



Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41: Part II, 1839-41

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LORD PALMERSTON AND THE REJUVENATION OF TURKEY, 1830-41¹

PART II, 1839-41²

ALTHOUGH Lord Palmerston had consistently favored a policy of peace in the Levant during the period from 1833 to 1839, he did not reprimand the British ambassador at Constantinople when at the end of that period the latter apparently was negligent in the execution of pacific instructions which might have prevented the outbreak of a second conflict between Sultan Mahmoud and Mehemet Ali Pasha. Indeed, after the outbreak of the second Syrian war the British foreign secretary seemed very much unconcerned about the preservation of peace in the Levant. During the period between 1839 and 1841 he energetically opposed a return to the *status quo ante bellum*, risked the development of a serious international crisis in Near Eastern affairs, and played a leading rôle in the negotiation and execution of an arrangement by which Syria and Crete were restored to the direct rule of the Sultan and by which the authority of Mehemet Ali was confined to Egypt. The story of these developments is a familiar one; yet it is not generally

¹ The material for this article was gathered while the author was serving as Fellow of the Social Science Research Council.

² For Part I, see *Journal*, I (December, 1929), 570-93.

known that at the same time when Palmerston was energetically attempting to exploit events in the East to bring about a settlement of the Turco-Egyptian question in the interest of the Sultan he was also actively elaborating and extending the program for the rejuvenation of Turkey which he had outlined in the period of peace between 1833 and 1839.

On the eve of the second Syrian conflict the British foreign secretary confined his efforts in favor of Ottoman military and naval reform primarily to the support of the group of British naval officers under Captain Walker who were seeking employment at Constantinople, but he did not lose sight of the need of reorganization in the sultan's army. In December, 1838, he inquired about the existence of a military academy at Constantinople, and expressed a wish to know whether, in the opinion of the British ambassador, Captain Du Plat could be employed to superintend such a school for the instruction of young officers if he was to return to the Near East.³ Ponsonby, in reply, mentioned three military and naval academies which were located near Constantinople. In these schools, he had been told, there was "not much solid instruction"; he doubted if the Porte would place an English officer at the head of one of them with such authority as would make it prudent for him to undertake the laborious duties he would have to perform.⁴ On another occasion, near the close of the year 1838, the British secretary of foreign affairs granted protection to a Hanoverian officer named Jochmus who wished to seek employment in the Turkish service. In a dispatch which Jochmus was given at London, Ponsonby was requested to render any assistance within his power to attain the object which the Hanoverian had in view.⁵ While at Constantinople Jochmus obtained employment destined to extend intermittently over a period of years, and won the approval of the

³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 226, December 18, 1838; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/329A.

⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 29, February 12, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/354.

⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, "Separate," November 30, 1838; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/329A.

British foreign office for his "zeal and intelligence" in the study of Turkish military problems.⁶

Eager to encourage the reorganization of the Ottoman army after its defeat by the Egyptians at Nezib in June, 1839, and after the withdrawal of the Prussian officers from Turkey,⁷ Palmerston informed Ponsonby that he thought General Chrzanowski should remain in the East subject to the same instructions and furnished with the same allowances as were given to him during previous years.⁸ Also, after the battle of Nezib and the withdrawal of the Prussians the British foreign secretary instructed his ambassador at Constantinople to point out to the Porte how much it might profit by the military skill and acquirements of a few European officers. Palmerston believed at that time that the best move the Turkish government could make would be to give actual command of its troops to some few good officers, "either English or German[s]," and that if a small model corps was thus organized the Porte would soon find that the example set by the new organization would spread the spirit of improvement through the rest of the Turkish army. In order to avoid jealousy, such a corps could be composed of rayahs or Albanians raised by voluntary enlistment.⁹

The Porte hesitated to follow Ponsonby's advice literally, but it did consent to have Chrzanowski draw up plans for its defense in Asia Minor, and it accepted propositions outlined by Captain Walker for the improvement of naval training in Turkey.¹⁰ Approving these beginnings of reform, Palmerston in May, 1840, instructed Ponsonby to impress upon the Ottoman ministers

⁶ Jochmus to Backhouse, February 3, 8, March 28, June 2, July 10, 1839; F. O. to Jochmus, May 20, 1839, *ibid.*; F. O. 78/379.

⁷ Early in 1839 the Prussian military mission had been increased to include twenty-four officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 22, February 6, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/354. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 79, March 26, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/355.

⁸ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 146, "secret and confidential," October 7, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/353.

⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 182, December 2, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/353.

¹⁰ Walker to Ponsonby, April 20, 1840; Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 86, April 25, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/393. Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 100 and 103, May 13, 15, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/394.

that there was one thing which had hitherto impeded the British government from carrying fully into effect its anxious desire to assist the sultan. This was the general opinion, "exaggerated no doubt, but nevertheless too prevalent," that the sultan had in 1839 been entirely stripped of all means of self-defense and that the whole task of protecting him must fall upon his allies. Hence, in proportion as the sultan revealed that he had been successful in the reorganization of his means of defense, it would become less difficult for Great Britain to give effect to her "good wishes" in his behalf.¹¹

After the treaty of July 15, 1840, had been signed, and it became evident that the four powers—Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia—would have to employ force against Mehemet Ali to accomplish their common purpose in the restoration of Syria and Crete to the authority of the sultan, Palmerston directly initiated a number of practical moves to promote Ottoman military reform. While a British fleet and a small detachment of British troops were co-operating with the Turks along the Syrian coast, arms and ammunition were supplied to the sultan's forces on liberal terms from Her Majesty's stores at Malta, various officers seeking military adventure were encouraged to apply to the Porte for employment, and the Ottoman government was frankly informed that it "must find and furnish the means" to produce pressure by land upon the Egyptians.¹² Also, the British foreign secretary, without waiting for petitions from the Porte, dispatched special missions to the Levant to aid the Turks directly in the reform of their military system.

One of the special detachments which Palmerston sent to Turkey in 1840 was a group of medical officers headed by Dr. Davy. Davy and the five men under his direction were instructed to make immediate provision for the medical wants of the forces which were upholding the sultan's cause against Mehemet Ali; they were to assist the Turkish government in placing the medical department of its army on a proper footing; they were to

¹¹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 69, May 20, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389.

¹² Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 105, 129, 140, and 154, July 17, August 3, 22, 31, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/390. Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 201, 254, 257, and 276, October 17, November 30, December 21, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

work for the establishment of a school of medicine for native Turks at Constantinople; and they were to pay careful attention to the nature of the plague, to determine whether it was contagious, and to give the Porte their opinions on quarantine.¹³ Ponsonby was directed to support Davy's mission and to point out to the Ottoman authorities the great advantages which they might derive from sending a few intelligent young Turks to England to be educated in medicine.¹⁴ Davy and his men, like many others who preceded or followed them on special missions to Turkey, found Ottoman conservatism so formidable that they were unable to make much progress in the attainment of their aims. Davy studied conditions in the Turkish medical service, he drew up reports upon a college of medicine at Pera and upon various military hospitals in the neighborhood of the Turkish capital, and he submitted to the Ottoman government plans for the reorganization of the medical department of its army.¹⁵ However, the Porte, as frequently was its custom during the nineteenth century, delayed action upon all recommendations which were designed to bring about practical reforms. Having failed to achieve their main objective, Davy's group of medical officers could claim, when they eventually withdrew from Turkish territory (September, 1841) that they had performed some immediate medical service for the subjects of the sultan and that they had obtained a promise for the dispatch of eight or ten Turkish youths to England for the completion of their medical education.¹⁶

¹³ Palmerston to Davy, Nos. 1-4, October 27, 30, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/415.

