largeur de vues" he had appreciated in Berlin and not with Salisbury "ce clergymen laïque obstiné et maladroit". In actual fact, Bülow had been instructed on January 3 to see Lord Odo Russell about Tunis "et lui demander s'il peut être vrai que le Consul Anglais.... ait joué un rôle inamical envers la France?... Nous avions pensé, Bismarck added, que la politique anglaise ne devait pas sentir le besoin, de gêner la France à Tunis"; the Chancellor concluded with a wish that "les agissements de M. Wood" should not endanger friendly relations between France and Britain.<sup>3</sup>

Salisbury answered that Wood "s'était tenu en dehors de l'incident actuel et qu'il (n'avait) donné à la France ..... aucun sujet de mécontentement."<sup>4</sup> But, possibly as

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1. D.D.F. II, Waddington to St. Vallier, December 29, 1878
  2. D.D.R. II, St. Vallier to Waddington, January 5, 1879
  3. P.E.A. III, Herbert von Bismarck, to Bülow, Jan. 3, 1879
  4. D.D.F. II, St. Vallier to Waddington, January 9, 1879

a result of Bismarck's suggestions, formal instructions were sent at the same time to Wood which fully met Bismarck's requirements; "You should maintain an attitude of strict neutrality on this question, he wrote to Wood on January 8, and should not interfere in any way."<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Office had already intimated to the Italian Government that the alleged French intention to assume the protectorate of Tunis was not a matter "that directly (touched) any interest of England" and that therefore it was not likely that Great Britain would interfere.<sup>2</sup> With Great Britain adopting this position, the Bey could not expect to stand French pressure any more; an ultimatum having been presented by Roustan (January 7, 1879) the Bey turned for the last time to Wood and asked him if he would formally guarantee Tunisian territory in case the Tunisian Government should refuse to accept part of the French demands; Wood could not but answer that he had no authority to give any such guarantee.<sup>3</sup> The Bey then yielded to the French demands regarding the confirmation of the De Sancy concession, public apologies and dismissal of some Tunisian officials made responsible for the difficulty.

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1. FO 108 124. Salisbury to Wood, January 8, 1879.
  2. FO 45 375. Salisbury to Paget, January 6, 1879
  3. FO 108 124, Wood to Salisbury, January 16, 1879



French policy triumphed in Tunis; the moderating influence of the International Commission was definitely eliminated by Cuéille's recall and the nomination of Financial Inspectors more devoted to French political interests in Tunis. Roustan expressed the hope that the Bey would henceforth consult him more frequently on subjects relating to the Foreign policy of the Regency and that he would "consider him as a Tunisian Functionary". The proposal, Wood remarked, indicated that France was now trying to establish a moral protectorate over the Regency.<sup>1</sup> For his own part Wood came off discredited from the crisis; there can be little doubt that he had induced the Bey to resist the French pressure (with Maccio's support); it was not to be expected that Wood could abstain altogether from the struggle for influence which was going on in Tunis and to which he had devoted his life in Syria as well as in Tunis. But at the decisive moment, Wood had failed to receive the backing of his government. The time had come for the French to remove the obstacle which his presence still constituted for their policy in Tunis.

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1. FO 102 124. Wood to Salisbury, January 16, 1879. A project of defensive alliance was actually proposed to the Bey in February and July, but rejected (Bardoux, pp. 172, 173).

6. Waddington, strong in Bismarck's support, carried out an offensive "en règle" against Wood in the first days of January: Wood, he told Lyons, was at the bottom of the de Sancy affair and had instigated the Bey to resist French demands; his presence in Tunis "immensely increased" French difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Waddington abstained from officially asking for Wood's removal, but some days later he informed Houston that in a private letter he had asked Salisbury to recall Wood.<sup>2</sup>

It is not impossible that Salisbury was less prone than Disraeli to comply with French demand; such an attitude fitted in with his "post-Berlin" policy about Tunis and explained Bismarck's remarks to Saint Vallier. But the odds were now against Wood. There is no evidence that Salisbury had ever encouraged the Consul's initiatives; at the utmost he had left him somewhat in the dark about the new British policy in Tunis; but Wood did not need encouragement to pursue a policy which was now meaningless - since Great Britain had abandoned her political objectives and accepted French predominance - and dangerous - since the Foreign Office was not ready to fulfil the hopes to which Wood's activity could give rise in Tunis and Rome, as had clearly appeared during

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1. FO 27 2561. Lyons to Salisbury, January 10, 1879

2. B.D.F. II, Waddington to Houston, January 14, 1879

the de Sancy affair. Wood's presence in Tunis was bound to embroil the situation, and involve Britain in serious difficulties with France. "I should be very sorry to do anything disagreeable to the French with regard to Tunis" Lyons remarked on January 14, and this opinion was shared in London by many people who thought that the Berlin engagements precluded any kind of action hostile to France in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> Lastly the Foreign Office could not fail to take Bismarck's warning and advice into consideration. Wood's recall was accordingly decided in January 1879.

It seems that "as a general massacre of aged official innocents" was contemplated shortly by the Foreign Office, it had been hoped that Wood's case could be settled gently. But the Consul had a very narrow escape from the age limit (70 years), probably at the price of a slight twisting of the truth; Wood who was 73 claimed to be 67 - "he entered the service 55 years ago, and therefore must have begun his public labours at a precocious age" Salisbury incredulously commented. The Foreign Office was somewhat at a loss to explain so sudden a dismissal (it was to take effect on April<sup>1</sup> 1879). Ultimately a "somewhat ignominious compromise" was resorted to; under the pretext of a reorganisation of the Consular service

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1. Newton II, p. 168. Lyons to Salisbury, January 1879

in the East the Consulate of Tunis was to be placed on a reduced footing, the establishment being "on a larger scale than present circumstances appear to require" (the Consul's salary was to be reduced from £1600 to £900).<sup>1</sup> Under these conditions the Foreign Office was obliged to deprive itself of Wood's "valuable services". "I am happy to assure you," Salisbury wrote to Wood on February 26, "that the zeal and ability which you have shown in the discharge of your duties are highly appreciated by Her Majesty's Government".<sup>2</sup> It is useless to dwell on Wood's distress when he was informed of Salisbury's decision. Emotion was universal in Tunis when it was felt that with Wood's removal, a 50 years old policy was coming to an abrupt end. Great Britain was officially withdrawing from Tunis and abandoning the Regency to Franco-Italian rivalry. As Salisbury wrote to Lyons, after having informed him of Wood's removal; "I think the French will find difficulties enough with Italy if they ever try to increase their influence in Tunis; but that is no affair of ours. We have hot water enough elsewhere without desiring to boil any in Tunis."<sup>3</sup>

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1. FO 103 124. Wood to Salisbury, January 29, 1879. Newton, II, 164, and 173. Lord Salisbury to Lyons March 6, 1879.
  2. FO 103 125. Note, February 23, 1879, Salisbury to Wood, February 24 and 26.
  3. Newton II, 174. Salisbury to Lyons, March 6, 1879.

7. Salisbury's expectations about Italy's resistance to French policy in Tunis were not mistaken; Italy had not lost hope and Depretis (and Cairoli after June 1879) tried to cultivate British friendship in order to get British support in Tunis. But the efforts of the Italians to drive a wedge between Britain and France and to arouse anxiety in London about French designs in Tunis were utterly unsuccessful. On no occasion did Salisbury depart from the attitude of neutrality which he had defined in 1878 in regard to an eventual French action in Tunis, and leave the least hope of Anglo-Italian co-operation in Tunis. It had been already quite clear in January 1879 when, in spite of Italian hints, Salisbury refused to make any declaration in favour of the maintenance of the status quo in the Regency.<sup>1</sup> Later on all the Italian overtures were ignored in turn by the Foreign Office. In March 1879 a propos of the nomination of Dupienne, a mere "Inspecteur des Domaines" as successor of Queillé, Membres suggested an action in common to remind the French Government that the agreement of 1869 provided for the independence of the French Inspectors; Salisbury dropped the matter until June and then contented himself with a mild and isolated

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1. Crispi, II, p. 112.

observation in Paris.<sup>1</sup> In May 1879 an offer of discussion for an agreement about Mediterranean questions was likewise accepted for Salonica and Egypt, but refused with regard to Tunis.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, in July 1879, the Italian Government proposed that in view of the difficult financial situation in Tunis the three Powers should consult and take action in common for the establishment of a budget in Tunis;<sup>3</sup> although Stevens, the acting Consul General seemed to approve Mensbrea's suggestion, and although the permanent officials of the Foreign Office thought desirable that Great Britain should join in a common action "if only to prevent the French and Italians from coming to open antagonism"<sup>4</sup>, Salisbury's answer was again negative. After having expressed his platonic regret about "the disorder into which the affairs of the Regency were apparently falling", Salisbury remarked that International budgets had not "as yet had a brilliant success in Egypt" and concluded: "I think we had better avoid, as long as we can, attempting a similar task for Tunis, in which we really have no interest" (August 26, 1879).<sup>5</sup>

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1. FO 45 395. Mensbrea to Salisbury, March 17, 1879. Salisbury to Lyons, June 3, 1879.
  2. Ciccacardi, p. 83.
  3. FO 45 396. Mensbrea to Salisbury, July 7, 1879.
  4. FO 102 124. Stevens to Salisbury, August 13 - Note August 25, 1879.
  5. FO 45 396. Salisbury to Mensbrea August 9 1879 - FO 102 124, Note by Salisbury, August 26, 1879.

These successive failures to awake some interest in the Tunisian question in Great Britain created at least an understandable discouragement in Italy: "Nelle questioni dell'Egitto e di Tunisi," Count Maffei remarked in July 1879, "il governo inglese non fa nulla per noi.... la buona intelligenza dell' Inghilterra.... non esiste che nella immaginazione de Membres."<sup>1</sup> And Membres himself could not entertain many illusions after the answer which Salisbury gave in December 1879 to a fresh offer of co-operation in Tunis. "In the case of Tunis, where our interests are but indirect I thought Her Majesty's Government should confine their action within limits as narrow as possible."<sup>2</sup> It was clear that Salisbury was leaving the Regency to its fate, that is to France with whom Great Britain had just been concluding an agreement about Egypt in September 1879.<sup>3</sup> It seemed that the British Government, at the beginning of 1880 had attenuated, if not abandoned altogether, the policy which Salisbury had sketched in 1878 and which aimed at delaying as far as possible an eventual French action in the Regency. Germany being more favourable than ever, Italy hostile but isolated, and Turkey

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1. Giaccerdi, pp. 161-162: Maffei to Cairoli, July 19, 1879.
  2. FO 45 376. Salisbury to Paget, December 19, 1879.
  3. John Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, p. 74.

impotent - Salisbury had warned the Porte in July 1879 that it would do well not to interfere in Tunis as it would "only do (itself) injury by provoking the hostility of France and thus bringing about a coalition between that Power and Russia"<sup>1</sup> - the diplomatic circumstances were very favourable to France, and it is probable that only the threatening nature of international politics in 1879 had prevented her from making a new attempt in Tunis. But just when there seemed to be no more obstacles in the way of France, the change of Government in Great Britain threatened deeply to effect the position of the Powers about the Tunisian question.

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1. FO 78 3939. Salisbury to Layard, July 21, 1879.



## XVI. The Liberals and the Berlin Engagements

Granville and the legacy of Salisbury.

