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LORD PALMERSTON AND THE REJUVENATION OF TURKEY, 1830-41¹

PART I, 1830-39

WHEN Lord Palmerston, in 1830, entered the British cabinet as secretary of state for foreign affairs, the Ottoman Empire was generally known to be weak. During the Greek Revolution public opinion in Europe had been shocked by tales of Turkish atrocities and misgovernment, careful observers had noted the contrast in the efficiency of the forces of the Sultan and of those of the governor of Egypt, and the cabinets of the western nations had been alarmed by the apparent ease with which a small force of Russians had advanced over the Balkans and had dictated to the Turks the humiliating settlement of Adrianople. Undoubtedly many "in looking at the state of anarchy and disorganization of the Turkish Empire, as well as at the total change of national character exhibited in the apathy, the disaffection, or the treachery, of a great portion of the population" were tempted as was Lord Palmerston's predecessor in the British foreign office "to suspect that the hour long since predicted" was about to arrive, and that "independently of all foreign or hostile impulse this clumsy fabric of barbarous power" would "speedily crumble into pieces from its own inherent causes of decay."² Under the circumstances, indeed, it was natural that the problem of "what to do with Turkey" should become one of fundamental European concern.

The traditions of British policy favored the preservation of the Ottoman Empire as a necessary element in the general balance of power in Europe; yet Palmerston, for at least two years

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

² Aberdeen to Gordon, November 21, 1829; Public Record Office MSS, Foreign Office, 78/179. The King wrote on the back of this dispatch, "Excellent, nothing can be better. G. R." Part of this dispatch is quoted in Sir A. H. Gordon, *The Earl of Aberdeen* (London, 1893), pp. 85-86.

after he assumed control over British foreign affairs, revealed very little concern for the welfare of Turkey. He unhesitatingly agreed to an extension of the limits of Greece, left the British ambassador at Constantinople without instructions relative to the war which broke out in Syria between the Sultan and his ambitious vassal, Mehemet Ali, and after the Egyptian forces had demonstrated their superiority in the contest refused to comply with either the recommendations of Stratford Canning or the pleas of the Ottoman government for naval assistance on the coast of Syria.

When Canning, who had been on a special mission to Turkey for the final arrangement of the Greek question, returned to England late in 1832, he prepared a long memorandum in which he warned the British foreign secretary that if the war being waged in Syria ended with the formation of a separate government under the scepter of Mehemet Ali, the Sultan would be deprived of so much territory and be so degraded in the opinion of his subjects as to make "it more difficult than ever either to make head against the encroachments of Russia, or to carry on that system of improvement" which had "become essential to the maintenance of his independence." Replying in a marginal notation, Palmerston asked: "Is not the unwieldy extent of the Turkish Empire one great check to the improvement of its industry and resources and possibly one great cause of its external weakness?" If the contending parties of Turkey and Egypt were left to themselves, Canning maintained, it was only too probable that the struggle would drain the resources of both sides in the war, would add another cause of "desolation" to those which had long worn down the Turkish Empire, and would "render it an easy prey to the first invader." According to his opinion, it was "difficult to conceive how commerce more than civilization could expand or even exist, under such a pressure." The secretary of foreign affairs again countered with a question. "Is it quite clear," he asked, "that war on an extensive scale in an Empire which at all times and during what is called peace is the theatre of perpetual turbulence and petty disturbances is really so injurious to its commerce and improvement as

this paragraph supposes?" Palmerston admitted that so far as Great Britain was concerned intervention "could be recommended" to rescue the Turkish Empire from a war which threatened "to lay it at the feet of a Power [Russia] already too great for the general interests and liberties of Europe," but he held that the Sultan's authority in Syria and Egypt, like that of the Pasha, was based only on the right of force; and he doubted if the presence of a British squadron in the Levant would suffice to insure success against Mehemet Ali. Furthermore, he challenged Canning's claim that the participation of Great Britain in measures for the coercion of the governor of Egypt "would be beneficial in no small degree to her interests," would give her "important influence in the counsels of the Divan," and that that influence "would powerfully operate" to promote reform and civilization throughout Turkey. "We rescued Egypt once for Turkey," Palmerston declared, "we acquired or supposed that we acquired influence in the Divan. What was the beneficial result? Certainly no progress for the civilization or reform nor any such improvement of Turkish resources as is here contemplated."³

Far different were the reactions of the British foreign secretary in 1833, after Russian forces had appeared in the Bosphorus in response to a request from Sultan Mahmoud for the protection of his capital against the Egyptians and after Rus-

³ Canning's memorandum on the Turco-Egyptian question, December 19, 1832; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/211. In other marginal comments Palmerston considered the probable attitude of other great powers to independent British interference in the Near East. "Surely it would be very strange," he thought, "if France would not object. Should we be easily reconciled to the *single* interference of France? Yet France is both by position and by ancient connection more directly interested in Turkish affairs than ourselves." After Canning's statement that "the Court of St. Petersburg, though no less adverse to our interference than to the Sultan's application for it, could hardly, with a due regard to its own principles and professions of peace, step forward to oppose its exercise," Palmerston continued: "Perhaps not, but would she [Russia] or could she be entirely neutral and passive on such an occasion—America is not glanced at, but she has commerce in those parts and by interfering we sanction her right of interfering too." A part of Canning's memorandum is quoted in the *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* (Cambridge and New York, 1923), II, 638, but the very brief extract from Palmerston's marginal notations which is included gives an entirely incorrect impression of the sentiments of the foreign secretary as revealed in those notations.