¹⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 218 and 220, October 29, 31, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

¹⁵ Davy to Palmerston, November 29, December 11, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/415. Davy to Palmerston, February 1, March 4, June 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/460. Davy to Ponsonby, January 30, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/430.

¹⁶ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 296, September 20, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/437. Davy to Palmerston, March 22, July 13, September 1, 18, 1841; Palmerston to Davy, Nos. 7, 10, and 11, April 28, June 4, July 15, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/460. In July, 1841, before he had abandoned all hope for the employment of Davy's mission in Turkey Palmerston wrote in a formal note to the Turkish ambassador at London: "The undersigned has . . . to request Chekib Effendi to state to his government that if Dr. Davy and his associates, who have been sent out from hence by Her Majesty's Government at a considerable expense and with the most disinterested views, are not employed by the Sultan for the purposes for which they were

Another special mission which Palmerston sent to the Levant during the crisis of 1840 was composed of officers who were to superintend the provisioning of the Anglo-Turkish forces in Syria and, if practicable, to assist in the establishment of a permanent commissariat for the Turkish army.¹⁷ Apparently the prospects for the accomplishment of the second objective of this mission were far from bright. Ponsonby wrote on October 14, 1840:

I am afraid that it would not be agreeable to the Turks to put foreigners forward in this line [the commissariat], and I do not believe it would be in the power of the British commissaries to render any service at Constantinople, because I believe they would have to support the blame of failure without having been the cause of it.¹⁸

As the British ambassador believed this mission was doomed to failure, he did not insist on the employment of its members by the Porte; and the commissariat of the Turkish army remained unreformed.¹⁹

A third detachment dispatched to Turkey by the British government proved more successful; it was made up of officers and men of the Royal Artillery and Engineers under the command of Captain Williams.²⁰ The detachment left England in January, 1841, and though its employment by the Turks remained doubtful for a time, Williams was able to report in May, 1841, that he had received directions from the Turkish government to establish himself at Tophana "for the purpose of reforming and remodelling the whole materiel of the Artillery and Engineer-

sent, that is to say, for the purpose of placing the Medical Department of the Turkish army upon a good and efficient footing, Her Majesty's Government will consider the refusal of the services of those officers as a slight offered by the Sultan to the British Government; and the Sultan must not expect that the British Government can take the same interest which it has hitherto done in his welfare and prosperity, if he shall thus prove how little he is disposed to appreciate as he ought to do, the friendship and the support of Great Britain." Cf. Palmerston to Chekib, July 15, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/463.

¹⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 173, September 15, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/390. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 263, December 11, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

¹⁸ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 237, October 14, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/397.

¹⁹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 88, March 9, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/432.

²⁰ Palmerston to Williams, January 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/461.

[ing] Departments” of the sultan’s army.²¹ Williams’s mission may not be judged to have revolutionized the Ottoman ordinance service, but it at least succeeded in the establishment of an “artillery laboratory” for the casting of guns, howitzers, and mortars at the Turkish artillery headquarters of Mehemet Ali Pasha of Tophana; and before reaction destroyed the hope of reform in Turkey, its commander frequently supplied both Turkish and British ministers with advice upon Ottoman military affairs.²²

Determined to leave no stones unturned for the improvement of the defenses of Turkey, Palmerston maintained in Syria, as long as he remained in office in 1841, a detachment of the British soldiers who had helped the Turks to clear the country of Egyptians. In instructions to the commander of these men the British foreign secretary directed that they should assist in the organization of Turkish troops as well as superintend the repair of fortifications along the Syrian coast.²³

Foreseeing that Palmerston’s numerous attempts to thrust military advisers upon the Turks might occasion a reaction against all innovations proposed from abroad, Ponsonby, early in 1841, warned his superior to send no more missions to Turkey without the Porte’s consent. He wrote:

It appears to me that things can be done, little by little, and will not be done by other means. The wedge has already entered, thanks to circumstances, and it may be driven home by well regulated strokes. We have Jochmus virtually at the head of the army with the honest consent of the Turks. Walker is at the head of the fleet. These are great advantages, which must work well, if not disturbed by precipitation and the display of our influence.

²¹ Williams to Palmerston, May 14, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/461.

²² Williams to Ponsonby, June 7, 1841; Ponsonby to Palmerston, June 8, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/434. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 272, “Confidential” August 28, 1841, with several inclosed copies of letters from Williams; Williams to Ponsonby, September 28, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/437. Bankhead to Aberdeen, No. 24, October 29, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/438. Williams to Canning, February 24, 1842; Williams to Aberdeen, July 22, 1842; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/505.

²³ Palmerston to Bridgeman, No. 1, March 4, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/453. Rose to Palmerston, No. 26, April 21, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/455. In response to a request from the Porte, Lord Aberdeen, early in his second term at the foreign office, withdrew the British detachment from Syria. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 276, September 2, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/437. Aberdeen to Canning, No. 5, November 2, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/439.

The British ambassador to Turkey also wrote that he would rejoice to know that Palmerston thought proper to concert with the Ottoman government respecting the employment of British officers before they were sent to Constantinople, for such a policy would prevent much difficulty and avoid many failures.²⁴

Palmerston did not object to this advice of the queen's ambassador at Constantinople. In fact, he stated in reply that if, as he hoped, the Turks decided to employ Jochmus to organize their army, they perhaps should engage German officers instead of British to act under him. Germans could probably be obtained cheaper, their employment would excite less attention in Europe, and it would cause less jealousy on the part of other powers. There were obvious reasons why the Porte should employ British officers to organize the Turkish fleet, but those reasons did not apply to the Turkish army.²⁵ On another occasion in 1841 Palmerston suggested that Great Britain should confine her efforts for military reform in Turkey to the support of a plan drawn up by Colonel Rose, commander of the British detachment in Syria. By this plan it was proposed that a commission of officers under Jochmus should outline a program of military reorganization which the Turks themselves could carry into effect. Palmerston admitted,

There is indeed so much to be done in order to put the various departments of the Turkish army on a good footing that the magnitude of the task might at first inspire despair; but by patience and perseverance, and by being contented with effecting a little at a time much may at length be accomplished.

One of the first things to be done was to create an establishment for the instruction of officers, and Palmerston agreed with Rose that elementary studies—reading, writing, arithmetic, and “a little geometry”—in addition to military drill, would constitute an ample curriculum for such an establishment. What was essentially wanted in the Ottoman army, it was emphasized, was immediate reward of merit by promotion or distinction, and the punishment of demerit by removal or the withholding of advance-

²⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 70, February 21, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/431.

²⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 27, February 10, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427.

ment. Palmerston was ready to allow any of the British officers in Syria, or others who might desire to go to Turkey and whose services the Porte might be willing to accept, to assist Jochmus in his endeavors to improve the Turkish service; but the English minister declared he was quite aware that any ostentatious display of British influence in this matter, or any attempts to introduce too many British officers into the sultan's employ, would only defeat the purpose he had in view.²⁶ Finally in August, 1841, on the eve of the resignation of Melbourne's cabinet, Palmerston approved a step which Ponsonby had taken in July of the same year favoring the Porte's employment of no foreign military advisers except Jochmus.²⁷

Thus, at the close of Palmerston's term at the foreign office in 1841 the idea that foreign missions could bring about military and naval reform in Turkey was being discredited generally; nevertheless, Great Britain, influenced by the course which the foreign secretary had taken, continued to regard the strengthening of Turkey's means of defense as of paramount importance. One of the last acts of Ponsonby before he left Constantinople in 1841 was to induce the Porte to purchase iron steamers to strengthen its fleet, and Aberdeen in his general instructions to Ponsonby's successor, Stratford Canning, declared:

In a country without a regular police, and in which the civil power possesses little force, order must be preserved, and security afforded, by the presence of the military. . . . An improved organization, therefore, of the army, by which discipline and regularity may be established, seems to be an object of the first necessity. It is understood that this reformation is now in progress [in the Ottoman Empire]. . . . You will endeavour to promote the success of these salutary measures, and to obviate the effects of an interested or prejudiced opposition which may be raised against them.²⁸

During the crisis which followed the outbreak of the second Syrian war between Mahmoud and Mehemet Ali, Palmerston's

²⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 52, March 23, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427.

²⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 190, August 3, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429. Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 222 and 258, July 2, 31, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/436.

²⁸ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 94, April 21, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428. Ponsonby to Aberdeen, "Separate and confidential," October 8, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/437. Aberdeen to Canning, No. 2, October 30, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/439.

interest in the strengthening of the Ottoman empire led him to champion fundamental reforms in the Turkish administrative system as well as in the reorganization of the sultan's army and navy. On August 25, 1839, he maintained in a private letter to Lord Beauvale, the British ambassador to Austria, that if the friends of Turkey could only induce the Porte to adopt, in addition to reforms for its armed forces, a rational system of administration and finance; to pay the pashas, preventing the purchase and sale of all employments and making the revenue come into the public treasury; to establish laws giving security for life and prosperity; and to prevent men being arbitrarily despoiled of all their goods or put to death, they would "in a very few years get Turkey into a condition of progressive improvement and there would be an end of all the nonsense which people talked about Turkey being in decay and falling to pieces"—nonsense which sprang "from mistaking a metaphor for an argument, and from fancying that because you compare a community to a man's body and to an old tree and building that therefore all the attributes and moralities of the one are ipso facto transferred to the other." According to Palmerston's opinion,

People forget that a community never can grow old and die of decay, because all its parts are constantly renovated, and it is as youthful and lively at the end of a century as it was at the beginning. A community is not like a man or a tree or a building whose parts are not renovated but remain the same, and are worn out and decay by age and use. All that is requisite to keep an Empire vigorous for an indefinite period of time is that its institutions and laws should adapt themselves to the changes which take place in the habits of the people and in the relative position of the community as compared with other countries.²⁹

Ponsonby likewise must have been optimistic about the possibilities of administrative reform in Turkey at the opening of the Turco-Egyptian crisis of 1839–41. In October, 1837, he stated he was persuaded that one of the greatest reasons why abuses were suffered to exist in the Ottoman political system was to be found in the lack of means to make them known not only to

²⁹ Palmerston to Beauvale, [Private,] August 25, 1839, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, England (*Varia*), 1833–39, F. 29. On September 1, 1839, Palmerston expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Bulwer. Cf. Bulwer, *Life of Viscount Palmerston*, II (London, 1871), pp. 298–99.

the sultan but even to the local pashas. According to the ambassador's opinion, every pasha was a miniature of the sultan surrounded by men whose interest it was to conceal the truth from their superiors. The European consuls, Ponsonby believed, had it much in their power to diminish this evil, for they could always have access to the pashas and might report the abuses which otherwise would never come to the attention of the heads of the Turkish administrative system.³⁰ Three months later, in a dispatch recommending the establishment of a British consulate at Brussa, the English minister to Turkey declared:

I will not hesitate to say that with a view to a solid and penetrating effectual interest in this country the consular establishment might be made our best engine. . . . Each Pasha is for the time an independent sovereign, so far as the good or ill of his government is acting upon the everyday existence of the people under his command. A prudent and honest consul, who knows how to talk to men will have a chance at least of having great influence on a Pasha, because a well informed consul could shew any Pasha that more money would go into his own purse by moderately good government than by obviously very bad.³¹

Palmerston, who had consistently been following a policy for the extension of the British consular system in the Levant, undoubtedly approved the suggestion that European consuls should expose abuses in the Ottoman administration; but in 1839 he was interested in a much more direct and fundamental plan than that for Turkish administrative reform. For several months both before and after the outbreak of the second Turco-Egyptian conflict Reshid Pasha the well-known reform minister of the Porte was in London on a special mission. The conversations which he held with Palmerston while the Turkish mission sojourned in the English capital are not recorded in the archives of the British foreign office; yet it may be ventured, almost with certainty, that the two ministers discussed in detail the program of the famous *hatti scherif* of Gulhané which was to be promulgated at Constantinople, largely through Reshid's influence, soon after his return from England to his native country.

³⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 248, October 13, 1837; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/306.

³¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, [Private,] January 16, 1838; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/329B.

On August 12, 1839, just before the Turkish representative left London, he presented to Palmerston an elaborate memorandum covering virtually every phase of the question of reform in Turkey.³² Less than two weeks later the British foreign secretary outlined in his private correspondence with Beauvale every fundamental idea of Turkish reform which Reshid was about to incorporate in his famous *tanzimat*.³³ Furthermore, when Reshid arrived at Constantinople he informed Ponsonby about the Ottoman program for reform. According to one of Ponsonby's reports, Reshid stated that he favored the adoption of measures giving security to life and property in his country and that he wished to consult with the British ambassador on the execution of such a program.³⁴

In response to Reshid's advances Ponsonby recommended that "caution should be united with energy" in the pursuit of the Porte's "inestimable ends."³⁴ Truly, on the eve of the promulgation of the *tanzimat* he thought "it prudent not to enquire much into the matter" lest he should "incur responsibility."³⁵ However, promptly after the sultan had proclaimed the *hatti scherif* at Gulhané, the British ambassador wrote unreservedly:

What has been done is excellent in conception and execution. It is in perfect unison with the religion and interests and feelings of the people, and at the same time provides security for the great interests of every class of subjects, whilst it infringes no right or privilege of any. It is a victorious answer to those who say that this empire cannot be saved by its ancient government, and that the spurious regeneration to be worked out by the Pasha of Egypt is its only preservative. The enemies of Turkey and the friends of Mehemed Ali are said to feel the weight of the blow that has fallen upon them: it will be their business to thwart the Ottoman government in carrying into effect the wise principles that have been now solemnly recognized by the Sultan.³⁶

³² Memorandum of Reshid, "Confidential," August 12, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/383. The memorandum is printed below, pp. 251-57.

³³ Cf. Palmerston to Beauvale, [Private,] August 25, 1839; as cited above in footnote 29.

³⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Separate and secret," September 30, 1839; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/359.

³⁵ Ponsonby to Palmerston, October 22, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/359.

³⁶ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 301, November 5, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/360.

Palmerston likewise approved of the *tanzimat* in no uncertain terms when he learned that it had been proclaimed. On December 2, 1839, he informed Ponsonby that the cabinet had received the document "with much satisfaction," and directed that the cordial congratulations of the British government be conveyed to the Porte on the adoption of a measure which was "fraught with incalculable advantage to the Ottoman Empire" and which redounded highly to the honor of the statesmen by whom it had been framed. At the same time he instructed the British representative at Constantinople to assure the Turkish ministers that Great Britain would afford to them "all such support and countenance" as a foreign government could properly give "towards the carrying out of the excellent principles" which were set forth in the *hatti scherif*. Her Majesty's government "most sincerely" wished Reshid Pasha all the success which he so well deserved "in his praiseworthy endeavours to improve the institutions, and thus to promote the happiness, the prosperity, the power and the independence of his country."³⁷ Palmerston must not have forgotten soon the promises which he made thus in the name of Great Britain for, before he withdrew from office in 1841, he repeatedly encouraged the Porte not to falter in the execution of the *tanzimat*.