1. One of the main themes of the electoral propaganda of the liberals had been a violent denunciation of the foreign policy of the Disraeli Government: "Abroad they have strained if they have not endangered, the prerogative by gross misuse, and have weakened the Empire by needless wars, unprofitable extensions and unwise engagements, and have dishonoured it in the eyes of Europe by filching the island of Cyprus from the Porte" Gladstone had declared, among other public utterances.<sup>1</sup> The liberals now came into office with a general wish to reverse the conservative policy everywhere, but more especially with regard to Turkey, where the traditional British policy of protection had already received serious blows with Salisbury. "It is clear that Turkey must now fall to pieces" Granville wrote to Lyons on May 1, 1880.<sup>2</sup> And he added later: "(the) idea that in the last resort the Ottoman power is a British interest to be sustained by our arms does not form the basis of any part of our policy."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Seton-Watson, Disraeli, Gladstone..., p. 548

2. G.P. 202, Granville to Lyons, May 1, 1880

3. G.P. 123, Memorandum for Gladstone, May 1880.

The great doctrines which Gladstone recognised as his guiding principles in international affairs - his strong belief "in law and justice, in the equality and community of interests of all nations"<sup>1</sup>, his hatred of war, his desire to base British policy upon the love of freedom - would indeed have led, if applied, to a complete reversal of his predecessor's policy on many points. This, Queen Victoria was unwilling to accept: on the other hand the liberal principles came up against practical difficulties of execution and embarrassing legacies which it was hard to repudiate altogether, especially in the Near East: the execution of the Berlin Treaty, the Cyprus convention, the Anglo-French dual control in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> In effect some kind of continuity was bound to appear between Salisbury's and Granville's policy: in the Near East Salisbury left no legacy of good will towards the Porte, and it was the easier for Granville to constitute himself the executor of the outstanding decisions of Berlin, as on the whole they were rather unfavourable to Turkey, for instance the questions of Greece and Montenegro.<sup>3</sup> Hence probably the unexpected faithfulness of the liberals to the Berlin provisions:

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1. Knaplund: Letters from . . . ., p. 13.
  2. Knaplund, *Ibid.*, p. 136, and Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, pp. 133-138.
  3. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, pp. 322-324.

"M. Gladstone and his colleagues," Granville reassured Queen Victoria in September 1880," instead of destroying the Berlin Treaty (are) determined to do their best to carry out its provisions."<sup>1</sup>

2. The numerous secret engagements entered into by Salisbury confronted the liberals with a more delicate problem. No precedent could be found in the past to such extensive use of secret negotiations; the famous memorandum of 1844 about Nicholas' overtures to Aberdeen had not been shown to the Cabinet and could not be considered as binding on the following Government. Palmerston had set as a diplomatic principle in 1841 that "the contracting of secret obligations with a Foreign Power by a British Foreign Minister or Cabinet (was) inconsistent with Parliamentary methods".<sup>2</sup> But it would have been difficult to contest that the agreements with Russia (May 1878) and Turkey (June 1878) - which had been revealed - and the agreements about Tunis (August 1878) and Egypt (September 1879) - which remained secret but were recorded in official documents of the Archives - were binding upon any British Government. Hence the perplexity and irritation of the liberals when

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1. Gladstone Papers, 44172, Granville to Queen Victoria September 19, 1880
  2. Temperley, British Secret Diplomacy (Cambridge Historical Journal, 1938), pp. 7-11.

the existence of these agreements was revealed to them. No records has been found of their immediate reactions but we may surmise them from Gladstone's angry comments three years later: "Of all the outrages (Salisbury) committed .... I am inclined to believe his three secret treaties, two of them still unpublished, are the most outrageous" he wrote to Granville.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may have been the indignation of Gladstone and Granville when they were informed of the Tunis agreement, it was clear that their appraisal of and attitude towards it would depend upon the ultimate decision which the liberal government had to take about the Cyprus Convention. The restitution of what they deemed to be an unfortunate acquisition would have given them back some measure of freedom of action towards France with regard to Tunis, which had been the counterpart of the Anglo-Turkish bargain. But, during the lengthy discussion which was started inside the Cabinet at the end of May about Cyprus, if a strong opposition was generally expressed to the Convention, and above all to the "inconvenient" and "onerous" obligations which it laid upon Great Britain,<sup>2</sup> few ministers actually suggested its cancellation: the Convention was "indefensible" Granville

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1. Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, p. 186, Gladstone to Granville, September 3, 1883
  2. G.P. 123, Memorandum for Gladstone, May 1880.

remarked, but to cancel it might appear as "an incitation to the Russians to advance." The general tendency was rather to keep Cyprus and get rid of the conditions which were attached to it, for instance by buying it.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately the fear of a Russian move prevailed and the Convention was recognised; when Goschen in February 1881 again suggested that Cyprus be given up in order to induce the Porte to make concessions to Greece, Granville answered that the proposals did not altogether "smile upon him"; although he did not think it unwise he "had to pay some attention to public opinion."<sup>2</sup> Under these conditions the Foreign Office was in a very weak position to refuse altogether to acknowledge the agreement about Tunis: "Our position for resisting the French intrigues in Tunis .... has been frightfully weakened first by the acquisition of Cyprus ... secondly ... by Salisbury's declaration which ... I suppose binds us" Gladstone was to conclude later.<sup>3</sup> All the subsequent hesitations of the policy of the liberals towards Tunis were in germ in their first acknowledgement of the difficulty of reconciling their moral principles with the hard realities of British foreign policy.

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1. G.P. 143.

2. Elliot, Life of Lord Goschen, I, p. 222.

3. Fitzmaurice, II, p. 236. Gladstone to Granville, April 22, 1881.

3. The French Government were well aware of the problems which the change of government in Great Britain placed before them; they felt the more uneasy about the threats which it might involve for the execution of the Salisbury - Waddington agreement as in Tunis the beginning of May 1880 had witnessed the renewal of Franco-Italian tension. The French were trying to obtain the concession of the port of the Goulette and to acquire the T.G.M. (railroad of Tunis to the Goulette and the Marsa) which the British Company was about to sell; but they came up against Italian obstruction. On the other hand in spite of French opposition, Maccio was exerting a strong pressure on the Bey to obtain the establishment of a telegraphic cable joining Tunis to Italy.<sup>1</sup> In these conflicts the new British Consul, Reade<sup>2</sup> had maintained an attitude of neutrality which had met with Granville's approval, but in view of the impending difficulties about the sale of the T.G.M., the French government were naturally anxious to ascertain whether the Liberals would abide by the attitude of their predecessors.

Freycinet first looked for reassurances in Berlin and obtained them in the clearest possible way.<sup>3</sup> Then the French Prime Minister turned to the British Government.

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1. FO 102 127. Reade to Salisbury (May 5 1880) and to Granville, May 31.
  2. He was the son of Sir Thomas Reade, the late British Consul General in the Regency.
  3. D.D.F. III, Freycinet to Saint Vallier, June 2, 1880.

Freycinet first recalled the British declarations of 1878 and laid stress upon their precision: "Nous les considérons comme n'ayant rien perdu de leur valeur par suite du changement de ministère", he added, "néanmoins il nous importe d'être fixés sur les dispositions personnelles des membres du nouveau Cabinet." The French Government, he concluded, considered that they could "compter pour l'avenir ... sur l'appui sympathique de l'Angleterre dans toutes les questions relatives à (sa) position dans la Régence." (June 4).<sup>1</sup>

According to Dilke it was Leon Say's demarche on June 8 which made him fully aware of the terms of Salisbury's offer to France.<sup>2</sup> Granville's surprise and embarrassment may explain why his answer was only given on June 12. The Foreign Secretary seized upon all the elements which in Salisbury's correspondence could support his own reservations about an agreement which he was not at liberty to reject altogether: there was "some discrepancy between what was originally mentioned in private conversation and what was afterwards recorded officially to (Lyons)<sup>3</sup> as the opinion of the late Government". Lord Salisbury, Granville added, "had distinctly reserved any opinion upon the position which

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1. D.D.F. III, Freycinet to Léon Say, June 4, 1880.
  2. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, p. 335.
  3. In Salisbury's despatch of August 7, 1878.

Italy might take up in reference to "Tunis", and the British Government shared the views of their predecessors on this particular point. Still more significant was the reserve which followed (and which had not been expressed by Salisbury): "In the view of Her Majesty's Government", Granville told Léon Say, "Tunis was a portion of the Ottoman Empire, to dispose of which Great Britain had no moral or international right". After considerations which were anything but reassuring Granville concluded with a conciliatory but very vague formula: Great Britain "had no jealousy of the influence which France, from her greater power and her high civilisation exercised and is likely to exercise, over Tunis."<sup>1</sup> Freycinet had believed that England admitted and sympathised with French claims in Tunis, and would weigh on the French side in case of conflict with Italy: Obviously he was wide of the mark.

The Crisis of the Summer of 1880.

4. At the end of June 1880, Franco-Italian tension in Tunis led to a crisis in which British intervention might have proved decisive. The fact that the Gladstone ministry showed no decided sympathy for either party

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1. A.O.T., I, Granville to Lyons, June 17, 1880.



largely contributed to the aggravation of the situation in Tunis; the uncertainty about British views encouraged both parties to go ahead, the Italians because they hoped that the liberals would support them<sup>1</sup>, the French because they wanted to stop Italian advance in the Regency and were disquieted by Granville's reticence and the effect it would have on the Italian Government.

The situation was made more awkward for the British Government as the effects of the Tunisian affair were felt in the Oriental questions which were then monopolizing Granville and Gladstone's attention; the negotiations about Montenegro and Greece were just beginning in June 1880 at Berlin. The more France found difficulties in her way in Tunis, the more reluctant she was to listen to British invitations to take an active part in the policy of coercion which Granville advocated with regard to the Porte, without great success, an attitude which gave rise to increasing irritation in London.