sian diplomacy had exacted from the Porte the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, which created a close alliance between the Tsar and the Sultan. "We must try to help the Sultan in organizing his army, navy, and finances; and if he can get those three departments into good order he may still hold his ground," Palmerston wrote on March 21, 1833.⁴ The conclusion of the Russo-Turkish treaty of alliance, he believed later in the year, proved that Russia was "intently engaged in the prosecution of those schemes of aggrandizement towards the South" which ever since the reign of Catherine II had "formed a prominent feature of Russian policy." In instructions to Lord Ponsonby, the newly appointed ambassador to Turkey, Palmerston suggested it should be represented to the Sultan that "inconveniences and dangers might be avoided, by reverting to the antient policy of the Porte; and by looking for aid to England," whose interests could not be adverse to those of Turkey, "instead of leaning upon a powerful and systematically encroaching neighbor."⁵ Obviously, before the close of 1833 the moment of hesitation in British policy for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire had passed. Palmerston was resolved to revive and to extend the traditional policy of Great Britain in the Levant and was determined to defeat at all cost any attempt which Russia might make to intervene independently in the internal affairs of Turkey under the terms of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi.⁶

⁴ Sir H. Bulwer, *Life of Viscount Palmerston* (London, 1874), II, 145. According to the reports of Talleyrand, who was on a special mission to England, Palmerston was undecided in January, 1833, as to what course Great Britain should follow in the Levant. In 1840 Palmerston insinuated that if he had not been overruled by the cabinet "in 1833" he would have supported the Sultan. Cf. *ibid.*, II, 360; C. M. Prince de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Mémoires, lettres inédites et papiers secrets* (Paris, 1891), V, 95-96, 114-16.

⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 23, December 6, 1833; Public Record Office MSS, F. O. 78/220. This dispatch has been published by R. L. Baker in *English Historical Review* (1928), XLIII, 83-89.

⁶ Early in 1834 a powerful British fleet was sent to cruise in the Levant and Ponsonby was authorized to call it to Constantinople on application from the Porte for the defense of the city against the Russians. Cf. Stanley to Rowley, January 31, 1834; Palmerston to Ponsonby, "Secret," March 10, 1834; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/234. Also on various occasions during the period 1833-39 Palmerston and his representatives directly warned the Russian government that Great Britain would not submit to a second independent Russian interference in the affairs of Turkey. Cf. particularly Palmerston to Bligh, No. 101,

Thus aroused after the Tsar's intervention in Turco-Egyptian affairs, the British foreign secretary adopted measures which were designed to curry the favor of the Turks and to encourage them to reform their internal affairs in so fundamental a way as to bring about a rejuvenation of the Ottoman state. In December, 1833, Ponsonby reported that he had found a means of direct confidential communication with the Sultan through Dr. MacGuffog, the embassy physician, and Vogorides, "the Prince of Samos."⁷ At the same time the ambassador reported a suggestion of the "Prince of Samos" that the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi might be reduced to "mere paper" if Great Britain and France would persuade Mehemet Ali to resign to his sovereign the island of Crete, which he had received as a reward from Mahmoud for the service of the Egyptian army in Greece during the Greek Revolution. As Palmerston had learned from Patrick Campbell, the British diplomatic agent at Cairo, that the Viceroy might not be opposed to such a move he promptly instructed the King's agent in Egypt to propose to Mehemet Ali the surrender of the island, and he urged Broglie, the French foreign minister, to send similar instructions to the representative of France in Egypt.⁸ The British plan involved the Sultan's giving to Crete a constitution with a degree of autonomy like that of the island of Samos, but it had to be abandoned, for France withheld her support and Campbell failed to obtain the consent of the Pasha.⁹ Balked in this attempt to render a practical service to the Turkish government, Palmerston turned his

December 6, 1833; *ibid.*, F.O. 65/206; Palmerston to Bligh, No. 5, February 28, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 65/212; Lamb to Palmerston, No. 72, September 8, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 7/272.

⁷ Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Secret," December 19, 1833; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/225. Stratford Canning had employed MacGuffog and Vogorides in a similar war during the negotiations on the Greek question in 1832. Cf. S. Lane-Poole, *Life of Stratford Canning* (London, 1888), I, 506 ff.

⁸ Palmerston to Campbell, March 3, 1834; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/244. Palmerston to Granville, No. 37, March 4, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/478. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 16, March 5, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/234.

⁹ Granville to Palmerston, No. 100, March 7, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/481. Granville to Palmerston, Nos. 113 and 114, March 17, 21, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/482. Campbell to Palmerston, "Separate," May 17, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/245. Palmerston to Campbell, No. 7, August 1, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/244.

attention more directly to the encouragement of reorganization within the territories which the Sultan had not alienated from his personal rule. On June 1, 1834, Ponsonby was informed that the cabinet had received with satisfaction his account of the measures adopted by the Porte to organize a militia as subsidiary to the regular army. "Anxious as the British government is that the Turkish Empire should retain its integrity and independence," the British secretary of foreign affairs explained,

we must always see with pleasure the development of its internal resources by which alone its independence can be permanently secured.

Your Ex[cellent]y is therefore instructed to use all the means in your power to encourage the Turkish gov[ernment] to persevere in the course of improvement which it has begun, in spite of all the endeavours which jealousy or interested views may prompt other Powers to make for the purpose of paralyzing the efforts of Turkey to place her internal organization upon a respectable footing.

The financial arrangements of the country are no less important than the military; and it is to be hoped that the Porte will direct its attention to that subject with a view to establish some order and system in the collection of the revenue, and to secure the means of maintaining the military force in a state of efficiency.