Immediately after the *tanzimat* was proclaimed, prospects for its execution appeared very promising. On the last day of 1839 Ponsonby quoted Reshid as saying that a measure had been carried in the Turkish council which would prove to the world that the *hatti scherif* of Gulhané was a reality. By this measure it was provided that after March 1, 1840, all "governors of provinces, cities, and burghs" should be paid fixed salaries. Also, promotions were to be by merit only, governors were to exact nothing except the established imposts of the Porte, and tax farming was to be "forever abolished."³⁸

When Palmerston received this promising report, he promptly replied, "with great satisfaction," instructing Ponsonby "to

³⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 181, December 2, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/353.

³⁸ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 346, December 31, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/360. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 15, January 16, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/392.

congratulate Reshid Pasha in the name of Her Majesty's Government" upon the perseverance he had shown "in his systematic endeavours to reorganize his country, and to improve its institutions, and upon the success with which those endeavours" had already been attended. Furthermore, the English foreign minister suggested that the ambassador might "make known to the Sultan the high sense entertained by the British Government of the wise and enlightened measures" with which he had "so auspiciously commenced his reign."³⁹ In a dispatch accompanying this reply Palmerston directed Ponsonby to inform Reshid that the British government was delighted to find he was working "in so wise and judicious a manner; and that instead of endeavouring to set up prematurely new institutions, which would be repugnant to the habits and prejudices of the Turkish nation" he was "progressively improving and developing the old institutions of his country, and in truth bringing them back to their ancient purity and vigour." Reshid, according to Palmerston's opinion, seemed "to understand the force of the well known maxim" that those "who wish to improve things should preserve ancient names, and by that means avoid rousing needless jealousies, and exciting unnecessary distrust."⁴⁰

Several months later, after Ponsonby had noted that "strong symptoms of popular distaste for the Franks" were appearing at Constantinople, Palmerston was aroused lest reactionary elements might succeed in intrigues for the removal of Reshid from the Turkish foreign office.⁴¹ In order to defeat such intrigues, the British secretary of foreign affairs instructed Ponsonby to co-operate with the Austrian internuncio in support of Reshid and to express to the sultan in the strongest manner the conviction of Her Majesty's government that all its efforts to aid him in his contest with the Pasha of Egypt would be marred if Reshid was to be removed from his post or was to be deprived in any way of the power "to second" the exertions of Great Britain in behalf of Turkey.⁴² Likewise Palmerston directed the ambassador to

³⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 17, February 4, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389.

⁴⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 18, February 4, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389.

⁴¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 156, August 1, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/395.

⁴² Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 228, November 9, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

co-operate with the Austrian representative in a move to procure the removal from Turkish government offices of all French employees, who were supposed to be friendly to Mehemet Ali and hostile to Reshid, and to obtain the substitution of Italian for French as the language of the official Ottoman *Moniteur*.⁴³

In 1841, after British arms had played a major rôle in the restoration of the sultan's authority in Syria, Palmerston again directed that the attention of the Turkish government should be called to the question of administrative reform. The British cabinet, he wrote to Ponsonby in March, 1841, hoped to see the recent success of the Turks against Mehemet Ali followed by a rapid increase in the prosperity of the sultan's domains and by a diffusion of contentment and happiness among all classes of the sultan's subjects in every part of his extensive empire. The sultan had already adopted a measure which would live forever in the grateful recollection of his subjects. That measure—the *hatti scherif* of Gulhané—"was an act of the greatest wisdom, as well as of the most enlightened justice and benevolence." Nothing remained for the sultan to do except to cause the *hatti scherif* to be strictly and faithfully executed in every part of his domains, and to follow it up by such other practical measures of reform as might be necessary to carry out the principles upon which it was founded. All the sultan's subjects, "be their rank and station high or low, be they rich or poor, be they born in one part of his domains or in another, and from whatever race descended, be they Mahometan or Christian or Jew or of any other religion," should enjoy equal rights and privileges and should live equally secure and free from oppression either in their persons or in their property. In other words, all should be protected equally from fraud, injustice, and violence by the paternal authority of the sultan. Palmerston believed the sultan would see that no state was secure—even when it was supported by large and powerful armies—unless it had the good will and attachment of its people, and that this could be obtained in no other way than through the exercise of justice and kindness. The English minister of foreign affairs further explained that a good army

⁴³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 231, November 9, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

and an efficient fleet were needed for protection in a nation; but good armies and fleets could not be maintained without a good revenue, and to secure a good revenue without imposing too heavy a burden on the people it was necessary to have a good financial administration. The sultan would no doubt feel the necessity of attending to these things, and by so doing would again raise the Turkish empire to a high pitch of power and glory among the first-rate states of the world.⁴⁴

In a dispatch dated April 1, 1841, the British foreign secretary repeated his instructions to Ponsonby about the support of Reshid against reactionary intrigues at Constantinople. The removal of Reshid at that time, Palmerston thought, would be an event very much to be regretted. The *reis effendi* was "understood" to have been the principal author of the *hatti scherif* of Gulhané and seemed to be the person most likely to have the will and means for its faithful execution throughout the Ottoman empire—a task which the British government well knew was one of more difficulty and would require more time than many people might be disposed to think.⁴⁵ Again, on April 21, Ponsonby was instructed earnestly to exhort the Turkish government to cause the new laws for the improvement of various branches in the Turkish administration to be rigidly and impartially executed in every province of the empire.⁴⁶ Also, in May he was directed to warn the Porte in the strongest manner that in order to keep the sultan's provinces together the Turkish government must render all its subject races and religious groups contented, and that this could not be done unless all obtained protection for their persons and property against every vexation and oppression on the part of the government authorities or any portion of the Ottoman population.⁴⁷ Finally, in June, 1841, after reports had reached London revealing that the Turkish pashas had not abstained from their former exactions and that the subjects of the Porte were no better off than they had been before the promulgation of the *tanzimat*, Palmerston instructed Ponsonby to urge

⁴⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, "Separate and secret," March 24, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427.

⁴⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 64, April 1, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427.

⁴⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 92, April 21, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428.

⁴⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 116, May 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428.

again upon the Turkish ministers the necessity of reform. If the abuses of the sultan's administration were allowed to continue, the English foreign secretary declared, Turkey would lose the sympathies of Europe, and this must end in the destruction of the Ottoman empire.⁴⁸ All these appeals in support of Reshid and favoring the faithful execution of his administrative reforms seemed to produce little or no effect at Constantinople, but in July, 1841, Palmerston at least had the satisfaction of learning that Mustapha Pasha of Nissa, one of the most unenlightened and tyrannical governors in the sultan's employ, had been dismissed in deference to British opinion.⁴⁹

In addition to measures for the improvement of the general military and administrative efficiency of Turkey, Palmerston, during the crisis of 1839–41, championed special concessions of reform to limited areas and to particular racial groups within the sultan's domains. Holding that the honor of the British crown as well as the interests of the sultan were at stake, late in 1840 he urged the recall of Izzet Pasha whom the Porte had selected for a post in Syria.⁵⁰ The Turkish government promptly recalled Izzet, and then Palmerston explained that as the Syrians had been urged by British authorities to take up arms for the sultan against Mehemet Ali it was "peculiarly incumbent" on the British cabinet to favor such arrangements for the government of Syria as might secure its people from oppression and render them contented and prosperous. Her Majesty's government was not sufficiently conversant with the internal affairs of Turkey to be able to say what specific measures should be adopted. It had been suggested that the important seaports of the Lebanon district—Beyrout and Latakia—should be added to the territory of the Druses, but there might be doubts whether such an arrangement would be politic or whether it would not be better for the sultan to retain those seaport towns more directly under his own control.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 131, June 2, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428.