5. The sale of the T. G. M. from the Tunisian Railway Company had given rise to a very sharp competition

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1. Paget remarked that the view was widely held in Rome that "if Italy (would) satisfy England in commercial matters, surely England (would) not leave Italy in the lurch in political matters which may interest her" and they meant Tunis (G.P. 182. Paget to Granville, June 22, 1880).

between the French Company of the "Chemin de Fer de Bône à Guelma" (which already possessed the concession of the Tunis - Beja Railway and desired to give it an outlet to the sea), and the Italian Rubattino Company of Navigation; the French Company had first scored a success and bought the railroad for 2,500,000 francs (its real value did not amount to more than 1,000,000 francs). But the adjudication was cancelled, for legal reasons, and a second sale by auction took place in London at the beginning of July. At this stage the French and Italian governments agreed to abstain from intervening in the matter. On July 7, quite unexpectedly, the Rubattino Company outbid its French opponent with an offer of 4,100,000 f.: the day after the Italian Parliament voted an annual subsidy of 600,000 f., which was to guarantee the interest of the considerable outlay of the Rubattino.<sup>1</sup> The French Government had the feeling, not wrongly, that they had been fooled and nothing could equal the outburst of enthusiasm which followed the auction in Italy, except the intense irritation which it provoked in France - Cairoli's initiative had been very imprudent indeed as the Rubattino incident immediately gave rise to a war to the knife in Tunis and probably decided the French to act in order to forestall Italian

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1. Broadley, I, p. 189, Cambon, p. 136.

designs.<sup>1</sup>

France and Italy tried alike to secure Britain's adhesion to their respective views about Tunis. Right in the middle of the struggle for the T.G.M. Freycinet had made a new overture to Lyons and reminded him that Salisbury's assurances had been understood by Waddington to amount "virtually, if not formally" to a declaration on the part of England "that France might annex Tunis to Algeria if she pleased without encountering any opposition."<sup>2</sup> Granville had answered that he had nothing to add to his previous declaration; as for the Rubattino incident, he had instructed Reade to adopt an attitude of complete neutrality and to decline giving the Bey any opinion on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Of course Freycinet was not well pleased with Granville's attitude: his language, he told Lyons, "did not go so far as he (Freycinet) should have expected; it meant no more than in case of Franco-Italian discussion "England would stand aloof and show no decided sympathy with either party"; Salisbury's correspondence had led him to look for something more than this and he thought

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1. Langer, *European Powers...*, p. 255. Reade much (questioned) the wisdom of the Italian policy (FO 102 127 Reade to Granville August 9, 1880). According to Constant, Jules Ferry attributed the origin of the French expedition of 1881 to the Rubattino incident.
  2. FO 27 2431, Lyons to Granville, June 29, 1880
  3. FO 102 127, Granville to Reade, July 8.

that England, sympathizing with the claim of France to "predominant and indeed exclusive influence in Tunis", would have been ready to advise Italy not to interfere with France in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> This Granville was not decided to do; harking back to the reservations he had found in Salisbury's correspondence he concluded that he was not "en état d'avoir un avis sur les différends qui se sont produits entre la France et l'Italie à Tunis".<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the Italians were making unsuccessful attempts to win Granville over to their cause, and to obtain a clear declaration against the French design to make Tunis a dependency of Algiers; England had only minor interests at stake in Tunis, Granville answered, and did not wish to interfere in the settling of the misunderstandings that had arisen between Italy and France; and he added discreet but significant hints about the very high tone which the French took on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

Granville, however, did not absolutely keep to this altogether passive view of the situation and he tried actively to avert an open crisis in Tunis. Granville probably did not think of going so far as Reade suggested: deeply perturbed by the violence of the struggle between France and Italy in Tunis and by the nearly intolerable

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1. FO 27 2432. Lyons to Granville, July 8, 1880
  2. D.D.F., III, Challemeil Lacour to Freycinet, July 12, 1880
  3. Crispi, II, p. 112.

pressure which was brought to bear upon the Bey from both sides, the Consul asked "whether it may not be an opportune moment... to exercise some such beneficial influence as may induce one or both of my colleagues, to abandon (these) lines of policy."<sup>1</sup> Granville tried at least to discover elements of conciliation between the two antagonists; while the French government asserted that they did not oppose the development of Italian "private undertakings" in Tunis, Granville remarked, Italy disclaimed any political designs whatever on Tunis; under these conditions, the Foreign Secretary wrote to Paris (July 26) and Rome (July 28), "ostensibly there was no difference between (the French views) and what was claimed by the Italian government". And he concluded that there ought to be no difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory result "by a calm interchange of opinions."<sup>2</sup> The only difficulty was that, as Granville himself recognised, these were the views "avowedly" taken by the two governments; the difference was indeed difficult to make between the private economic Italian enterprises which France accepted in Tunis and the governmental and public works for which she could not admit competition;

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1. FO 102 127. Reade to Granville, July 23, 1880.
  2. FO 27 2422. Granville to Lyons, July 15; FO 27 2422, Granville to Adams, July 26; FO 45 401, Granville to Paget, July 28, 1880.

on the other hand the Italian Government had in certain instances taken steps "which seemed to have some political significance, under the guise of commercial objects."<sup>1</sup> Granville's attempt to find the way to a compromise and to bring about a lull in Tunis by persuading France to content herself with a vague political predominance and Italy to abstain from hazardous initiatives, bore some resemblance to Salisbury's policy after the Berlin Congress. But it was based upon wishful thinking rather than upon a concrete appraisal of the situation.

6. In actual fact Franco-Italian rivalry increased in violence in Tunis after the affair of the T.G.M. The French, who had to take a revenge for their set back of July, proposed to build a railroad from Tunis to Radès, which would have given their Algero-Tunisian system access to the sea. The project was opposed by Maccio as competing with the T.G.M.<sup>2</sup>, but some days later French contractors obtained the authorization to create a canal from Tunis to the sea across the lake, and to make a harbour at Tunis, and two concessions for the building

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1. FO 27 2422, Granville to Adams, July 26, 1880.
  2. FO 102 127. Reade to Granville, August 6, 1880. Distant of 10 kilometres from Tunis, Radès is situated on the sea, on the south of the Goulette.

of railroads joining Tunis to Bizerta and Sousse.<sup>1</sup> Roustan was even beginning to negotiate a draft of protectorate with the Bey and was pressing Freycinet to give him strong support to "convince" the Bey<sup>2</sup>, when the crisis, which seemed to be impending, was again delayed. This result was not due to Granville's diplomatic speculations but firstly to the hesitation in France which followed the fall of De Freycinet (September 1880). Jules Ferry, the <sup>new Prime</sup> Minister, was primarily concerned with internal problems; Barthelemy Saint Hilaire was a rather timid Foreign Minister and he was probably uneasy about Granville's dispositions; lastly Gambetta and Grevy were hostile to an action which would give rise to much resentment in Italy. Hence a respite on the French side at the end of September 1880.<sup>3</sup> As for the Italian Government, overtures had been made in August to Austria and Germany for a reprochement but had met with reserve in Berlin and had been finally dropped<sup>4</sup>; the feeling of their isolation added to Granville's rather dubious attitude incited them to prudence in Tunis.

A lull in Tunis could not but please Granville. At the end of September Granville's policy towards Turkey

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1. FO 102 127. Reade to Granville, August 23, 1880.
  2. Freycinet, p. 168. "Autorisez moi à débarquer une compagnie de fusilliers marins, m'écrivait il, et le Bey signera" De Freycinet adds that he was about to authorize Roustan to go ahead when J. Ferry took his place.
  3. Langer, European Powers, p. 256.
  4. Chiala, II, p. 178

nearly met with a failure as the Powers appeared reluctant to support a blockade of Smyrna. In these conditions Granville was bound to seize upon any possibility of settling Franco-Italian differences in Tunis as an incentive to more decided action in the Near East. Mattei having expressed to Macdonall the desire of the Italian Government that the tension should be reduced in Tunis by the removal of the French warships, Granville changed that somewhat vague hint into "an earnest of the desire of Italy to make friendly overtures to the French Government" and immediately informed Adams of it. The Italians had not intended to go so far and did not think of using British good offices for a rapprochement with France; as for Barthelemy Saint Hilaire's answer, it was friendly in tone, but reasserted vigorously the usual French themes about the necessity of French paramount influence in Tunis....<sup>1</sup> There was hardly anything reassuring in it for British policy in Tunis as well as in the Near East.<sup>2</sup> At least there was nothing in the answer given in Paris to Granville's soundings which authorized him to assure Menabrea on October 9 (at a moment when he was trying desperately to gain support to

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1. FO 27 2436. Adams to Granville, September 30, 1880
  2. On October 11, 1880 (two days after the Sultan's ultimate capitulation about the Montenegro) Granville still wrote to Lyons that the policy of France "was clearly a policy of perfect inaction." (FO 27 2424).



his Balkan policy) that as for Tunis he thought that "la cosa sarà ben questo sistemata in modo soddisfacente per voi".<sup>1</sup> The hint was perhaps meant to induce the Italians to support Granville's policy in the Balkans: But, the Porte having given way, Granville did not proceed further with the Italians with regard to Tunis.

The crisis of the Enfida.

7. The crisis which from December to March 1881 was to oppose the French and British governments about the sale of the Enfida estate, was the more unfortunate for France as it placed her in open opposition to the very Power whose friendly relations it was essential for her to keep, as Germany was unflinching in her support, and Italy powerless if alone. As for Granville, one can surmise that his feelings with regard to the Enfida affair were mixed: the difficulty provided him with a providential opportunity to give way to the displeasure which France's attitude in the Montenegrine and Greek questions had caused him. At the same time the Enfida affair, and the clumsiness of Barthélemy Saint Hilaire allowed him to free himself for a time from the chain of Salisbury's

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1. Giaccardi, p. 189. Giaccardi thinks that Granville was alluding to a possible British support in Tunis which is perhaps going too far.

promises and to give way to his inner feelings about the French policy in Tunis. Lastly, after two years during which he was only allowed to complain of his financial difficulties, Reade was to be given a belated opportunity to show what Lyons called his "Levantine Consular animus": he had at last found a cause to defend.<sup>1</sup>

When leaving Tunis in 1877, Khaireddin had sold the estate of the Enfida, which had been previously given him by the Bey, to the French Société Marseillaise: considering its dimensions (100,000 hectares in the Sahel between Hammamet and Sousse) the price paid by the Société (2,500,000 francs) made the affair a good bargain. The Tunisian Government were not very pleased with a transaction which affected 60,000 Tunisians living on the estate and which was likely to give rise to the same political difficulties as the Djedeida and de Sancy affairs: thus it was a happy coincidence that a British subject, Joseph Levy, who happened to own a small property near the Enfida should have claimed to exercise the right of preemption<sup>(Sheja)</sup> which, according to the local law, he undoubtedly possessed (the sale had been made under the provisions of the Tunisian law). As the Société Marseillaise

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1. Safwat, p. 307. Reade had been appointed Consul (instead of Consul Général and Political Agent) and received £900 instead of £1,600; in the end the title of Consul Général was given back to him with a salary of £1350 (FO 102 135. Granville to Reade, February 5, 1881).

received the full support of the French Consulate this very intricate legal problem was bound to degenerate into a serious political question: Roustan considered that Levy was the agent of a group of people who wanted to prevent the Enfida estate from falling into French hands, and he suggested that the Tunisian Government, and even the Italians, supported Levy's pretensions. On the other hand, Reade sided whole-heartedly with Levy "a British subject who (sought) to exercise a right guaranteed him by Treaty"; while admitting that he might represent other people interested in the business, Reade considered that Levy had acted strictly in accordance with the local law and it remained "for the local Tribunals exclusively to judge as to whether the Sheffa (was) valid."<sup>1</sup> On the British side, Broadley's intervention contributed to arouse passions: Established as a barrister in Tunis since 1873, Broadley, after some differences with Wood in 1873, had become very influential both in the Beylical Palace and the British Consulate; by his articles in the Times and his appeal to his

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1. A.O.T. IV, Reade to Granville, December 6, 1880. January 17, 1881. The legal problem was, of course, confused by secondary issues: for instance whether Khaireddin had or not kept around the Enfida a strip of lands as a precaution against the right of Shefaa; whether or not such a precaution was valid (the hanefi and Maleki judges held different views on this point), etc....

relations in the Parliament, Broadley succeeded in arousing British interest in the mishaps of his client whom he represented as the victim of French manoeuvres in Tunis.