If the Turkish gov[ernment] should be in want of muskets with which to arm its new levies, H[is] M[ajesty]'s gov[ernment] could supply them with any quantity out of H[is] M[ajesty]'s stores in this country, and at a very moderate price.¹⁰

Undoubtedly throughout the period from 1833 to 1839 Palmerston believed that peace must be preserved in the Near East if such a policy as he favored for the rejuvenation of Turkey was to succeed. In 1834, when first the *reis effendi* (Turkish minister of foreign affairs), and later Vogorides, revealed that the Sultan had resolved to encounter all the risks of a new struggle with Mehemet Ali in order to remove the sword of the Pasha, "hanging always threatening over his head," Ponsonby exerted his influence at the Turkish capital against a renewal of hostilities.¹¹ Palmerston entirely approved the course followed

¹⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 24, June 1, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/234.

¹¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 99, July 25, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/237. Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Secret," September 15, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/238.

by the ambassador on this occasion and directed the admiralty to have Vice-Admiral Rowley, the British naval commander in the Levant, maintain a watch for the Ottoman fleet in the neighborhood of the Archipelago. If it appeared in those waters the British admiral was to get in touch with the Turkish commander, to urge him to suspend any orders he might have to undertake hostile operations against the Egyptian fleet, and if these representations proved successful to report the fact immediately to Ponsonby, so that a repeated endeavor might be made to prevail on the Porte to recall its armaments.¹² Also in October, 1834, after Campbell had warned the foreign office of serious intentions on the part of Mehemet Ali to declare himself independent, Palmerston warned the Pasha in no uncertain terms not to disturb the status quo. To sever from the Ottoman Empire the vast and fertile provinces held by Mehemet Ali, the British foreign secretary maintained, "would not only trench deeply upon the integrity of the Turkish Empire, but would fatally impair its independence." Instead of encouraging the Viceroy in his ambitions, Palmerston strongly recommended that he should evacuate Orfa and Diarbekir, and pay the tribute that he owed to the Sultan.¹³

Henceforth until the renewal of war between the Sultan and the Pasha of Egypt in 1839 Palmerston consistently coun-

¹² F.O. to Admiralty, September 19, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/250.

¹³ Campbell to Palmerston, "Secret and confidential," September 4, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/237. Palmerston to Campbell, No. 14, October 26, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/244. Palmerston's reply to Mehemet Ali's overtures was transmitted to the Porte. Cf. Ponsonby to *reis effendi*, November 20, 1834; Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 186, November 25, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/240.

Again in 1835 Ponsonby reported as his opinion that the chief ministers of the Porte concurred with the Sultan in thinking war with the Pasha of Egypt necessary, and on this occasion the ambassador argued that "the Ottoman Empire must crumble to pieces unless the power of Mehemet Ali be attacked by the Sultan." Ponsonby thought that such a war as the Porte contemplated would be a "fever which Turkey might easily recover from." He warned his superior that remonstrances by the British government against a declaration of war by the Sultan upon Mehemet Ali would require to be well considered and founded upon a most correct knowledge of facts, or they might "produce only mischief." Nevertheless Palmerston strongly upheld his policy for peace in the Levant. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 178 and 186, September 27, October 11, 1835; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/255; Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 40, November 4, 1835; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/251.

seled the Turkish government to keep the peace in the Levant in order that it might succeed with its plans for military and administrative reorganization, and on more than one occasion he took practical steps to further Ottoman reform. Late in 1835 he instructed Ponsonby to exhort the Turkish ministers to pursue "with increasing energy and perseverance that wise system of organization—military, naval, financial, and administrative"—which had "already been so successfully begun." Ponsonby was to impress upon the Turks that their only chance to restore the Ottoman Empire to its former condition of power and independence lay in not allowing a renewal of war to interrupt the progress of their reform measures unless they were compelled to take the field against an unprovoked attack. Also he was to say that the British government had the prosperity and independence of Turkey so much at heart that it would willingly contribute in any way in its power to assist the Sultan in the organization of his resources. The King intended to send to Mahmoud a collection of all the books of instruction and of all plans and drawings used in the military academies of Great Britain. Finally, the ambassador was instructed to state to the Porte that if it thought the assistance of British officers would be useful to instruct and organize the army or navy of the Sultan the King would willingly take the necessary steps to afford such assistance to His Highness.¹⁴

So early as August 16, 1834, Ponsonby had informed the *reis effendi* that the British government would not be indisposed to send officers to aid in the formation of the Sultan's army and he had offered to furnish arms to the Porte at a "very reasonable price." In reply the Ottoman minister of foreign affairs had professed gratitude and had promised to return to the subject at another time.¹⁵ Accordingly, in February, 1835, a request was made through the Turkish ambassador at London for patterns of the muskets used in the British service, and a month later permission was sought for the admission of a certain

¹⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 40 and 43, November 4, December 8, 1835; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/251.

¹⁵ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 115, August 16, 1834; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/237.

number of Turkish students to the military academies at Woolwich, Portsmouth, and Sandhurst.¹⁶ After both of these matters had been arranged in a manner satisfactory to the Porte, and after the advances which Palmerston made late in 1835 had been received at Constantinople, the Ottoman authorities ventured to open negotiations for the dispatch of a British military mission to Turkey.¹⁷

Pleased by the favorable response of the Turks to his advances Palmerston during the year 1836 sent several military officers to the Levant. Among these there was a Polish officer named Chrzanowski whom the British foreign secretary judged to be

a remarkably intelligent, well informed little fellow—just the sort of man who might be of the greatest use to Reshid Pasha [the Turkish commander] in Asia Minor by giving him hints and suggestions as to the organization of his troops, the selection of points for fortification, the arrangement of plans, and all matters requiring military experience and scientific acquirement.