⁴⁹ Palmerston to Chekib, July 15, 20, 1841; Chekib to Palmerston, July 15, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/463.

⁵⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 227, November 9, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

⁵¹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 266, December 12, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

In the summer of 1841 reports of unrest in Syria revealed clearly that the local Turkish administration, which the Porte had organized in its customary manner in that country after the expulsion of the Egyptians, had failed to win the approval of the Syrians. At Damascus Nezib Pasha was said to have ordered that no Christian should be permitted to enter the city on horseback or to wear within its limits clothing of a light or gay color. Ponsonby believed that even the *reis effendi* was partly responsible for this state of affairs, and in a private letter which he wrote to Palmerston after Reshid had resigned from office at Constantinople he declared: "I am furious against Reshid Pasha who seems on all occasions to have selected the greatest scoundrels in the Empire for employment in the offices of trust and power. He is a fool."⁵²

Aroused by such reports as these, Palmerston repeatedly urged through Ponsonby and through the Turkish ambassador in London that the Porte should remove Nezib from his position as pasha at Damascus, and satisfy the demands of the Maronites for reform in taxation, while in general it should take "effectual measures" to protect the Christians of Syria against the "tyrannical proceedings" of their Moslem rulers.⁵³ Furthermore, he frankly informed Chekib Pasha on one occasion that the British cabinet could not doubt but the enlightened sense of justice which directed the councils of the sultan would lead him "without a moment's delay to take the necessary measures for preventing the Muftis in Syria from acting upon the obsolete and antiquated doctrine" laid down by one of their number who refused to admit the evidence of Christians against Moslems in his court.⁵⁴

⁵² Ponsonby to Palmerston, [Private,] May 23, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/434.

⁵³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 139 and 145, June 8, 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428. Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 175 and 181, July 15, 20, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429. Palmerston to Chekib, June 15, July 2, 20, August, 9, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/463. Early in June, 1841, Ponsonby and the Austrian and Russian representatives at Constantinople agreed to a plan collectively to urge the Porte to reform its administration in Syria. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 191, June 8, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/434.

⁵⁴ Palmerston to Chekib, August 9, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/463. Palmerston encouraged the Porte to grant justice and good government to the Christians of

While posing as a friend of the Christian population of Syria, the British government endeavored to avoid offending the Druses. Ponsonby suggested in March, 1840, that it might be "useful and easy" to obtain from the Porte the acknowledgment of certain rights which the Druses enjoyed *de facto* if not *de jure*.⁵⁵ Palmerston soon replied, instructing the ambassador to urge the Porte "at the proper time" to give to the Druses such privileges and exemptions as might satisfy their "reasonable desires." And in 1841, on the eve of his retirement from public office, he refused to appoint Richard Wood consul general of Syria because Wood was a Roman Catholic and would be regarded by the Druses as a partisan favoring their enemies the Maronites. The Maronites, Palmerston thought, would always, through their priests, "lean upon France rather than upon England." But there might be established among the Druses "an influence useful to England and serviceable to the Porte."⁵⁶ Moreover, Palmerston gave a friendly reply to advances which the Druse chiefs had made through the English Colonel Rose for some connection with Great Britain. The foreign secretary stated in that reply that the British government's object and intention would be to exert its "good offices" and its "just influence" to prevent differences between the Druses and the sultan which might loosen the bonds that "ought to exist between a sovereign and his subjects." He stated, also, that the British government, with due appreciation of the many fine qualities of the Druse nation, approved their wish to establish some good system of education for their children.⁵⁷ Finally, late in July, 1841, Palmerston announced that an English clergyman would be sent to the Druse country to seek employment as a teacher, and

Syria, but he opposed the adoption of a stipulation for their protection in the Straits Convention of 1841. Cf. F. S. Rodkey, "The Turco-Egyptian Question," in *The Relations of England, France, and Russia, 1832-1841* (Urbana, Illinois, 1924), p. 221.

⁵⁵ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 47, "Secret," March 3, 1840; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/392.

⁵⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 61, April 21, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389. Memorandum by Palmerston, "Confidential," August 16, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429.

⁵⁷ Palmerston to Rose, No. 8, July 15, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/454.

he suggested that others might be selected to follow this pioneer if the Druses chose to employ them.⁵⁸

A second limited area within the Ottoman empire for which Palmerston championed special concessions of reform during the crisis of 1839–41 was the island of Crete. Then in fact, as in 1834, a favorite plan of his was to obtain for the Candiotés privileges and institutions of self-government similar to those which had been conferred upon the inhabitants of Samos.⁵⁹ During the first part of the crisis he did not strongly urge the adoption of this plan, for he knew that Ponsonby, as well as Reshid, regarded it as impracticable.⁶⁰ But in April, 1841, after the direct authority of the sultan under the treaty of July, 1840, had replaced the rule of Mehemet Ali in Crete, and reports indicated that an insurrection had broken out among the natives of the island, the British ambassador advised the Porte to remove the pasha of Candia, who was evidently not trustworthy; to cause the *hatti sherif* of Gulhané to be immediately proclaimed in Crete; “and then to grant the inhabitants some form of local government similar in principle to that established in Samos, in which Greeks and Turks should be equally eligible as members of the local councils.”⁶¹ About the same time Ongley, the British consul in Crete, exerted his influence to persuade the Cretans to remain loyal to their sovereign, trusting that the Porte, upon the recommendation of its allies, would take measures to safeguard the people of the island against the oppression of Turkish officials.⁶²

During the brief period of this insurrection among the Candiotés, Palmerston became so much concerned about the Cretan question that he made it the subject of repeated dispatches to both Ponsonby and Ongley.⁶³ In July, 1841, after Ponsonby

⁵⁸ Palmerston to Rose, No. 11, July 26, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/454.

⁵⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 152, October 21, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/353.

⁶⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 323, November 30, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/360. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 151, August 31, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/390.

⁶¹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 80, April 16, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 88, April 19, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428.

⁶² Palmerston to Ongley, April 17, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/450.

⁶³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 134, and 162, June 4, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428. Palmerston to Ongley, Nos. 2 and 3, May 18, June 25, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/450.

had offered excuses for not obeying some of his instructions in regard to Crete, Palmerston restated his position on the question in emphatic terms. The events which had occurred in Crete since he had forwarded instructions, he wrote to the ambassador, did not lead him to retract his advice for the sultan. Instead, those developments led him to think that the advice was more expedient and necessary than it had been when it was first suggested. He admitted that Ponsonby and the Porte must be in a better position than he could be in to chalk out the details of the arrangement which should be made for Crete. He even conceded that institutions like those in Samos might not be entirely suitable for the larger island. What he considered as absolutely necessary in order to induce the Candiotes to be obedient to their sovereign was that the Sultan should guarantee to them full security for their persons and property. This could be done not by taking privileges from the Turkish population in Crete, which the British foreign office had never recommended, but by the effectual abolition of political distinction between the Turks and the Greeks and by admitting Greeks as well as Turks—in fair proportion according to their wealth and numbers—to the local councils which were to be established on the island for the management of local affairs. Palmerston believed that if the Porte managed by an arrangement to take away all excuse for disobedience on the part of its discontented subjects it might expect to see Crete pacified, but that if it imagined force alone would attain that object it would be disappointed.⁶⁴

Late in August, 1841, after the termination of the Cretan revolt had been announced, Palmerston rejoiced to learn that the Ottoman government was disposed to give to the Candiotes “protection and security” for the future. On the same occasion he directed that the Porte should be urged to establish equality of taxation between the Moslems and the Christians of Crete, and he declared that such a measure was “indispensably necessary, not only in Candia, but in every other part of the Ottoman Empire”;