At the outset Granville tried to keep the difficulty at a local level and to prevent its developing into a political crisis at the governmental level: the case appeared to depend "entirely on the local law", he wrote to Reade on December 29, 1880, and it "should await the decision of the local Tribunals". Reade was therefore instructed to support Levy "in vindicating his legal rights", but, Granville added, only if Reade was satisfied that he had "a bona fide claim, and that his proceedings were not "simply vexatious".<sup>1</sup> Granville unhappily did not try to clear up what he meant by his rather vague formula, a lack of precision which was to lead to much embarrassment as Reade was to interpret "bona fide claim" on a strictly legal basis, while the French accused Levy of bad faith, because they suspected that in the *Enfida* case he was acting as the mere representative of interests antagonistic to France. The situation in the meantime was quickly deteriorating in Tunis: French troops were being moved to the frontier;

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1. A.O.T., IV. Granville to Reade, December 29, 1880.

the Italians scored a political success at the beginning of January 1881, with the visit of Sidi Hussein, the Bey's nephew, to Palermo where he met King Humbert; but the rather threatening Address of the Italian Colony of Tunis (January 2, 1881)<sup>1</sup> seemed to receive an answer some days later with an Havas despatch from Algiers which openly advocated the establishment of a French protectorate in Tunis (January 10, 1881). The Enfida affair was going from bad to worse when on January 14 Levy's agents whom he had established on the Enfida to assert his rights were forcibly expelled by Officials of the French Consulate and Representatives of the Société Marseillaise. A violent polemic then began between Roustan and Reade; whose angry communications recalled <sup>the</sup> duels which had previously opposed Sir Thomas Reade and Sir Richard Wood to their French Colleagues. "I have long been aware of ... the unduly rigorous and menacing attitude which M. Roustan had for some time past assumed in his relations with the Tunisian Government, but as no British interests were therein directly involved, I held my peace"; Reade wrote on January 17. "He has now, however, thought fit to violate the local law to the prejudice of a British

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1. The Italians of Tunis spoke of Tunis as one of "Les contrées qui riches de tant de glorieux souvenirs, furent jadis une province de Rome" (Paget to Granville, January 15, FO 45, 426).

subject and it becomes my duty to speak, and to speak plainly."<sup>1</sup> The affair had come to a complete deadlock on the spot and it only remained to Roustan and Reade to appeal to their Governments.

On January 17 Barthélemy Saint Hilaire took up the matter during a conversation with Lyons, asserting that Levy's claim was "fictitious" and aimed at French interests in Tunis with Reade's connivance.<sup>2</sup> The attempt of the Quai d'Orsay to remove Reade from the discussion and to act directly upon the Foreign Office which was supposed to be more amenable to French arguments, was not unsuccessful. Though it is probable that Granville was less ready than Lyons to sacrifice Tunis for the sake of French friendship (British interests in Tunis, Lyons remarked are "not worth a quarrel or even a coolness with France") he shared the view of the Ambassador that it was "extremely desirable" to prevent Tunisian questions from "being stumbling blocks in the way of good relations between France and England."<sup>3</sup> He was well aware also that it was to Italy's interest more than to Great Britain's that a quarrel should oppose Great Britain and France over Tunis. The Italian Govern-

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1. A.O.T., IV. Reade to Granville, January 17, 1881.
  2. A.O.T. V, Lyons to Granville, January 17, 1881.
  3. G.P. 171. Lyons to Granville, January 18, 1881.

ment were obviously eager to push the Foreign Office: Italy, Maffei told Paget on January 19, was keeping herself aloof from the Enfida affair, but was anxious that in dealing with it the British Government "should pay due attention to the very serious consequences to the interests of other Powers, and to the independence of the Bey which the overbearing policy of France .... was calculated to entail."<sup>1</sup> Levy's case did not appear to the Foreign Office so obviously fair as to justify its playing the cards of Italy against France. These considerations led Granville to receive favourably the French suggestions that the Enfida affair should be left to the ordinary tribunals and that Consular intervention should be avoided: On January 31 Granville and Challemeil Lacour agreed that the further discussion of the question should be adjourned until further information would be available. But, Granville wrote to Lyons, it was of great importance that neither Government should take any step in the meanwhile "which might make the settlement of the matter more difficult."<sup>2</sup>

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1. FO 45 426 Paget to Granville, January 19, 1881.
  2. AOT. IV. Granville to Lyons, January 31 and February 2, 1881.

8. At this stage Barthélemy Saint Hilaire tried, very imprudently, to bully both the Bey and Granville. The French Minister was deeply dissatisfied by the non-committal attitude of Granville and feared lest any delay should injure French rights in Tunis. Very improbable rumours about a Turkish intrigue for appointing Khairuddin as Pasha in Tunis served as a pretext for proposing once again a French protectorate to the Bey, again unsuccessfully, and for sending a French iron clad to Tunis. The real motive for the sending of the "Friedland", as Barthélemy Saint Hilaire ingeniously told Lyons on February 2, was the question of the Enfida. Saint Hilaire probably thought that, Reade being now neutralized on the spot, the presence of the "Friedland" would intimidate the Bey and bring the affair of the Enfida to a satisfactory conclusion. It is less easy to understand why the French minister should have expected that Granville would remain idle.<sup>1</sup>

It would have been difficult to act more clumsily. Until then Granville had acted with much restraint probably because of the agreements of 1878, and of his

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1. Saint Hilaire's statesmanship has been questioned more than once: Noailles stated that "he had 'embrouillé' the affair which he had never thoroughly understood" (Paget to Granville, March 25, 1881), and Waddington told Adams that he could not help likening Saint Hilaire to a man "who without any knowledge of skating had suddenly been put upon the ice with skates on, and kept slipping about" (G.P. 175 Adams to Granville, July 25, 1881).



anxiety to avoid entering into difficulties with France. Barthélemy's decisions freed him from Salisbury's promises and allowed him to intervene on behalf of British interests which the French were threatening in Tunis, and to express his dissatisfaction with French policy in Tunis, and probably in Greek affairs.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Barthélemy Saint Hilaire's behaviour was so obviously provocative and so detrimental to the rights of a British subject (however dubious these rights might be) that Granville was bound to show his teeth; the more so as strong pressure was brought to bear upon him by Broadley and his political friends in London (Montague Guest in the Commons and Earl De La Warr in the Lords)<sup>2</sup>. As Dilke himself concluded "We did not want to keep the French out of Tunis, but we could not have ironclads used to force Tunisian Law Courts into giving decisions hostile to British subjects."<sup>3</sup>

Granville took a very firm stand: Unless the "Friedland" were immediately recalled from Tunis, he wrote to Lyons on February 3, the British Government would find themselves in the necessity of sending a naval force to

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1. Safwat, p. 309. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, 378. Duplicity or Diplomacy, p. 6.
  2. FO 102 143. Montague Guest to Granville, February 1, 1881, Broadley, I, p. 202.
  3. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, 380.

Tunis, a decision which would be unfortunate "as it would give a false impression of a disturbance of the good relations existing between France and England" and would "tend to make the question itself more difficult of settlement".<sup>1</sup> Barthélemy Saint Hilaire, at last conscious of his blunder, then tried to deny that the sending of the "Friedland" was connected with the Enfida affair; it was connected with alarming rumours about a Turkish attempt against Tunis; the danger, however, appeared to be "moins prochain qu'on n'avait été autorisé à le croire" and in these conditions the presence of the "Friedland" in Tunis "ne (serait) pas de longue durée". In conclusion Saint Hilaire hoped that the Foreign Office would give up the idea of sending a warship "mesure sur le caractère comminatoire de laquelle il serait pénible au Gouvernement français d'insister".<sup>2</sup> Not unexpectedly Granville thought the answer "vague" and the assurances insufficient and suggested that two ships be ordered to call at Tunis. Gladstone gave his consent: "We "cannot well do less or more with reference to this foolish escapade of the French, he wrote to Granville on February 4."<sup>3</sup> On the

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1. A.O.T., IV, Granville to Lyons, February 3, 1881.
  2. D.D.F., III, Note given by St. Hilaire to Lyons, February 4.
  3. G.P. 124, Granville to Gladstone, and Gladstone to Granville, February 4, 1881.

5th of February the Admiralty sent the "Thunderer" to Tunis. It only remained for Barthélemy Saint Hilaire to recognize that "he alone (could) be accused of the mistake". On February 8 he announced the departure of the "Friedland" from Tunis, which was immediately followed by that of the "Thunderer".

9. Granville had met with a complete success which, however, was to leave him in a rather embarrassing position. First of all quite soon it appeared that the removal of the man-of-war had not brought the Enfida affair nearer a satisfactory conclusion. On February 7, Dilke thought it possible to announce to the Commons that the two governments had agreed "that the question should be dealt with by the local tribunals".<sup>1</sup> Granville's illusions were quickly dispelled: on the 9th Barthélemy Saint Hilaire denied that he had ever accepted that the matter should be left to local jurisdiction; it was "so open to suspicion" that the French Government must examine the question more minutely; the case, Saint Hilaire hinted in conclusion, might be "referred to impartial arbitration".<sup>2</sup> Lyons was not a little disappointed, and so probably was Granville; but there was no avoiding a

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1. Hansard, CCLVII, 267

2. A.O.T., IV. Lyons to Granville, February 9, 1881.

resumption of the discussion upon the bases suggested by the French. It dragged on through February, March and April without positive results. Obviously the French Government were not anxious to conclude; it was to their interest to wait until the evolution of the Tunisian situation should allow them to seize the Enfida without difficulty (as was to happen after the establishment of the Protectorate). But the position of Granville, whom Reade and Broadley urged to give the affair to the local tribunals while he was plied with questions in the Commons and the Lords<sup>1</sup> was far from enviable. The Law Officers, when consulted, were not very helpful: they appeared to favour a judgement by a Consular Court but admitted that it might be convenient for both parties "that the difference should be determined by means of an independent arbitration."<sup>2</sup> "I cannot think anything clear in this case" Lord Selborne sadly concluded on March 9.

From a political point of view the situation was not more satisfactory. When in face of Barthelemy Saint Hilaire's inprudences Granville had felt bound to make some kind of reprisals, he had tried to limit the significance of his action: "Do not announce or give any

1. Drumnong Wolff and Montague Guest on February 21; Montague Guest on March 10; Earl de la Warr and Lord Stanley on March 25; Montague Guest on April 5; de la Warr on April 7....
2. FO 102 144. Law Officers to Granville, March 3, 1881

ostentatious importance" to the arrival of the "Thunderer" he had written to Reade on February 5.<sup>1</sup> But Granville could not prevent the sending of the "Thunderer" from being seen in Tunis in a different light, as marking the return of Britain to her traditional policy in the Regency. Reade let loose his "levantine animus": The effect of the visit of the Thunderer has been "in the highest degree satisfactory" he reported triumphantly on February 14; the impression was prevailing that "Great Britain had ... ceased to take an interest in the fate of this Regency, and, as a natural consequence French influence prevailed here ... All is now changed... The Tunisian mind, which infers from the Thunderer's mission an assurance of this country's independence, is restored to a condition of comparative tranquillity."<sup>2</sup> The interpretation given to Granville's policy largely exceeded the real character of his action; as Lord Lyons wrote on March 15, it was to be feared that the affair of the Enfida and Reade's conduct would lead "to expectations of support from us which could not be realized in case of need."<sup>3</sup> Granville was prone to cast the whole blame upon Reade: "I am afraid (he) has been

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1. A.O.T. IV, Granville to Reade, February 5.
  2. FO 102 143. Reade to Granville, February 14, 1881.
  3. G.P. 171, Lyons to Granville, March 15, 1881.