Palmerston thought that the way “to make him [Chrzanowski] useful would be to attach him to Reshid’s staff as a sort of Quartermaster General.”¹⁸ In order to avoid attracting the attention of the Russians, Chrzanowski and two companions who accompanied him were directed to proceed to the headquarters of the Ottoman army by way of Smyrna.¹⁹ They were promised £1,000 from the British government for a year’s service in Turkey, and in a memorandum which the foreign office prepared for the general he was directed to inform himself on the state of the Sultan’s army, on its discipline and spirit, and on the degree of re-

¹⁶ Namic to Wellington, February 3, March 14, 28, 1835, Wellington to Namic, March 11, April 4, 8, 1835, Palmerston to Nouri, May 26, 1835, *ibid.*, F.O. 78/268.

¹⁷ Nouri to Palmerston, January 13, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/297. Also on this occasion Nouri requested that several young Turks who had been sent to England be given an opportunity to study gunnery, cannon foundry, “the science of finding out minerals in their proper places,” smelting, etc. Palmerston gave a favorable reply. Cf. memorandum by Palmerston, January 24, 1836, Palmerston to Nouri, February 27, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/297.

¹⁸ Palmerston to Ponsonby, “Private and confidential,” March 7, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/271.

¹⁹ Palmerston to Brant, “Secret and confidential,” March 29, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/289.

sistence which it might be expected to offer to either a European army or an army of Egyptians and Arabs under Mehemet Ali's orders. Also Chrzanowski was directed to ascertain what European officers were employed in the Turkish army, and was not to omit sending to London by any safe opportunity a report of his observations on all these points and on any other matters of interest which might come to his knowledge.²⁰

In addition to Chrzanowski and his companions, Palmerston in 1836 dispatched a group of British officers to assist in the military reorganization of Turkey. The ranking men of this detachment were Lieutenant-Colonel Considine, of the Fifty-Third Regiment, and Captain Du Plat, of the Royal Engineers. They, and those under their command, were assured liberal pay by the British government so long as they were not given regular employment with the Sultan's forces. In fact the English foreign secretary was so enthusiastic about the undertaking that he promised to send as many additional officers as the Sultan might desire, or as Lieutenant-Colonel Considine might report "to be necessary for the service to be performed."²¹ The *kiahaya bey* (Turkish minister of the interior) seemed "much pleased" when Ponsonby explained to him the plans of the British military mission, and the *seraskier pasha* (Turkish minister of war) received Considine "with great civility" upon his ar-

²⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, "Secret and confidential," March 29, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/271. Memorandum for Chrzanowski, March 30, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/298. In 1837 and 1838 Chrzanowski presented the British foreign office with a series of memorandums upon the state of the Turkish army and the Sultan's means of resistance in a war with Russia. Cf. Chrzanowski's memorandums of September 13, November 8, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309. Memoranda of January 25, March 13, 20, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/348.

²¹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 21, April 28, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/271. The group of British officers who were dispatched to Turkey in 1836-37 included, in addition to Considine and Du Plat, Captains Cook and Campbell, R.A., Lieutenant Knowles and a noncommissioned officer of the Royal Artillery, two noncommissioned officers of sappers and miners, and one civil artificer whom it was "thought necessary to send to Constantinople in order to explain the British artillery system to the Turkish military Departments." Knowles and the noncommissioned officers conveyed to Turkey as presents for the Sultan "3 tons heavy [and] 21 tons light" arms, and a quantity of artillery, equipment, models, drawings, and instruments. Cf. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 75, August 31, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/272; memorandum on "arms and stores for Turkey and Persia," July 5, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/299.

rival at Constantinople.²² Nevertheless the venture was doomed to meet with very limited success.

Influenced perhaps by the Russians, who regarded the development of British influence in the Levant as a serious threat to the alliance of 1833 between the Sultan and the Tsar, the Turks delayed finding employment for Considine and his fellow-officers. In October, 1836, the *seraskier pasha* frankly informed the head of the British military mission that it was quite impossible for any Christian to hold command in the Turkish army. Thereupon, Considine, who was unwilling to be a mere "instructor" of the Sultan's soldiers, returned at once to Great Britain.²³ Palmerston, believing that the Porte could not be insensible to the great political advantages which would accrue to the Turkish Empire from a well-organized and well-disciplined army, directed Ponsonby to omit no effort in an endeavor to persuade the Ottoman ministers to agree to a plan whereby the British army officers would be invested with temporary authority in the Turkish service. Moreover, he persuaded Considine to go once more to Turkey to await the results of the negotiations in his behalf.²⁴ Again the Turks delayed action. During the summer of 1837, while the question of his employment remained in the balance, Considine made a tour of inspection through Asia Minor. What he saw there proved so discouraging that in a report which he sent to the foreign office after his return to the Turkish capital he declared he would be pleased to be relieved from the service of the military mission.²⁵ Hence he at least was not sorry to see the long-drawn-out negotiations about the employment of British officers in Turkey end (November, 1837) in a deadlock over the question of what authority should be conceded by the Porte to its foreign military advisers.²⁶

²² Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 77, June 2, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/275. Ponsonby to Palmerston No. 118, July 21, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/276.

²³ Considine to Ponsonby, October 11, 1836; Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 198, October 20, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/277.

²⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 6, February 4, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/300. Palmerston to Considine, No. 1, April 17, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309.

²⁵ Considine to Palmerston, No. 2, August 7, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309.

²⁶ Considine to Ponsonby, October 19, 26, November 6, 1837; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 272 and 283, November 7, 8, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/306. Considine to Backhouse, "Private," October 7, November 7, 1837, Considine to Palmerston, No. 3, November 7, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309.

During these negotiations for the employment of British officers, the Turks maintained that they had requested the dispatch of Considine's mission to Constantinople with the mistaken notion that the English system of military drill did not differ from the French system with which they were already familiar. They objected on principle to a change of tactics as well as to the concession of authority over the Sultan's troops to foreigners. What they desired was expert technical advice and not a change of system. Therefore, the services of the engineer Du Plat were more acceptable to them than those of his countrymen from other branches of the British military service. Like Considine, Du Plat was discouraged by the delays of the Porte, and on one occasion unsuccessfully sought Palmerston's permission to return to England. But eventually he was detailed to inspect and report upon a new Turkish naval college on the island of Khalki in the Greek Archipelago, and after that task had been completed to make a tour of inspection of the Turkish forts in the eastern part of the Balkans.²⁷ In fact when the negotiations for the employment of Considine's mission failed, the *seraskier pasha* requested that Du Plat remain in Turkey long enough to complete his surveys and to prepare reports upon Varna, Shumla, Silistria, Rustchuk, and the passes of the Balkan Mountains.²⁸

Du Plat revealed in his various reports a deplorable condition so far as the defenses of Turkey were concerned. In his report on the naval college he quoted the school's founder (a Spaniard named Garcia) as stating that there were only eight officers in the Turkish navy who could determine latitude by observations and calculations. According to Garcia, even these eight were obliged to content themselves with "dead-reckoning" to obtain an approximation to longitude. No nautical tables were published regularly in Turkey, and the Turks were so universally ignorant of European languages and figures that they were unable to use tables published in other countries. The

²⁷ Du Plat to Palmerston, February 17, 1837; Palmerston to Du Plat, March 20, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309. Palmerston to Vaughan, No. 13, March 25, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/308.

²⁸ Du Plat to Ponsonby, November 4, 1837; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 273 and 286, November 7, 13, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/306.

course of study at the college, Du Plat found, embraced only reading and writing, the first rules of arithmetic and geometry, a slight knowledge of logarithms, and “a kind of mechanical facility of computing some of the first problems in theoretical navigation.” All other sciences, and even drawing and languages, were totally neglected; nor did the school possess any globes, maps, charts, or instruments except such as were required to draw mathematical diagrams. The student body consisted of about two hundred pupils. Some thirty of these were receiving instruction in “navigation,” sixty or seventy were sufficiently advanced to be able to study geometry, and at least one hundred were only learning to read and write. In the junior class students ranged from eight or nine to almost thirty years of age. Nearly all of the pupils belonged to the laboring class of the Turkish population.²⁹ Du Plat’s reports on the forts of the Balkans revealed a similar state of unpreparedness in the land defenses of the Ottoman Empire. According to the British captain, even the new works of the Turkish engineers at Varna possessed “every defect” that a fortress could have, and those at Shumla, though much stronger than the old ones, had the “most glaring defects perceptible.”³⁰

Ponsonby, who did not support the British military mission to Turkey as effectively as Considine thought he should, knew well in advance of the mission’s failure that the prospects for reform in the Ottoman Empire were far from promising. “I fear,” he wrote to Palmerston, on November 29, 1836, “there are at work instruments too powerful for evil, to permit us to entertain much hope that any great improvement will be made here [at Constantinople].”³¹ Some months later he continued:

²⁹ Du Plat to Ponsonby, September 5, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/305.

³⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 12, January 8, 1838; Du Plat to Ponsonby, November 30, December 9, 14, 23, 1837, January 8, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329B. Copies of the reports on the Balkan fortifications which Du Plat presented to the Turkish government were inclosed with Ponsonby’s dispatch to Palmerston, No. 34, February 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329B. Apparently such reports as these did not discourage Palmerston. Cf. Bulwer, *op. cit.*, II, 286–87.

³¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 227, November 29, 1836; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/278.

I have . . . recommended to the Sultan . . . the propriety of sending young men to Malta and the Ionian Islands, to Gibraltar and to Würtemberg for military education, and I particularly dwelt upon the necessity for so educating a very considerable number of young men not only that His Highness might have enough to teach and form others, but that by the *number* of individuals so educated an efficient opposition might be made to the intrigues and power of the *uninstructed*. There is a natural and permanent league of blockheads against their intellectual superiors, and the few men in this country who have acquired knowledge sink under the power of the ignorant. It is absolutely necessary to increase the number of *taught* men to enable them to do any good.³²

Naturally Palmerston was disappointed with the outcome of Considine's mission to Turkey.³³ He had carefully instructed both Considine and Du Plat not to return to England without "express" permission from the foreign office, and he had been so interested in the improvement of the Sultan's defenses that he personally had outlined a detailed plan for the effective fortification of Varna.³⁴ When he learned of the final refusal of the Porte to grant authority to British officers in the Turkish service, he declared Great Britain had a "just cause of offense," ordered the return of decorations which the Ottoman government had given to members of Considine's party, and instructed Ponsonby to inform the Porte that if it wished to keep Du Plat in its

³² Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 206, September 7, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/305. On another occasion Ponsonby wrote: "I have laboured constantly to obtain employment for the British officers [Considine's mission], and am gratified to be able to hope that they will be employed; but I regret that I cannot flatter myself with the hope that any considerable good will ensue from it." Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 203, "Confidential," September 5, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/305.