⁶⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 185, July 23, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 179, May 26, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/434. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 217, June 23, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/435.

without it the Porte could "never expect to see permanent tranquillity established in the Sultan's dominions."⁶⁵

The Jews of Palestine constituted another element in the Ottoman empire whose special interests in reform were championed by the British foreign secretary between 1839 and 1841. At the opening of the period arrangements were being made to send an Englishman named Young as vice-consul to Jerusalem, and it was stated in his instructions that one of his duties would be to afford protection to the Hebrews of the Holy Land. Also, he was instructed to report to Palmerston at an early date on the state of the Jewish population within the territory of his consular jurisdiction.⁶⁶ Consequently in May, 1839, Young forwarded to the foreign office a report indicating that the Hebrews of Palestine numbered about 9,690; that they were very poor and were dependent to an extent upon contributions from Europe; and that they were oppressed as an inferior race.⁶⁷ Before the close of the year 1839 the English vice-consul at Jerusalem was assured of the support of his government, although Campbell, the British consul general in Egypt, had complained that Young was "granting protection in an indiscriminate and inconsiderate manner to all Jews."⁶⁸ Furthermore, in May, 1840, Palmerston protested vigorously to the Porte and to Mehemet Ali against the persecution of Jews at Damascus and on the island of Rhodes, and he granted the special protection of the British government to a Jewish delegation which Hebrews in London dispatched to the East to investigate the circumstances that had led to the persecution of their fellow-Israelites.⁶⁹ Finally, in an important

⁶⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 222, August 26, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429.

⁶⁶ Bidwell to Young, No. 2, January 31, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/368.

⁶⁷ Young to Palmerston, No. 13, May 25, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/368.

⁶⁸ Young to Palmerston, No. 25, August 13, 1839; Backhouse to Young, No. 8, November 23, 1839; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/368.

⁶⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 62, 80, and "Separate," May 5, 30, June 27, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389. Palmerston to Wilkinson, May 23, August 29, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/413. Palmerston to Consuls in Levant, June 27, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/416. The archbishop of Canterbury and the commission of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland urged the British government on this occasion to defend the persecuted Hebrews in Damascus and Rhodes. Cf. Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 248, 251, and 278, November 24, 25, December 22, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

dispatch of August 11, 1840, the British foreign minister drew up for the Porte's consideration a plan to settle Jews in Palestine which foreshadowed very directly the Zionist movement of later times.

In the important dispatch of August 11, Palmerston declared to Ponsonby:

There exists at present among the Jews dispersed over Europe, a strong notion that the time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine. . . . Consequently their wish to go thither has become more keen, and their thoughts have been bent more intently than before upon the means of realizing that wish. It is well known that the Jews of Europe possess great wealth; and it is manifest that any country in which a considerable number of them might choose to settle, would derive great benefit from the riches which they would bring into it.

. . . it would be of manifest importance to the Sultan to encourage the Jews to return to, and to settle in Palestine, because the wealth which they would bring with them would increase the resources of the Sultan's dominions; and the Jewish people, if returning under the sanction and protection and at the invitation of the Sultan, would be a check upon any future evil designs of Mehemet Ali or his successor. . . .

It is obvious that full and complete security for persons and property is the necessary foundation upon which any such invitation could rest; and it is also manifest that no such security could exist unless all arbitrary proceedings and all acts of capricious authority can be prevented, and unless some impartial Courts of Justice can be constituted, before which Jews, and Mahometans might be equally sure of obtaining a just sentence.

But even if the encouragement held out by the Sultan to the Jews were not practically to lead to the settlement of any great number of them within the limits of the Ottoman Empire, still the promulgation of some laws in their favour would spread a friendly disposition toward the Sultan among the Jews in Europe; and the Turkish Government must at once see how advantageous it would be to the Sultan's cause thus to create useful friends in many countries by one single edict.⁷⁰

Palmerston followed up this important dispatch to Ponsonby with another, suggesting that Jews should be permitted to transmit through British consular authorities and the British embassy at Constantinople any complaints which they might wish to make to the Porte against Turkish local officials in Palestine.⁷¹ Indeed

⁷⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 134, August 11, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/390.

⁷¹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 248, November 24, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

the British foreign secretary proposed such extensive concessions to the Hebrews of the Holy Land that the Porte refused to grant them, and Ponsonby upheld the Porte in its refusal. The Ottoman ministers and the British representative at Constantinople agreed that the sultan should not grant more than the right of all his subjects to secure redress through direct appeal to the Porte.⁷²

Regardless of the opposition of Ponsonby and the Turks, Palmerston continued for a time to advocate special reforms for the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. He explained early in 1841 that if the Porte persisted in its refusal to adopt his suggestions Ponsonby might propose a limited concession of the right of the Hebrews to transmit complaints through British officials for a period of twenty years.⁷³ To this Ponsonby replied in March, 1841, stating he was unable to see what additional security could be given to the Jews, or what other inducements the sultan could offer to them for settlement in Palestine than security for persons and property and the enjoyment of equal rights with every other class of inhabitants in the Ottoman empire. It might, in fact, be inconvenient to the Porte, and not advantageous to the Jews, to give them special immunities. Such immunities would probably be abused, and would certainly excite demands that could not be granted to others.⁷⁴ After Palmerston received this reply, he made no further moves to obtain special concessions for the Hebrews of the Holy Land, but he did not modify his instructions to the vice-consul at Jerusalem; and just before he resigned from the British foreign office in 1841 he announced that a bishop of the Church of England would be sent to the ancient capital of Judea to look after British ecclesiastical interests there.⁷⁵

While Palmerston favored the granting of special guarantees of justice and of good government to the inhabitants of Syria, Crete, and Palestine in 1839-41, he continuously emphasized

⁷² Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 19 and 29, January 21, February 1, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/430.

⁷³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 33, February 17, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427.

⁷⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 113, March 27, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/432.

⁷⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 187, 210, and 227, "Confidential," July 26, August 16, 27, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/429.

that the power of the sultan should not be compromised in any part of his extensive empire. Care should be taken, he wrote to Ponsonby in December, 1840, to make such arrangements as would protect the people of Egypt from a continuance of the tyrannical oppression by which they had been crushed, and as would secure the sultan against a renewed attack by Mehemet Ali. According to the British foreign secretary's opinion, the basis for such arrangements was to be found in the stipulations of the treaty of July 15, 1840. Under those stipulations the sultan would "be able, by an exercise of his legislative authority, to establish unity of flag and of military and naval uniform throughout all his provinces; to limit the number of troops which each province should, according to its population, maintain; to regulate the mode of enforcing the conscription so as to protect the people from undue burdens and oppressive levies; to fix the number and class of ships of war" which should belong to the several naval ports of his dominions; to fix the manner in which military and naval commissions should be granted in his name and by his authority; and to determine that a single monetary system should prevail throughout all his territories. The treaty of July specified that none but the legal imposts of the sultan should be levied in Egypt. This should secure the people under Mehemet Ali from undue exactions; and the execution of the Anglo-Turkish commercial convention of 1838, by which all monopolies were to be abolished in the Ottoman empire, would at once free the industry of Egypt from those oppressive restrictions which had hitherto kept the great mass of the Egyptian population in the most abject poverty.⁷⁶ At a later date Palmerston approved the sultan's firman of February 13, 1841, which would have imposed important limitations upon the power of the pasha of Egypt if it had been executed; and he expressed regrets to Commodore Napier because that officer had not advised Mehemet Ali to acquiesce in the proposed arrangement.⁷⁷ Also, in June, 1841, after the English foreign secretary had been informed about attempts to excite disturbances in the neighbor-