too impulsive" he remarked on February 10, and on March 16, "I wish Reade had never been sent to Tunis."<sup>1</sup> But the Consul could find some excuse in the fact that he had been very ill-informed of Granville's policy. That policy itself was singularly uncertain about its aims and methods. Granville had never been able to reach in regard to Tunis Lyons' philosophical detachment: "in the peculiar state of things between us and the French about Tunis, the more philosophically (Reade) can see the French bully and the Italian intrigue there, the better", he wrote to the Foreign Secretary on March 18.<sup>2</sup> But it was unfortunate that Saint Hilaire's high-handed and clumsy proceedings had so to say forced Granville into intervening in Tunis, for at the very time when Great Britain appeared ready to enter on a serious quarrel with France about the Enfida, everybody in Granville's entourage, and Granville himself, were expressing the most serious doubts about the fairness of Levy's claim.<sup>3</sup> The embarrassment was the greater in London as the Foreign Office was conscious of serving the interests of Italy's policy in Tunis in

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1. G.P. 202. Granville to Lyons, February 9, March 16, 1881

2. G.P. 171.

3. Selborne, on February 9: "Consul Reade seems to me to have assumed with a greater degree of confidence than I can entirely share that Mr. Levy's claim of pre-emption is well founded." (FO.102 143). Granville on February 9, : "We are not very strong in our belief of Levy having right on his side" (G.P. 202) - Lyons on February 11 expressed a strong presumption "against Levy's being a bona fide purchaser on his own account."

spite of its efforts to avoid acting with Italy in the matter, and being entangled in the diplomatic wrangles about Tunis: the British Government, Granville told the Italian Ambassador on February 4, "were anxious to keep the question of M. Levy's case separate from any other matters in Tunis, and to deal with it upon its own merits."<sup>1</sup>

In these conditions one understands Granville's belated wish that "the sooner the matter gets out of the international position it now occupies, the better it will be,"<sup>2</sup> and his final decision about the Enfida question "that Her Majesty's Government are not called on to interfere in the difference which had arisen between the contending purchasers of the Enfida Estate" (April 19). Unfortunately this pacifying gesture (if it was one) came too late: the Tunisian question had just reached its final stage and the French were soon to be in a position to settle questions in Tunis entirely in their own favour. In effect the French Government had drawn their own conclusions from the Enfida affair and their resolutions were not affected by the efforts of the Foreign Office to limit the significance of its intervention. As Granville had foreseen the "Enfida mess"

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1. FO 45 424, Granville to Poget, February 4, 1881
  2. G.P. 202 Granville to Lyons, March 23, 1881.

had left "a bitter taste in the French mouth"<sup>1</sup>: the French had had the feeling that Granville was not ~~only~~ indifferent to their claims in Tunis, in spite of Salisbury's pledges, but that he was now disputing the supremacy of French interests in Tunis. The Enfida affair, they believed, had been an Italian intrigue for raising difficulties between England and France, and with Reade's support it had largely succeeded. If the French positions in Tunis were to be saved, it was high time to act energetically. The hesitations which had appeared in Granville's policy since February, and his slowness in taking a definitive position, induced the Quai d'Orsay to expect that the French undertaking would meet in England with a grumpy neutrality at the very worst.<sup>2</sup>

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1. G.P. 202. Granville to Lyons, February 9, 1881.
  2. See Chaliemel Lacour's opinion about Granville's attitude, (D.D.F. III, April 4, 1881).



XVII. The Bardo (April - May 1881)

France decides to go ahead in Tunis.

1. Several reasons prompted the French government to seize upon the first opportunity which offered to go into the Regency and to put an end to the somewhat confused situation which had prevailed since the Berlin Congress. The French authorities were of course eager to solve the Enfida question at their advantage, both on its own merits and because it was to be a test for subsequent French economic enterprises in the Regency.<sup>1</sup> But political considerations came first: Italian pretensions in Tunis as expressed during the Sicilian demonstrations (January 1881) had developed into a systematic opposition to French interests, either by the publication of the "Mostakel" in Cagliari in which French policy was vigorously attacked, or by the obstacles which they were putting in the way of the French concession for the Tunis-Sousse railway. The "Italian danger" was deemed to be the more acute as the French

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1. The opposition in the Chambre des Députés, and several French polemicists (especially Rochefort) have lengthily dwelt on the financial side of the Tunisian operation. See in Broadley, II, 260, Villet's declaration (made at the Roustan's action for libel against Rochefort), that private speculations supported by Roustan had provided an excuse for French intervention in Tunis.

government were afraid of the existence of some kind of 'entente' between Italy and England about Tunis: that impression was largely unfounded, but Cairoli himself entertained illusions about the support which he could find in England to counteract French policy in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> Feeling that their chances of acquiring Tunis were decreasing, the French government decided to settle definitely the character of their relations with Tunis and close the door to further opportunities for Italian interference.<sup>2</sup> The certainty of German support, the pressure of public (especially in Algeria), the agreement of the Republican leaders and above all of Gambetta, the necessity of acting well before the approaching general elections, were the other considerations which, at the end of March prompted the Government to action.<sup>3</sup>

It was at the end of March 1881 that "des Kroumirs, plus ou moins menaçants, en tout cas opportuns"<sup>4</sup> came on the stage. On March 31 and April 1 500 Kroumirs invaded<sup>the</sup> Algerian territory and after some hours' gunfire withdrew to Tunis. Frontier incidents of this kind were no news in the northern part of the Regency: the French

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1. Chiala, II, pp. 242-243. Safwat, p. 290.

2. Safwat, pp. 293-294, and 313.

3. Langer, The European Powers, p. 260. Safwat, p. 324.

4. Freycinet, p. 169.

Blue Book records no less than 2635 complaints for trespass of frontiers in ten years. But this time the French authorities were resolved to act: Jules Grevy the Governor of Algiers, immediately asked for a military intervention. The Government decided to bring the Tunisian matter to an issue: on April 4 Jules Ferry informed the Chambers of the incidents and asked for, and obtained, credits for an expedition which was to be limited to the chastisement of the frontier tribes. But on the 11th, at the end of the Parliamentary session, Jules Ferry made an unambiguous declaration "Le Gouvernement, he said, ira dans la répression militaire qui commence, jusqu'au point où il faut qu'il aille pour mettre à l'abri d'une façon sérieuse et durable la sécurité et l'avenir de la Tunisie."

British policy was far from having the sharp outlines which the French suspected and which it needed, considering the resolutions of the Paris Cabinet. Since the sending of the "Thunderer" Granville had fallen back in his hesitations and irresolution: he was torn between the feeling that the agreement of 1878 was in some way binding upon the British government and precluded a strong stand in Tunis, and his dislike of the methods and aims of French policy in Tunis. Furthermore he was fully

conscious of the diplomatic problems which an action about Tunis would involve: It was difficult for the Liberals to support the claims of the Porte in Tunis, or even to give it assistance while they openly expressed their dislike of the Ottomans and had not ceased to wrangle concessions from them in the East, since 1880. On the other hand, Granville was just trying to settle, against the Porte, the Greek question which was to reach its climax in April, and he was thus precluded to make any strong intervention in Tunis, in the meantime. French statesmen were indeed equivocating about Greece, as in 1880 about Montenegro, to Granville's obvious dissatisfaction. On the other hand Italy was careful to act "in complete concord" with Great Britain<sup>1</sup>, in order to win her support in Tunis. But Bismarck, whose backing Granville tried anxiously to obtain in the Greco-Turkish boundary dispute, whole-heartedly, and openly supported France in her Tunisian undertaking.

In these conditions Granville was more unable than ever to make up his mind about the attitude to adopt and went more or less adrift under the conflicting influences of Reade who advocated action, of public and Parliamentary opinion which criticized his passivity, and of the Cabinet

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1. FO 45 424. Granville to Paget, March 7, 1881.

members and the Foreign Office functionaries who deemed an intervention impracticable. This impotence of British policy was the more unfortunate as Britain's attitude was to be decisive at this critical stage of the Tunis question.<sup>1</sup>

Granville's hesitations (April-May 1881).

2. From the outset Granville's attitude was in no way favourable and in spite of Bismarck's encouragements to France and assurances that Britain would not move and would accept the "fait-accompli"<sup>2</sup>, it appeared that the Foreign Office was unwilling to give "carte-blanche" to France. In answer to Barthélemy Saint Hilaire's inquiry about the intentions of the British Government, Granville enumerated the obstacles which the French would find in their way: "We do not wish to follow the example of the foolish opposition made to Algiers", he wrote to Lyons on April 6, "but the French cannot be allowed to seize Tunis without the consent of Turkey and communication with the rest of Europe. The Italians wish us to move vigorously in the matter."<sup>3</sup> Granville understood

1. In March 1881, Dilke rightly remarked in this connection: "If we want to stop the French from going to Tunis, there is a safe and easy way to do it - i.e. let me go to Berlin for one day and see Bismarck and talk about the weather, and then to Rome for one hour and see no one, merely to let the fact get in the newspapers" (Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, p. 412).
2. D.D.F. III, De Saint Vallier to Saint Hilaire, April 3, 1881.
3. Newton (II, p. 241), by error, gives the date of April 5 to this letter.

that with the Greek problem still on his hands an active opposition was impossible, but he was not ready to acknowledge it and British policy at this stage could be summarized in one typical formula of his letter to Lyons: "Pray look as mysterious as you can as to what might be our attitude." And Granville remarked, hopelessly, on April 6: "We ought to make up our minds what attitude we ought to take."<sup>1</sup>

In these conditions, the simplest way of dealing with the French expedition was obviously to take the French assurances about their limited designs for Gospel truth. Disquieting signs were not lacking indeed: Barthélemy Saint Hilaire himself made a rather ominous comment on his first assurances that the French had "no intention of annexing Tunis but were determined to punish the savages who attacked them": these **were** his "intentions présentes" but he had "nullement limité (sa) liberté d'action, et ... pris aucun engagement pour l'avenir" (April 8). Lyons avowed that he could not view the accumulation of French forces in Algiers "without anxiety."<sup>2</sup> However the Foreign Office showed, at least officially, the utmost confidence in the assurances given in Paris.

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1. G.P. 124.

2. A.O.T. II, Lyons to Granville, April 8, 1881; D.D.F III, St. Hilaire to Challemeil Lacour, April 8.

In Parliament Dilke and Granville imperturbably gave as answer to uneasy queries about French action in Tunis that assurances had been given that the operations would be confined "to the punishment of the lawless Frontier tribes" and that any other object "would be quite outside of the statement... made to Lord Lyons."<sup>1</sup> Similarly Granville reassured Menabrea who expressed the misgivings of his government about French intentions: "While France claimed to exercise the influence over Tunis which is necessary for a powerful civilised country over a small and less civilised neighbour... she had no intention to annex Tunis."<sup>2</sup> Lastly in answer to Reade's anxious appeals - the Consul suggested that British warships be sent to Tunis, and even, on April 7, that Bizerta be occupied with a naval force as "a desirable countermove"<sup>3</sup> - Granville instructed Reade to "maintain a careful reserve" and to recommend the Bey to "take all necessary measures to co-operate with the French authorities in the punishment" of the recent outrages, a piece of advice which had of course "a very depressing effect" in Tunis.<sup>4</sup>

Some disappointment could not but appear also in Rome - de Courcel reported that the Italian Embassy in

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1. Hansard CCLX, Dilke April 8 (1021) and May 3 (1662)
  2. AOT, N2. Granville to Menabrea, April 6, 1881.
  3. FO 102 133, Reade to Granville, April 5, 7 and 8, 1881
  4. A.O.T. N2, Granville to Reade, April 8, 1881.