³³ In 1838 when Considine left Turkey he was sent by Palmerston on a military mission to Tunis. The aim of this mission was to aid the local bey in the reorganization of his forces and thus to provide for the defense of Tunis against a possible French advance from Algiers. Although Considine was sent to Tunis upon the request of the Bey and remained there for more than a year he was not permitted to initiate any reforms of importance in the Tunisian army. Reade to Backhouse, "Confidential," January 13, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 102/3. Palmerston to Considine, Nos. 1, 5, 7, February 3, May 26, August 2, 1838; Considine to Palmerston, No. 7, "Confidential," September 30, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O., 102/4. Reade to Palmerston No. 10, "Confidential," August 5, 1839, *ibid.*, F.O. 102/5.

³⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby No. 79, "Confidential," September 6, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/300. Palmerston to Vaughan, No. 13, March 25, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/308. Palmerston to Considine, No. 1, April 17, 1837, *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309.

service it must defray part of his expenses.³⁵ However, the British foreign secretary did not abandon his policy for the rejuvenation of Turkey. Chrzanowski, who had given a good account of himself in Asia Minor, was promised a second sum of £1,000 from the British treasury to remain with his two companions another year in the Sultan's territory and was assured a bonus of £250 a year if he entered the permanent employ of the Porte. Furthermore, Palmerston issued to him letters of denization in order that the British ambassador at Constantinople might be justified in protecting the Polish officers if the Russians demanded their expulsion from the Ottoman Empire.³⁶

At the same time that Considine's mission was seeking employment at Constantinople, the Porte was actively making arrangements to engage a detachment of Prussian officers to join the famous Helmuth von Moltke, who was already in its employ. Palmerston was alarmed when he first learned of this move, and in a protest which he sent at once to Berlin, he appeared to be particularly disturbed because the Prussians were reported to have agreed to serve in Turkey without military titles, "in the same questionable manner" as Moltke had been serving since 1835. The British foreign secretary declared,

The subterfuge which appears to have been resorted to on this occasion to conceal the real character of these officers seems to be so dispar-

³⁵ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 126, December 8, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/300. Palmerston to Considine, No. 4, December 8, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/309. Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 37, February 12, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/328. Later in the year 1838, after the British government had reaffirmed its stand against the independence of Egypt, the Sultan proposed to confer "a decoration of honour" upon Palmerston, and also upon Backhouse, the British undersecretary of state for foreign affairs. Palmerston rejected the proposal explaining that the acceptance of such decorations was prohibited by the regulations of the British service. Cf. Palmerston to Reshid, December 18, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/347.

³⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, Nos. 84 and 85, "Secret and confidential," May 7, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/328. Ponsonby was enthusiastic about the ability of Chrzanowski to work with the Turks for the improvement of their army. In February, 1838, he explained that it was difficult to find men qualified to perform such work successfully. He was very sure it was not to be done by "good officers" unless they would allow ignorant men to claim and enjoy the praise to which they had no right. It was only due to Chrzanowski to say that he had done the work in so far as it was possible under the circumstances. At a later date Palmerston directed Ponsonby to consider Chrzanowski as one of his family, and to employ him in such a way as might appear best calculated to promote the interests of Her Majesty's government. Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 35, February 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329B; Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 189, September 29, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329A.

aging to them and so little consistent with the dignity of the Prussian government, that it necessarily tends to inspire suspicion that these officers are employed for purposes which the Prussian government is unwilling to avow; and in deference to a foreign impulse [from Russia] which, though unable to resist, it is reluctant to acknowledge.³⁷

The British representative at Constantinople was instructed to explain frankly to the Turkish government "the surprise and dissatisfaction" of the British cabinet "at finding that the Porte, after refusing the services of the military officers offered by Great Britain, should have recourse to other officers, who though coming from Berlin" could only be considered by Great Britain "as sent by the Russian government, and for purposes unfriendly to England and injurious to Turkey."³⁸ On another occasion Palmerston informed Ponsonby, "It would be desirable that Baron de Moltke should, if possible, be removed from his present employment in Turkey. I have accordingly to instruct Your Excellency to endeavour to effect his removal."³⁹ Such an instruction as this had been suggested by Ponsonby in one of his dispatches, and William Russell, the British ambassador at Berlin, had written that Moltke had gone to Constantinople "to seek his fortune," was "suspected of being in the pay of Russia," had "no military talents," and was "quite unworthy of the confidence of the Sultan."⁴⁰ Both Ponsonby and Russell, it is interesting to note, feared that Moltke could not be trusted, but they agreed that the other three Prussian officers in Turkey—Fisher, Vinck, and Muhlbach—were "highly independent and honourable" gentlemen who entertained opinions strongly opposed to Russian domination in the Near East.⁴¹ Calmed perhaps by such assurances as these in regard to the opinions of Fisher, Vinck, and Muhlbach—if not by the claim that Moltke had no military talents—the British minister eventually ceased to oppose the employment of Prussians in the Turkish military

³⁷ Palmerston to Russell, No. 43, May 11, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 64/209.

³⁸ Palmerston to Vaughan, No. 30, May 11, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/308.

³⁹ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 62, August 4, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/300.

⁴⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 138, July 4, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/304. Russell to Palmerston, No. 69, "Confidential," May 17, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 64/210.