⁷⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 270, December 17, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

⁷⁷ Palmerston to Napier, March 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/461.

hood of Salonica, he notified the admiralty that some British ships of war should be dispatched to the Aegean with a view to support the authority of the sultan and to put a stop to any piratical proceedings in that quarter.⁷⁸

Eager though Palmerston was to defend the power of the sultan and to further the rejuvenation of Turkey, he refused to grant such practical assistance as the Porte wished to obtain on at least two occasions during the crisis of 1839–41. In May, 1841, the *reis effendi* Rifaat Pasha privately informed Ponsonby that he wished a clause guaranteeing the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire would be added to the Straits Convention which had been initiated in March, 1841, but which still remained formally unsigned.⁷⁹ According to Palmerston's opinion, such a clause could not be adopted because it had been clearly understood there would be no change in the terms of the convention for the closure of the Straits without the consent of all parties that were directly involved in it, and some were sure to object to the *reis effendi's* proposal. Moreover, the proposed clause—provided it was adopted—would probably not have the effect which Rifaat expected. If either France or Russia wished to interfere in Ottoman affairs and if Turkey was weak, they would be able to find some pretext for doing so regardless of stipulations for the defense of the sultan's dominions. The British minister of foreign affairs declared,

The truth is that the most effectual means which the Porte can use to prevent any improper and uncalled for interference of foreign Powers in the internal affairs of the Turkish Empire, will be, first, to take care that the Pashas and other officers of the Sultan shall govern the people of all races and religions with mildness, forbearance, and justice, so as to give the subjects of the Sultan no real cause for discontent, in order that thus the tranquillity of the country may remain undisturbed; and, secondly, so to improve the organization and efficiency of the Turkish army and navy, that foreign Powers may respect the strength of the Ottoman Empire, and may be unwilling to run the risk of giving unnecessary cause of dissatisfaction to the Sultan.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Palmerston to Admiralty, June 26, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/467.

⁷⁹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Separate and confidential," May 20, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/433.

⁸⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 147, June 15, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/428. On an earlier occasion in 1841 Palmerston had opposed a French proposal to provide in

Similarly during the crisis of 1839-41 Palmerston refused to grant a type of practical assistance which a group of English bankers sought in the negotiation of a loan to the Porte. In December, 1839, Ponsonby informed his superior that the Ottoman government wished to borrow £2,000,000 and hoped "to find facilities for it" through the friendly aid of Great Britain. Certain bankers, it was believed on that occasion, would advance the sum which the Porte desired on the security of Ottoman copper mines provided the British government would guarantee the investment. According to Ponsonby's opinion, the loan was necessary for the execution of the *hatti scherif* of Gulhané and the abolition of monopolies.⁸¹ It would be "highly useful," he thought, "and not subject to much abuse."⁸² Apparently the only alternative which the Porte had considered seriously was a project for the issuance of paper money. Believing that that project "would produce such confusion and such robbery and such distress amongst the people as would bring about a revolution," Ponsonby eagerly favored the negotiation of the loan. "There is at present," he wrote in April, 1840, "a great want of money in consequence of the alterations that have been made for the benefit of the people, and it would be fortunate if a loan could be made. I doubt if any government can give better security to lenders."⁸³ Finally, in September, 1840, the British ambassador at Constantinople reported that he had assisted a Mr. Bourjot, the representative of certain bankers in London, to arrange details for a loan to the Porte.⁸⁴

This loan, as explained to Palmerston by Timothy Curtis, one of the bankers, was to be for £3,000,000 and was to be secured by a mortgage on the customs of Constantinople, Salonica, and Smyrna. In case of default the Porte was to allow the contractors

the Straits Convention a guarantee of the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. Cf. Rodkey, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

⁸¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 336, December 18, 1839; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/360.

⁸² Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 45, February 27, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/392.

⁸³ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 76, April 14, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/393.

⁸⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 214, 219, and [Private], September 20, 26, and 27, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/397.

of the loan to appoint persons who would receive the customs and apply the proceeds to the payment of "dividends" and to the establishment of a "sinking fund of one per cent." Curtis further explained that he had found there was "not that confidence in the Turkish Government that would induce capitalists to lend their money without some guarantee as to the payment of dividends." He was aware that the British government would not guarantee the financial obligations of foreign governments; but, as the power to enforce the payment of dividends from the revenue of customs would be altogether a nullity in the hands of an individual, it had occurred to him that the British government might through a special treaty with the Porte gain the power to interfere in Turkey if called upon by the contractors in a case of default. Upon this part of the subject the Rothschilds whom Curtis had consulted were "quite decided"; and as he considered that they were "the only persons who could efficiently and successfully carry such a loan through," he trusted Palmerston would "not see any great difficulty in making such an arrangement."⁸⁵

The foreign secretary approved of Ponsonby's opposition to paper money in Turkey.⁸⁶ He even approved of the assistance which the ambassador gave to Bourjot in the arrangement of details for a loan to the Porte.⁸⁷ However, he definitely refused to

⁸⁵ Curtis to Palmerston, December 24, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/426. Because of the "urgency" of the Turkish loan, the "importance of being immediately in the field," and his understanding that the foreign minister might not be in London again for ten days, Curtis presumed to take the liberty of presenting himself at Palmerston's home on Christmas day, 1840, for a private conference and reply to the bankers' proposals. A difference of twenty-four hours, he claimed, might "mar the whole plan."

Also in the period between 1839 and 1841, British capitalists headed by the house of Reed, Irving and Company were interested in the reform of Turkey's monetary system and in the establishment of an Ottoman National Bank. Their projects were supported by Ponsonby and Sandison a British consular agent in the Levant, both of whom acted without specific instructions on this matter from Palmerston. The Porte, besieged similarly by a group of French capitalists under the leadership of M. Coste, managed to avoid committing itself definitely upon the projects of either party. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Confidential," "Separate and confidential," and [Private], July 22, 30, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/395. Coste to Ahmed Fethi, September 18, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/397. Irving's Memorandum, September 26, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/422. Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 125 and 166; April 6, May 17, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/433. Irving's Memorandum, March 6, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/465.

⁸⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 46, March 31, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/389.

⁸⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 189, October 10, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/390.

promise that Her Majesty's government would guarantee such a loan. On December 30, 1840, he wrote to Ponsonby:

I have explained to him [Curtis] fully in conversation that it is quite impossible for Her Majesty's Gov[ernmen]t to take any part in that transaction [the Turkish Loan], or to give any security direct or indirect, to the parties who may engage in it. I said that those parties must obtain the best information they can as to the resources and good faith of the Turkish Gov[ernmen]t, and must then exercise their own judgment upon the information so obtained; that there is no middle course to be pursued on a matter of this kind, and that Her Majesty's Gov[ernmen]t should either entirely abstain from saying anything which can sway individuals in regard to advancing their money to a foreign Government, or else they should agree to a Treaty of Guarantee and propose that Treaty to Parliament for its sanction and confirmation; and as Her Majesty's Gov[ernmen]t are not prepared to take the latter course, I feel it my duty to pursue the first.⁸⁸

In truth, Palmerston not only refused to involve the British government in a guaranty of a Turkish loan but even insisted that the Porte should pay for the arms and ammunition which British agents distributed among the Syrian insurgents during the war with Mehemet Ali in 1840.⁸⁹ The British foreign secretary must have foreseen that the sultan and his ministers might squander moneys which could be obtained easily from abroad, that international complications would arise if Her Majesty's government attempted to intervene in the affairs of the Levant to safeguard the interests of British investors, and that such developments as these would not promote Ottoman rejuvenation. Palmerston's policy for the rejuvenation of Turkey was comprehensive—it was designed to encourage all types of reform which might contribute directly to the strengthening of the Ottoman empire as an independent state and as an essential element in the European

⁸⁸ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 279, "Confidential," December 30, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391.