London complained of "l'égoïsme des Anglais"<sup>1</sup> - and Constantinople - "Voilà encore une fois que l'Angleterre nous lâche" the Turkish interpreter commented after Goschen's interview with the Sultan.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary Challemeil Lacour remarked with satisfaction that in spite of "une certaine défiance, sinon un peu d'aigreur" it was likely that Granville would not oppose the Tunisian operation actively.<sup>3</sup> British public opinion, however, and a large portion of Parliament, expressed an open sympathy for the Bey which was partly the result of Broadley's activity: besides the part of occult Tunisian Foreign Minister which he played in Tunis during the crisis, he was in correspondence with three London Papers, wrote the Reuter telegrams and was represented by personal acquaintances in both Houses of Parliament.<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps with a view to putting an end to this hostile campaign and undoubtedly to strengthen Granville's unsteady resolution not to interfere that, on April 10, Barthélemy Saint Hilaire sent the correspondence relative to the Berlin agreement to Challemeil Lacour: these documents, Saint Hilaire remarked, were to remain "strictly

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1. D.D.F., III, De Courcel to Noailles, April 10, 1881.
  2. G.P. 189, Goschen to Granville, April 13, 1881.
  3. D.D.F. III, Challemeil Lacour to Saint Hilaire, April 7, 1881.
  4. See Granville's declaration in the Lords on May 29 (Hansard CCLXI, 1447).



confidential" and there was "jusqu'à présent" no desire to make them public.<sup>1</sup> But it cannot be a mere coincidence that on April 11, Blowitz, then correspondent of the Times in Paris, gave an account of the Berlin agreement which was so accurate that, in spite of Saint Hilaire's subsequent denial, it could only have originated in a "calculated indiscretion" of the French Foreign Office. Blowitz' conclusion that "successive cabinets in England may differ as to the means but not as to the great principles of foreign policy, and loyally abide by their predecessors' engagements" would indeed have been Saint Hilaire's.<sup>2</sup>

Be that as it may, the "Blowitz bomb" made a strong impression in England: the British Government were disarmed, but at the same time the attacks which were directed against them in Parliament and the country were somewhat blunted. Even if Granville had had an urge to intervene and had thought of favouring a scheme of mediation<sup>3</sup> he seemed definitely to come round to an attitude

1. D.D.F. III, Barthélemy St. Hilaire, April 10.
2. The Times, April 11, 1881, p. 5, col.2.
3. It is at this point that the somewhat obscure Dufferin episode occurs: At the beginning of May Bismarck assured St Vallier that Lord Dufferin, when coming back from Russia, had tried to decide him to take part in an European mediation in the Tunisian affair "sur un ordre spécial de Granville" (D.D.F. III. St Vallier, May 2.). But none of the information we have about Lord Dufferin's conversation with the Chancellor on April 18 confirms Bismarck's statement (G.P. 185 Dufferin to Granville, April 23 - Lyall:

of strict neutrality: "The whole question is difficult and delicate, he wrote to Queen Victoria on April 14, and made more so by some impulsive declarations of Lord Salisbury at Berlin . . . . Your Majesty's present government, like the last, admit that they have no jealousy of the legitimate influence of a great civilized country over a semi-barbarous and weak neighbour". The question Granville added, was "what is legitimate influence"<sup>1</sup>: he gave no precise answer but it appeared clearly from what followed that "legitimate influence" was anything short of annexation. In any case, during the few days which followed, Granville gave unmistakable proofs of his desire to stand aloof from the Tunisian question: On April 19 he informed Lyons that the Government did not feel that they were called on to interfere in the Enfida affair. The Bey's successive calls for help were left unanswered: On April 20 Granville only expressed

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1. The Letters of Queen Victoria, III, pp. 209-210.

3. (cont. from p.644) : The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin I, 323). Dilke and Granville have denied it most emphatically (Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, 381), and Odo Russell likewise denied that there had been English representation against France about Tunis in Berlin (FO 64 981 Odo Russell to Granville, May 10, 1881). One is reduced to suppose either that it was one of Bismarck's usual tricks to embroil France and Great Britain or, more likely, that in the course of a conversation which dealt with Tunis among many other subjects, Lord Dufferin had made a confidential and unofficial sounding about Bismarck's views. (Giaccardi p. 311).

his regret "at the Bey's refusal to co-operate with the French, since it gives them a plausible excuse for taking the law into their own hands." At the same time the Foreign Secretary ignored Menabrea's suggestion "of simultaneous and identic action" of the two governments in view of the eventual despatch of warships to protect British and Italian nationals in Tunis: it did not appear that there was any real occasion for it, Granville answered, and the sending of warships would most likely induce France to do the same.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion made by the Turkish Government that England should interfere in the Tunisian question met likewise with a "stern" admonition by Goschen about the past misbehaviour of Turkey: moreover Goschen made it clear to the Sultan that England was not "interested" in maintaining the status quo in Tunis but only "desirous" that it should be maintained.<sup>2</sup> It was not to be denied "that the French (were) playing the part of the wolf against the lamb in the Tunisian matter," Lyons concluded on April 22, "but unless the Italians (could) and (would) protect the lamb, it (was) very far from a kindness to her to stir her up to defy the Wolf"<sup>3</sup>: obviously Granville was not ready to pit himself against the wolf, and Lyons even less.

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1. A.O.T. II, Granville to Paget, April 20, 1881.
  2. A.O.T., II, Goschen to Granville, April 19, N 57 & 58.
  3. G.P. 171. Lyons to Granville, April 22, 1881.

3. It soon appeared that Granville's hopes "that the matter (would) be satisfactorily settled and ... the marauders ... subdued and punished by the joint action of the French and Tunisian authorities"<sup>1</sup> would be disappointed. While the Bey firmly refused to co-operate in the projected operations, huge concentrations of troops were taking place behind the frontier and were completed on the 20th of April: 30,000 men, 24,000 of which had been brought from France, were ready to invade the Regency, in three columns on the 24th of April. In the meanwhile a landing of troops was prepared in Tabarka from the 16th and carried out on April 25, after a show of resistance. It became difficult to entertain illusions any longer about the real character of the French expedition. On April 22 Lyons reported that the object of the intervention was to "exact from the Bey the signature of a Treaty which, with or without the introduction of the word Protectorate, shall place France in an exceptional and predominating position in the Regency."<sup>2</sup>

Granville's forced optimism gave place to concern and his long-repressed irritation suddenly broke out: "I am uneasy about Tunis, " he wrote to Gladstone on April 21, "I see that during the reigns of Louis Philippe

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1. A.O.T. II, Granville to Lyons, April 9, 1881.

2. A.O.T. II, Lyons to Granville, April 22, 1881.

and of Napoleon III, the French were constantly biting at Tunis, and as often stopped by the decided language of successive Foreign Secretaries. I do not like barking without biting. But if the result of our not barking at all is that the French make (Bizerta) ... impregnable... and neutralizing Malta, we shall look rather foolish." Granville then suggested that Lyons be instructed to remind the French "that this country had always maintained the doctrine, now put forward by Turkey and the Bey, that Tunis was under the suzerainty of the Porte. The risk of a war with France about Tunis is appalling," Granville concluded, "but they would have to think twice before they took steps which might bring upon them England and Italy. A hint need not commit us, while it might have a moderating effect on the French."<sup>1</sup> This limited and ill defined scheme of vocal opposition to French action in Tunis was only a new and more reserved variation on the theme of "look mysterious as you can": "I do not see how we are to give France 'carte blanche'" Granville wrote to Lyons. "It would be as well that France should not imagine that it would be "perfectly impossible" to have England, Italy and the Arabs against her. No doubt Lyons did not like the despatch even accompanied with Granville's qualification ("I am rather sorry to

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1. G.P 124. Granville to Gladstone, April 24 (partly quoted in Fitzmaurice, II, 234)

send it.")<sup>1</sup> Gladstone was not enthusiastic either: "Our position for resisting the French intrigues in Tunis" he replied on April 22, "has been frightfully weakened first by the acquisition of Cyprus ... secondly by Salisbury's declaration, which ... I suppose binds us ... In fact, the position seems to me not tenable beyond the point of friendly remonstrances in case of need."<sup>2</sup>

Gladstone had however agreed to sending ships whenever it would appear necessary, and the Admiralty was accordingly requested to keep a ship of war ready at Malta to be dispatched to the Tunisian coast (April 22). In the meanwhile Lyons, acting on Granville's instructions reminded Barthélemy Saint Hilaire that Great Britain maintained the doctrine that Tunis was under the suzerainty of the Porte and formed a part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> On April 23 and again on April 25, Menabrea suggested the sending of ships of war to Tunis "not as a menace to France" but as a measure of protection for English and Italian subjects, and "represented that the

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1. Newton, II, pp. 242, 243. Granville to Lyons, April 22, 1881.
  2. Fitzmaurice, II, p. 236, Gladstone to Granville, April 22.
  3. A.O.T. II, Lyons to Granville, April 25. "Nobody will wrap up the warning of our doctrine as to the Ottoman Empire better than you will", Granville wrote to Lyons on April 22 (Newton, p. 243).

moment had arrived for taking some decision."<sup>1</sup> Granville gave no immediate answer but as the Italians stated that the French fleet had received orders to go to the Goulette<sup>2</sup> and asked what Britain was "prepared to do in concert with them" he obviously contemplated some restraining action in conjunction with Italy and asked for Gladstone's opinion by telegraph. The Prime Minister's answer was very clear: Granville was free to act on his judgement "as to sending force" but Gladstone was "averse to combination".<sup>3</sup>

Under these circumstances Granville decided to give up the course of policy which he had sketched from the 22nd: "Tunis does not seem so alarming as Menabrea seemed to think," he wrote to Gladstone on the 27th. "I suppose our best policy is to do nothing to irritate the French unnecessarily and at the same time nothing to reassure them as to possible result."<sup>4</sup> Granville thus reverting to the policy of "look as mysterious as you can", Tunisian affairs resumed their previous aspect. To the queries in the Commons, Dilke opposed the French assurances about the aims and limits of the expedition.

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1. A.O.T. II, Granville to Paget, April 25, 1881.
  2. The news immediately received a flat denial in Paris.
  3. G.P. 124 Granville to Gladstone, April 25, and Gladstone to Granville, April 26.
  4. G.P. 124, Granville to Gladstone, April 27, 1881.