⁴¹ Russell to Palmerston, No. 70, May 24, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 64/210. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 138, July 4, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/304.

service. In June, 1838, he approved "especially" of a recommendation which Ponsonby had made to the Porte favoring the continued employment of Prussian officers in preference to Frenchmen for the instruction of the Sultan's army. Whatever might be the disposition of the Prussian court and cabinet to defer to the will of the Tsar, it had been well ascertained, according to Palmerston's opinion, that among the officers of the Prussian army there existed a very general and decided jealousy of, and dislike for, Russia. There was good reason, therefore, to expect that Prussian officers employed in Turkey would "do their duty honestly to the Porte."⁴²

Encouraged by the concern which the British government had revealed in the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire, the Porte ventured in April, 1837, to propose an Anglo-Turkish understanding for the reduction of the power of Mehemet Ali within narrower limits than those which the Pasha had been enjoying under the terms of the settlement of 1833.⁴³ Of course, Palmerston, who had denied the right of Russia to interfere independently in Turkish affairs under the terms of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi and who had favored the preservation of peace in the Levant, could not consistently agree to such a proposal. He explained in reply that if the Sultan was manifestly strong enough to carry into execution any new determination which he might come to with regard to the provinces of which Mehemet Ali had been appointed governor, the British government "would be far from disputing" his right to do so. Indeed,

⁴² Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 121, June 6, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329A. Palmerston continued as follows in this dispatch: "Besides there is no point of contact between Prussia and Turkey, upon which the real interests of the two countries can well come into collision. On the other hand, there are so many existing and possible circumstances, which either do, or might set the interests or the views of France in opposition to those of Turkey, that there must necessarily be more uncertainty connected with the employment of French officers." Obviously, the British foreign secretary feared French aspirations in northern Africa and in Syria. Cf. particularly Palmerston to Granville, No. 178, November 1, 1836; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/518; Palmerston to Granville, No. 34, February 14, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/535; Palmerston to Granville, No. 261, October 10, 1837; Palmerston to Aston, No. 39, November 28, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/537; Palmerston to Granville, No. 72, February 9, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 27/555.

⁴³ Pertev to Ponsonby, April 5, 1837; Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 68, April 6, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/302.

it would look upon such a change "as an internal arrangement with which foreign Powers were not entitled to interfere." However, it was well known to all that the military and financial means of Turkey had been much impaired—so much so in reality that Mahmoud's ministers should not hope to exert immediately in Syria and in Egypt the full extent of authority which belonged to the sovereign of the state. "His Majesty's government," Palmerston emphasized,

cannot too strongly impress upon the Porte, that the only certain way of restoring the Turkish Empire to that position of strength and security, which it is so desirable for its own interests and those of Europe that it should occupy, is, in the first place, to spare no pains to improve the internal organization of the provinces, to encourage productive industry, and to protect commerce; and thus by increasing the wealth of the population, and by diffusing prosperity more widely throughout the land, to increase the public revenues of the state.

In the next place, to apply those revenues in paying and organizing an efficient army and navy, and in putting into a good state of repair the fortifications which at present defend those approaches by sea and by land, by which it is likely that Turkey might be attacked; and in erecting additional works in places which are now inadequately defended. But it is on the Bosphorus and towards the Black Sea that such additional fortifications are required, and not towards the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean.⁴⁴

Refusing to be discouraged in the development of his policy for the rejuvenation of Turkey in 1838, after all hope for the Porte's employment of Considine's detachment of British officers had been abandoned and after Du Plat even had returned to Great Britain, Palmerston turned his attention to the improvement of the Sultan's fleet. Undoubtedly he was encouraged to make this move by the reports which he received from Ponsonby. On February 10, 1838, the ambassador declared that a British naval officer who had seen the Ottoman and French fleets together at sea considered the former to be nearly as good as the

⁴⁴ Palmerston to Vaughan No. 29, May 11, 1837; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/308. Six days before this dispatch was written Palmerston seemed particularly disturbed because it had been reported that the Porte intended to strengthen the defenses of the Dardanelles, but not those of the Bosphorus. Cf. Palmerston to Vaughan, No. 25, May 5, 1837, *ibid.*, F.O. 78/308.

latter.⁴⁵ Ponsonby further stated on this occasion that he had been anxious to induce the Sultan to take into his service a sufficient number of steamers to be used in case of need to tow line-of-battle ships towards “the mouth of the Bosphorus” where it was presumed they might be so placed as to render the passage of a Russian fleet impossible.⁴⁶ Twelve days later the British representative at Constantinople reported that he knew that the Turks were contemplating a request that British naval officers be sent to instruct the Ottoman maritime forces, and he enthusiastically proclaimed that “a Turkish fleet capable to cope with Russia in the Black Sea would be worth its weight in gold.”⁴⁷ Again in March, 1838, Ponsonby wrote that the Sultan had been advised to apply to Great Britain for naval officers.⁴⁸ Finally in May of the same year the British ambassador to Turkey stated that the *reis effendi*, Reshid Pasha, had assured him such an application would be made through the Sultan’s ambassador at London.⁴⁹ Thus encouraged, Palmerston instructed Ponsonby to suggest to the *reis effendi* that the Porte should send a detachment of its fleet to cruise for “some months” with the British squadron in the Mediterranean. The presence of British ships, the British foreign secretary believed, would serve as a guaranty to France and to Mehemet Ali that the Turkish commander had no hostile intentions against them in Algiers or in Egypt and Syria, as they had professed to believe he had when he put to sea on certain earlier occasions, “but came only for exercise and instruction, and yet . . . the union which such an arrangement would evince between Turkey and England might have a moral effect useful to the Sultan in more quarters than one.”⁵⁰ The Porte agreed at once to Palmerston’s suggestion.