⁸⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 225 and 281, November 5, December 30, 1840; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/391. Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 19 and 35, January 29, February 18, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/427. The Porte agreed to pay for these military supplies and, beginning late in the year 1841, made advances in small instalments upon them. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 91, March 9, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/432. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 143, April 27, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/433. Bankhead to Aberdeen, Nos. 40, 56, and 67, November 10, December 1, 24, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/438. F. O. to Treasury, October 25, November 9, 21, 1842; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/512.

balance of power—but it did not involve the financing of Turkish reorganization entirely at British expense.

Perhaps the attempts which Palmerston made to further Turkish reform before he withdrew from office in 1841 have received scant attention in historical study heretofore chiefly because of a factor which must now be taken into account. Despite his efforts to encourage Turkish reform, the Ottoman state remained essentially as unprogressive when Palmerston was replaced by Aberdeen in the British foreign office as it had been in 1839, or even in 1830. In fact, by 1841 a reaction against innovations and Western ideas had gained the center of the stage throughout the sultan's dominions. Ponsonby wrote in March, 1841 :

I regret to say that I hear of great dissatisfaction in too many parts of the Empire created by the feeble administration of the Executive Government which is said to leave the people exposed to greater vexation than was experienced under the old system in its worst time. I hope these things are exaggerated, but it certainly is true that the law is very ill executed, and that there is weakness and unsteadiness in the administration in carrying into execution measures already adopted, and a most impolitic meddling with matters dangerous to touch, and which, I venture to say, need not be touched, for the attainment of any essential good at present. The public mind is said to be disturbed and considerable discredit [is] thrown upon those acts of the government which unquestionably are founded upon the wisest principles, and are also in full conformity with the law of the Koran.⁹⁰

Again, in May, 1841, Ponsonby declared that fiscal oppressions throughout the Ottoman empire had been grievously aggravated by new regulations and were the real cause of the discontent and outbreaks in Turkey against the authority of the sultan.⁹¹

After Stratford Canning succeeded Ponsonby as British ambassador at Constantinople, he also drew a discouraging picture of the prospects for reform in the Ottoman empire. In March, 1842, he called attention to evidences of an anti-Christian policy, of misgovernment, of a jealous impatience of foreign instruction, and of an attachment to old abuses. He believed Reshid's reform

⁹⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 103, March 17, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/432.

⁹¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 159, May 11, 1841; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/433.

had been "too rapid and inconsiderate," and he was convinced that unless "the means of giving another direction" were speedily found and effectively applied "the most serious, and perhaps irremediable mischief" would ensue.⁹² In a memorandum that was inclosed with the dispatch in which these ideas were set forth the new British ambassador further explained:

In the present temper of the Porte the advice of Foreign Powers has little chance of being followed, and if repeated continually without effect, it can only fall into contempt and oblivion. . . .

Should the adoption of . . . [a policy favoring Turkish reform] be attended with insuperable objections, it might be worth while to consider whether a tacit acquiescence in the proceedings of the Porte in so far as her internal affairs are concerned, would not be preferable for British interests to the system of vigilant but ineffective admonition now pursued. The peculiar interests of Great Britain would in this case derive no hindrance or detriment from angry feelings excited by her opposition to the favourite policy of the day, and if she acquired no additional credit for herself, she would at least occasion no disappointment to those who look up to her for aid or protection.⁹³

Even more discouraging was Canning's view of the Turkish question in December, 1843. At that time he wrote:

The innocent are oppressed, the guilty screened, and judgments, places, and public property disposed of for value received. A volume might be filled with examples of this corruption, which flourishes alike in the capital and in the provinces. . . .

The stream of improvement is not only arrested in its progress. Unfortunately it is made to flow backwards. The interests of those in power are attached to this reaction. We may, therefore, expect to see the gradual abandonment of all that has been gained for humanity, and, unless some means of prevention be interposed, we shall also witness a full return to that system of policy and administration, which during two centuries contributed so powerfully to the decline, and nearly completed the dissolution, of that Empire.⁹⁴

⁹² Canning to Aberdeen, No. 67, March 27, 1842; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/476.

⁹³ "Memorandum on the Present Policy of the Turkish Administration," inclosed with Canning to Aberdeen, No. 67, March 27, 1842; *ibid.*, F. O. 78/476. Lane-Poole, who failed to mention this memorandum in his *Life of Stratford Canning*, did not reveal that the "great *Elchi*" recommended that Great Britain should seriously consider abandoning the cause of reform in Turkey. Cf. S. Lane-Poole, *Life of Stratford Canning* (London, 1888), II, 86.

⁹⁴ Canning to Aberdeen, No. 260, December 13, 1843; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/523.

Although abundant evidence reveals clearly that Palmerston's program for the rejuvenation of Turkey produced no great and permanent changes in the Ottoman system either before or immediately after its author withdrew from office in 1841, it must be conceded that his program served as a fundamental element in Great Britain's policy for the preservation of the Ottoman empire—a policy which Her Majesty's government pursued quite consistently at least until the time of the Near Eastern crisis of 1875–78. Lane-Poole, in his *Life of Stratford Canning*, wrote:

Fortunately we are not here concerned with the management of diplomacy in Turkey during Canning's absence; otherwise it might be necessary to enquire whether a firm steady policy such as his might not have saved the Porte from the many troubles which encompassed and well-nigh over-whelmed her between 1833 and 1841.⁹⁵

Canning, it is true, urged the adoption of a "decided line of policy" by Great Britain in defense of Turkey so early as 1832.⁹⁶ However, it was Palmerston, and not Canning, who first elaborated a definite program for the establishment of that policy and who proceeded to carry it into effect. Furthermore, the period of the development of Palmerston's program for Turkey was no other than the one between 1833 and 1841. It was then that the British government for the first time in its history sent official missions to Turkey to promote directly the reorganization of the sultan's military and naval forces; encouraged the promulgation and faithful execution throughout the Ottoman dominions of a great charter of liberties in which all of the sultan's subjects were recognized as equals before the law; and sponsored various lesser reforms which were designed to round out a program for the rejuvenation of the extensive Turkish state. Indeed, the instructions which Aberdeen prepared for Stratford Canning when the "Great Ambassador" returned to Turkey in 1841 contained little more than a recapitulation and indorsement of the many details of British policy in the Levant developed by Palmerston during the previous eight years.⁹⁷ In so far as the Brit-

⁹⁵ Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, II, 80.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 76–78.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79; Aberdeen to Canning, No. 2, October 30, 1841; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/439.

ish government was responsible for the reaction against reform which triumphed in Turkey in 1841, it was responsible because it had encouraged the Porte to go too far rather than not far enough on the road to reform and reorganization. Also, it should be remembered that the period of reaction in the Ottoman empire did not end with Canning's arrival at the Turkish capital near the close of 1841, but continued during the early years of his administration and reached its most alarming proportions perhaps, as his dispatches seem eloquently to indicate, about the close of 1843. Consequently Lane-Poole's statement about British policy in the Levant during the period 1833-41 should be received with caution, and Palmerston should be given credit for the elaboration of the details of the first definite program which served as a fundamental element in Great Britain's policy for the preservation of Turkey in the nineteenth century. This means that Palmerston should be given credit provided credit is due to the author of a policy for the rejuvenation of an empire whose population included numerous incongruous elements and whose doom might seem to have been sealed by the rising tide of nationalism.

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