The appeal addressed by the Bey to the Powers signatory of the Berlin Treaty after the "violation" of the Tunisian territory by French troops (April 25) was disregarded in the Foreign Office; Granville replied to Mensbrea's inquiry about British intentions and offer of common action that "Her Majesty's Government (would) not immediately reply to the Bey's circular."<sup>1</sup> A Turkish proposal for an inquiry about the Tunisian difficulties met with no better success; the British Government did not feel "called upon to give any opinion upon the proposal ... which (appeared) to be superseded by the course of events."<sup>2</sup> Lastly Reade's repeated demands for the sending of a British ship of war met with a cold and even irritated welcome in London; "The accounts given in your several telegrams as to danger to foreign residents are not quite consistent" Granville wrote on April 26 "Continue to maintain a reserved and cautious attitude." And some days later, while Reade frightened by the prospect of a French protectorate being imposed on the Bey, suggested a British intervention ("I am convinced that a word from Her Majesty's Representative would effectually prevent his yielding

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1. A.O.T., II, Granville to Paget, April 29.
  2. A.O.T., II, Tenterden to Musurus Pasha, May 1, 1881.



even now.") Tenterden remarked that it "would be as well" if Granville were to write privately to Reade "to tell him not to get us into an imbroglio. He seems all on the wrong tack."<sup>1</sup>

4. On May 1 the port of Bizerta was unexpectedly conquered by the French and on the 2nd, 8000 soldiers were landed and soon began marching towards Tunis, which was only 100 kilometres distant from Bizerta. The French were now going far beyond the objects which they had avowedly assigned to their intervention. The sudden extension of the operations, as well as the prospects of seeing Bizerta transformed into a French naval base aroused deep emotions in Great Britain: "The French have behaved very badly" the Queen remarked on May 2.<sup>2</sup> Granville himself was deeply perturbed by the news, and the gravity of the situation, which confirmed the apprehensions he had expressed to Gladstone in April, led him to consider diplomatic action to check further French progress.

The circumstances seemed to be wholly favourable for Britain's taking the initiative of international action. On May 3 the Porte proposed to the signatories of the

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1. FO 102 132. Reade to Granville, May 1; G.P. 193, Tenterden, May 1, 1881.  
2. G.P. 38, Queen Victoria to Granville, May 2.

Berlin treaty "de (s')entendre soit avec elles, soit directement avec la France" to arrive to a satisfactory settlement of French grievances.<sup>1</sup> The Italian Government were pressing the Foreign Office to take the initiative in bringing about a solution of the Tunisian difficulties: if the British Government were disposed to take any steps with that object in view "the Italian Government would be ready to cordially co-operate" Menabrea again assured Granville on May 4.<sup>2</sup> On the same day the Russian Ambassador affirmed that his Government wished to ascertain the views of Great Britain "with whom they would be glad to act as far as possible in unison."<sup>3</sup> Lastly the Bey of Tunis made a desperate appeal to Granville's help on May 5: "Je place mon propre sort, ainsi que les destinées de la Régence entre les mains de Votre Excellence ... implorant, au nom de l'humanité et en qualité d'ancien allié de votre gouvernement ... l'aide de Votre Excellence."<sup>4</sup> The fate of Tunis was in the hands of Granville, who since the settlement of the Greek question (May 2) was freer to act than ever before.

1. A.O.T., II, Assim Pasha to Musurus Pasha, May 3, 1881
2. A.O.T., II, Granville to Paget, May 4, 1881.
3. A.O.T., II, Granville to Wyndham, May 4, 1881.
4. A.O.T. The Bey to Granville, May 5. Broadley was present at the Council which decided to send the appeal, and concludes: "everybody felt that we were now hoping against hope." (I., p. 293).

Dilke has given the only account which we possess of the memorable 6th of May when Lord Granville, against Tenterden's and Dilke's opinion, drafted despatches to Germany and Austria "as to the position of the French in Tunis with a view to raise the concert of Europe in their path". During the discussion which followed Tenterden and Dilke pointed out to Granville that Germany and Austria would "snub" Great Britain and that the Concert of Europe would be reduced to Russia, Italy and England: "A curious league ... and a queer concert". These arguments were convincing and Granville at last abandoned his scheme.<sup>1</sup> International action was impracticable, but Granville's hostility to the French policy in Tunis found a milder and more limited expression in the half-offer of mediation which, on May 7, he instructed Lyons to make in Paris: While not doubting the sincerity of the assurances given by the French government about the aims of the expedition, the British government could not but note the fact that it seemed directed "to some object beyond the mere chastisement of disorderly Arab tribes"; this object, although not being a protectorate, "would be in the nature of one". Great Britain could not be indifferent to measures

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1. Gwynn and Tuckwell, I, 380.

affecting the existing state of the Regency; nor could she "ignore entirely" the Bey's and the Sultan's appeals. Without desiring to give an exaggerated importance to the question of Tunis or make "any formal proposal of mediation" unless invited to do so, by both parties, the British Government were ready, if they could "in any way conduce to an early settlement" of the Tuniso-French differences, "to exercise all the influence they (might) possess in any manner which (Barthélemy Saint Hilaire might) indicate as likely to be useful and acceptable."<sup>1</sup>

One wonders whether Granville entertained any illusions about the chances of success of a proposal which was so vaguely shaped and so timidly put forward, which had no international support - except from the vacillating Turkey and weak Italy as even Russia was soon to confirm that she would observe a reserved attitude in the Tunisian affair<sup>2</sup> - and which was not expected to be more than a friendly advice as the majority of, if not all, the members of the Cabinet were convinced of the impracticability of any protest and of its undesirableness for the reasons which Gladstone had very forcefully stated. As for the French Government,

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1. A.O.T., II, Granville to Lyons, May 7, 1881.

2. A.O.T., VI, Wyndham to Granville, May 11, 1881.

strong as they were in German support, they were now waiting for the conclusion of the Tunisian affair. The French troops had left Bizerta on May 7 for the last stage of their campaign, the Bardo, and it was hoped in Paris that the success of the expedition could be obtained for the re-opening of Parliament (on May 12). Barthélemy felt sure that, as Bismarck had told Saint Vallier, Granville would not go farther than expressing "du mauvais vouloir, des procédés peu aimables, des taquineries"<sup>1</sup>. On May 10, the French Minister affirmed once more that France "did not intend to annex Tunis", that the military occupation would be "of an essentially provisional character", and that the Treaty which would be made with the Bey would respect the Treaties concluded between the Bey and the Powers, and refused Granville's offer as mildly as he could: "he did not think that at the present moment he could suggest any way in which the interposition of Her Majesty's Government could conduce to the early settlement of the questions at issue between France and Tunis."<sup>2</sup> This time everything was over: while Granville resigned himself to the 'fait-accompli' and turned down the last Italian and Turkish demarches,

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1. D.D.F., III, Saint Vallier, to Saint Hilaire, May 2, 1881  
2. A.O.T., III, Lyons to Granville, May 10, 1881.

French troops arrived in the neighbourhood of the Bardo. On May 12, Roustan and General Breart imposed on the Bey the signature of a Treaty which had been kept ready for three years and provided for the temporary occupation of some parts of the Regency (article II), and the nomination of a Minister Resident who was to act as the Bey's foreign minister (articles V and VI).

After the Treaty.

5. The conclusion of the Treaty was bound to cause an unfavourable impression in Great Britain. Not to speak of Reade's affliction, even Lyons felt some irritation at a Treaty which established something so like a Protectorate "that it would be difficult to point out a difference."<sup>1</sup> British public opinion and the press were deeply impressed by the possible strategic consequences of the seizure of Bizerta by France, although Saint Hilaire had assured that France did not contemplate incurring the enormous expenses which were needed to make Bizerta a harbour utilizable by war-ships. In Parliament Montague Guest's energetic speech of May 16, and demand for a protest against France's "high handed attack" was followed by numerous and pressing suggestions

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1. Newton, II, p. 244: Lyons to Granville, May 13, 1881

for action. In the Foreign Office, however, even if some emotion had been felt at first - Challemeil Lacour reported on May 16 that it had been thought of expressing reservations<sup>1</sup> - it quickly subsided. A diplomatic action was out of the question as it would have been useless; moreover Bismarck, who was in great spirits "since the French (had) gone into the Tunis trap"<sup>2</sup> was urging the London Cabinet to "se résigner à ce qu'il ne pouvait plus empêcher et accepter les faits accomplis."<sup>3</sup>

The feeling that in the situation created by Salisbury's engagements there was not much room left for resistance largely contributed to soothing the irritation of the British Government: "We think Cyprus and the language of Salisbury leaves little ground under our feet to take a strong attitude" Granville wrote to Goschen on May 13, and this tendency to put the blame on Salisbury appeared again and again in the correspondence of the Liberal statesmen.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it was thought expedient to publish part of the Salisbury-Waddington correspondence of July and August 1878 with a view to putting an end to the attacks to which the

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1. D.S.F. IV, Challemeil Lacour to Saint Hilaire, May 16.
  2. G.P., 177, Odo Russell to Granville, May 14.
  3. E. Daudet, p. 214.
  4. G.P. 210, Granville to Goschen, May 13. See also G.P. 137, Northbrook to Granville, May 13, G.P. 143 Bright, May 16, and Forster, May 17, etc....

Government's policy in Tunis was subjected in Parliament and in the country: it is perfectly understandable that Granville, who had laboured during one year under the burden of the Berlin agreement, was not sorry to distribute the responsibilities more fairly. Publication was decided on by the Cabinet after some discussion whether they were to publish the whole or only part of the correspondence (May 14 to 17)<sup>1</sup>. Though some of the crudest documents were ultimately left aside, especially Lyons' letter of July 19, 1881, what remained was impressive enough, and the discussion in Parliament ended lamely with innocuous considerations about the preservation of the rights of British subjects in Tunis (May 20, 1881).<sup>2</sup>

6. At the same time, Granville was asking for such guarantees as would strengthen his position at home. On May 13 he reminded Barthélemy Saint Hilaire of the successive assurances which he had given to Great Britain about Tunis: no intention of annexation, no design of using Bizerta as a naval station, respect of all

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1. See Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, p. 122, and G.P., 143.
  2. Dilke and Gladstone had persistently refused to engage into any full discussion before the publication of the Papers - See Hansard CCLXI 571 to 574 (May 16), 683 (May 17), 805 (May 19).



existing Treaty rights of foreign countries and subjects in Tunis, maintenance of the commercial freedom and of the financial agreements.<sup>1</sup> The French Minister showed a significant readiness to give the satisfactory assurances which were demanded of him, and professed a sincere desire to maintain Anglo-French friendship: "Tunis ne peut pas être entre nous un objet de discorde"<sup>2</sup>. Granville's answer, however, was still tinged with some ill humour: The British government, he wrote on May 20, "would be wanting in frankness if they allowed M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire to remain under the impression that the proceedings of the French in Tunis have produced a favourable effect on public opinion in this country."<sup>3</sup>

Granville's lasting irritation was probably meant to induce the French Government to adopt a prudent attitude: "However anxious we are not to squabble about little points," he wrote to Lyons on June 22, "public opinion will be very watchful here."<sup>4</sup> If the Queen's

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1. A.O.T., III, Granville to Lyons, May 13, 1881
  2. G.P. 147. Saint Hilaire to Reeve May 16, 1881
  3. A.O.T. III, Granville to Challemeil Lacour, May 20, 1881
  4. G.P. 202. Granville to Lyons, June 22. Granville's squabbling with France was perhaps part of his political philosophy: "My mother, who was popular in French Society, used to say that it was impossible to be so, unless one insulted them once a month" he wrote to Lyons on July 9, 1881 (G.P. 202.)

vehement apprehensions about Egypt seem to have been at least premature - "Lord Granville said the other day to the Queen that this (the French annexation of Egypt) WE could not tolerate and she trusts he will take care that our unfortunate apparent acquiescence in the annexation of Tunis does not lead France and Europe to believe we shall stand that. This should be known."<sup>1</sup> - the outbreak of a revolt in the south of the Regency and the French military intervention which followed could give rise to some concern about Tripoli. At all events Granville made it quite clear that in view of the unquestioned incorporation of Tripoli in the Ottoman Empire and of its proximity to Egypt, Great Britain could not regard French interference in that province with indifference (July 15).<sup>2</sup> Barthélemy immediately, and most emphatically, denied that France had any designs on Tripoli. (July 17)

By that time the stir which had been caused by the Tunis affair had largely subsided. A rapprochement between France and England was hoped for in Paris where France's isolation and her utter dependence upon Bismarck's support aroused some misgivings. In the Foreign Office also the closeness of French relations with Germany

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1. The Letters of Queen Victoria, III, p. 223. Victoria to Granville, June 27.
  2. Fitzmaurice, II, p. 235.

was a matter of concern and as early as the end of May Granville appeared anxious not to worsen Franco-British relations. The resumption of serious business - the discussions about the Trade agreement - helped to speed up the "detente" and in December Gambetta remarked with much gratification that Lyons' friendly language about Tunis was "une preuve précieuse de la bonne grâce avec laquelle le cabinet de M. Gladstone paraît disposé à accepter aujourd'hui les faits accomplis dans la Régence."<sup>1</sup>

7. In spite of a belated effort to convince the French government that he had maintained a "conciliatory attitude" during the crisis,<sup>2</sup> it was impossible for Granville to derive political benefit from his unwilling neutrality. The obstacles to a British intervention were indeed formidable: Germany's constant support to France had prevented the interposition of the "concert of Europe" in the Tunisian question; in these conditions, Granville could rely only on Turkey and Italy which were obviously not suitable partners. The rapidity of French action also largely contributed to put the Foreign Office before the "fait accompli": the French statesmen had carefully

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1. D.D.F. IV, Gambetta to Challemeil Lacour, December 15, 1881.

2. G.P. 202, Granville to Lyons, June 22, 1881.

concealed their intentions at the beginning; when they at last showed their hand, towards the 25th of April, they needed only two weeks to bring the Tunisian affair to its conclusion. Lastly the existence, and the disclosure of the Berlin agreement made a British isolated intervention impossible, in the absence of an organised action of the Powers.

It appears however that none of these difficulties would have been such as to prevent the ultimate intervention which Granville had had in mind in April and May, had it not been for the moderating influence which his entourage exercised on him at the critical moments. Preserved from what was likely to be a diplomatic failure by the interventions of Gladstone, Dilke and Lyons, Granville came gradually to accept with a bad grace the events which he was unable to prevent.

### Concluding Observations

1. The British policy towards Tunis took shape in answer to a well defined situation - namely the danger of a French occupation of Tunis which seemed to be threatening in 1835, as a result both of France's expansion in Algiers and Constantine and of her fear lest the Turks, now masters of Tripoli, should try likewise to reassert their direct authority in Tunis. This accounts for the first fundamental feature of British policy: unlike France and Italy, Great Britain persistently disclaimed any political designs over the Regency, and gave over and over again indisputable proofs of her disinterestedness. Britain's interest in Tunis was from the outset limited to the diplomatic aspect of Tunisian affairs, namely to upholding the Regency as a semi-autonomous state in the general framework of British Mediterranean and European policy: At a time when, Palmerston thought, the united ambitions of France and Mohammed Ali were threatening to overthrow the balance of power in the Mediterranean and endangering the very existence of the Ottoman Empire, the possibility of French expansion in Tunis was of a very alarming character and had to be firmly opposed by Britain.

The obvious weakness of the Tunisian state called for an external support to counterbalance increasing French pressure: the 'rapprochement' between Tunis and the Porte, in Palmerston's mind, was to provide for this strengthening of the Regency; at the same time it fitted in well with Britain's policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire. The obstacles which were met with in implementing the "Turkish solution" - and primarily the unflinching opposition of France - were, however, to lead the Foreign Office to accept the policy of "status quo" as a lesser evil: in spite of its brilliant appearance the settlement of 1871 was a mere consecration of the status quo and in no way the materialization of Palmerstone's more radical conceptions. An examination of the means of British policy in Tunis may account for this progressive shrinkage of its ambitions.

2. We have already remarked that Britain's desire to prolong the autonomous existence of the Regency was merged into more general diplomatic issues: as seen from London the Tunisian question had never constituted an isolated problem, but a limited and local aspect of Britain's relations with France and the Porte, determined by these relations, and never determining them. This principle was to reach its limit when, in 1878, the

change of attitude towards the Ottoman Empire and the necessity of squaring France led Salisbury ultimately to sacrifice Tunis in the interests of Britain's "Great policy"

The methods which the Foreign Office considered using in Tunis corresponded with the subordinate and, as it were, mediate position which the Tunisian problem was thus occupying in its diplomatic preoccupations. It does not appear that the Foreign Office was ever prepared to go farther than diplomatic interventions to hold France in check and to moderate the impatience of the Porte: as early as 1837 Ponsonby had warned the Porte that England would not quarrel with France in support "of any injudicious attempt" of the Ottoman Government meaning any attempt to revive the rights which the Porte vindicated in Tunis, and which Great Britain agreed that it had. It is true that at several critical moments, and especially in 1839 and 1840 Palmerston had appeared ready to resort to a more determined action to stop French encroachments: but the Tunisian question was then merged into a Mediterranean problem, the centre of which was in Egypt. By thus limiting its own action, the Foreign Office was bound to upset the balance which it tried to maintain between what was to be allowed to France and what was due to Turkey in Tunis: it was to prove easier to restrain Turkey's pretensions over Tunis

than to prevent France from showing her strength before Tunis; hence the gradual drift of British policy towards the policy of status quo.

Wood was later to demonstrate with much lucidity the inconsistencies and contradictions in the policy of status quo, and to suggest the adoption of more logical solutions - as for instance neutralizing the Regency. The Foreign Office, however, ignored these suggestions, less perhaps through ignorance of the short comings of this policy than through a belief that the adoption of Wood's clear-cut solutions would have forced a difficult choice upon Great Britain. She would have had either to sacrifice the friendship of France for Turkey's benefit, or publicly to repudiate British traditional policy of support of the Ottoman Empire. The maintenance of an obscure and ambiguous situation was deemed to be more advisable than recourse to decisions which would perhaps have affected the whole of British Foreign Policy.

3. The main trends which have just been defined, give, however, only a schematic and incomplete picture of British policy: to complete it, one must examine the features of Consular activity in Tunis. The Foreign Office was of course mainly interested in these aspects of the Tunisian problem which were likely to affect the



general equilibrium of British policy in the Mediterranean. At a time when Britain was on the whole clinging tightly to the policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire, which underlay her concept of equilibrium in the Mediterranean, her policy in Tunis was bound to be remarkably static: this stability revealed itself in the diplomatic tradition which had been given shape by Palmerston, and had invariably triumphed whenever the Tunisian policy had been subjected to close examination (for instance in 1850 with Baynes' arrival, in 1856 after Wood's nomination, in 1862....). When the period of framing this tradition was over, i.e. after 1846, the influence of the parties was insignificant until Salisbury questioned the fundamental principles of British policy in the Mediterranean (fear of French expansion and integrity of the Ottoman Empire) and Tunis was altogether abandoned to its fate: Granville was to experience the difficulty of resuming the traditional British policy in Tunis without the general principles which had underlain it and which the Liberals were not ready to restore.

The outlook of the Consuls was for many reasons different from the views which were held in London. Isolated from London by distance and the difficulty of communications (the first telegraphic line was established only in 1860) they enjoyed a large freedom of action

because the Foreign Office did not provide them with more than a bare outline of its diplomatic interests in Tunis. Imbued with the traditions of the Levantine consular body, with which many of them had spent their entire career, they had an irresistible propensity to indulge in a keen struggle with their French colleagues with an avowed view to checking the progress of French influence: but they were strongly tempted to take up their stand on the very ground of their opponents, and to drag their own government into the competition for political influence which opposed France and Italy in Tunis. Limited as they were to the narrow horizon of local politics and consular rivalries they were prone to forget that the Foreign Office had other considerations than their own often trivial difficulties to take into account in its shaping of a policy. This tendency of the Consuls to interfere with the internal affairs of the Regency had not always a negative aspect: it sometimes contributed towards giving British policy an original course as was the case with Wood's policy of reforms. In this last instance the Foreign Office was ready to give its backing to Wood's initiative because it fitted in with the policy which Great Britain was then pursuing in Turkey.

But on the whole the Foreign Office appeared but moderately enthusiastic to support the action of the

Consuls when it was likely to draw Great Britain into taking an active share in the competition for political domination in Tunis, and ultimately to divert British policy from its main course or to hinder Britain's relations with France or Turkey. A latent discrepancy between the objects of the Foreign Office and the local attitude of the Consuls had already appeared in the question of reform. It could not but lead to an open conflict when Richard Wood endeavoured after 1870 to develop an active policy in Tunis while the Government of Gladstone and Granville were very strongly prejudiced against any kind of "interventionism" in the internal affairs of foreign countries. Granville's refusal in 1873 to follow Wood's policy of economic penetration and of participation in the political struggle in Tunis rang the knell of Wood's ambitious schemes. Wood's language and methods during that period had not been very different from those of the Consuls who were looking for political predominance in Tunis: His disavowal indicated that the Foreign Office kept to the traditional conception of a policy limited in Tunis to diplomatic objects.

4. If one tries to base conclusions about British policy towards Tunis on the object which Palmerston had set himself in 1835, that is to say the protection of the political existence of the Regency against French designs, it appears as an uninterrupted succession of failures - regarding the Turkish solution, the reforms and the economic penetration - with, in the end, Salisbury's paradoxical volte-face of Berlin. For these failures the shortcomings of British policy were largely responsible: improvisation and empirism during the first years which perhaps threw Palmerston off the track with the illusory notion of the status quo; internal contradictions of a policy which should have rested on the Beys - but the Beys were not unnaturally reluctant to accept for themselves the fate of their neighbours of Tripoli - and on the Porte - but the Porte was first uncompromising and later faltering. But the fundamental cause of Britain's failure was of course the flagrant disparity between the means and the aims of her policy in Tunis: while France was pressing with all her weight on the Regency, Great Britain pretended to keep France out of Tunis by means which fell short of the active measures of protection which would have been needed at critical junctures. This refusal to use in Tunis the

means which her policy required was justified by Britain's appraisal of the subordinate character of the Tunisian question. But at the same time the Foreign Office was tempted to pursue a policy which was beyond its means as was apparent at the very end with Granville's unsuccessful attempts at "barking without biting".

One may also try to base one's conclusions on the principles which had inspired Palmerston's policy from 1835 to 1841, and underlay British policy after him, that is to say the fear lest French expansion should overthrow the equilibrium in the Mediterranean and imperil the existence of the Ottoman Empire. This danger, if there was one, was first averted by Mohammed Ali's failure and, with respect to Tunis, by Palmerston's firm resistance to French penetration. After 1841 the internationalisation of the Turkish question, at the Congress of Paris (1856) and much later the concurrence of the Powers in a controlled and limited partition of the Ottoman Empire, lessened greatly the danger which a French annexation of Tunis might have represented for British interests in the Mediterranean. Salisbury's decision of 1878 was the result of an appraisal of this new situation in the Mediterranean as well as of his recognition of the fundamental impotence of British policy in Tunis to which we have just called attention.

At the moment when the Great Powers were about to launch forth on the conquest of the world, Palmerston's notions about equilibrium in the Mediterranean would indeed seem outmoded. When examined from this point of view, the occupation of Tunis by France was only the first episode of the great redistribution of Africa between the Imperialist Powers which was to go on for forty years, until the Versailles settlement.