⁴⁵ This opinion appears amusing, indeed, in comparison with Du Plat’s report of September 5, 1837, upon the Turkish naval college of Khalki.

⁴⁶ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 35, February 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329B.

⁴⁷ Ponsonby to Palmerston, “Private,” February 22, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/330.

⁴⁸ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 65, March 13, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/330.

⁴⁹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 119, “Confidential,” May 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/331.

⁵⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 146, July 25, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329A. F.O. to Admiralty, August 3, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/349. Palmerston explained as fol-

Accordingly, in September, 1838, a Turkish fleet under the *capitan pasha* joined the British squadron of Admiral Stopford for a combined cruise in the eastern Mediterranean. The flag of the *capitan pasha* and that of the British admiral remained united for seven weeks, after which period the Sultan's vessels were escorted back toward Constantinople, as far as the island of Tenedos, by five British warships.⁵¹ Stopford's reports upon the cruise indicate that the maneuvers of the Turkish ships not only pleased him but also reflected "very great credit" upon the Ottoman commander and his officers.⁵²

While plans were being developed for this experiment in the Levant the Porte carried on its negotiations, through the Turkish ambassador at London, for the dispatch of a British naval mission to Constantinople.⁵³ The matter remained under consideration until December, 1838, when at last it was agreed (at least Palmerston thought it was agreed) that four British naval officers—Captain Walker, Commanders Legard and Massie, and Lieutenant Foote—should enter the Sultan's service.⁵⁴

The four officers arrived at Constantinople in March, 1839, but they then, like their countrymen of Considine's mission two years earlier, found the Turkish authorities unwilling to concede the authority which they considered necessary to enable them effectively to introduce reforms in the Ottoman service.

lows to the admiralty why he had proposed a combined cruise of the British and Turkish fleets in the Levant: "First, that the Turkish fleet should by cruising in company with the English fleet, improve in discipline and skill; secondly, that a personal communication and interchange of civility between the officers of the two squadrons should cement and improve the good understanding between the two countries; and thirdly, that the junction of the two fleets should present to other parties a symbol of the alliance between England and Turkey." Cf. F.O. to Admiralty, September 20, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/350.

⁵¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 234, November 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/333.

⁵² Stopford to Ponsonby, September 22, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/332. Stopford to Wood, October 26, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/350.

⁵³ Ahmed Fethi to Palmerston, August 23, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/347.

⁵⁴ Palmerston to Ahmed Fethi, August 27, 1838; Sarim to Palmerston, October 26, 1838; Palmerston to Reshid, December 10, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/347. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 244, November 21, 1838; F.O. 78/333. F.O. to Admiralty, November 22, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/350. Palmerston to Ponsonby, "Separate," December 15, 1838; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/329A.

Despite Ponsonby's efforts in their behalf, the Porte failed to employ any of the four except Walker, and he had to be content with a position as "*adviser* to the Capitan Pasha." The policy of the Sultan, Ponsonby explained, was to steer between parties and carefully to avoid giving dissatisfaction to Russia, at least so long as Mahmoud had no absolute assurance that Great Britain would "effectively support him if he should offend the Emperor Nicholas."⁵⁵ Certainly by 1839 the British government had proved in no uncertain way that it sincerely wished to further the rejuvenation of Turkey; but the Sultan, aroused by Mehemet Ali's move during the previous year to obtain the consent of the great powers for a declaration of his independence, was resolved upon war and wished an assurance of support in all contingencies. In other words, on the eve of a renewal of the struggle with Mehemet Ali for the control of Syria, Mahmoud desired something of a more practical immediate value than the assistance of a few naval experts.

Palmerston, who had not changed his views since 1833 as to the necessity of peace in the Levant for the attainment of Turkish rejuvenation, refused to promise aid to the Porte in an aggressive war even though the *reis effendi*, Reshid, appeared in London on a special mission to plead for the negotiation of a treaty of offensive alliance.⁵⁶ In fact, when a rumor of the Porte's warlike intentions against the Pasha of Egypt reached the British capital early in 1839, Palmerston promptly instructed Ponsonby in a ciphered dispatch to impress strongly upon the Sultan that while on the one hand Great Britain "would undoubtedly assist him to repel any attack on the part of Mehemet Ali, it would, on the other hand, be a different question if the war was begun by the Sultan."⁵⁷

Palmerston's persistent championing of peace in the Levant

⁵⁵ Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 60, 66, and 87, March 11, 17, April 6, 1839, Walker to Ponsonby, March 12, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/355.

⁵⁶ Early in 1839 Palmerston proposed a treaty of defensive alliance to the Ottoman government. A copy of this treaty, which the Turks rejected, is to be found in *ibid.*, F.O. 78/355, and is quoted in *Parliamentary Papers* (1841), Vol. XXIX, *Correspondence relative to the Levant*, I, 13-15.

⁵⁷ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 38, "Cypher," March 15, 1839; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/352.

might have led the Sultan to reconsider his rash resolution to attack the Pasha of Egypt if Mahmoud had not been encouraged by the vacillation of Ponsonby. Ponsonby was willing to "beg the Sublime Porte to weigh most deliberately its decisions and to make prudence and caution its guides," but he objected strongly to the use of language which might lead the Turks to think Great Britain would under any circumstances abandon their cause.⁵⁸ In 1835 he had not followed literally instructions of Palmerston to urge the Sultan to refrain from an attack upon his powerful vassal in Egypt. A strict following of those instructions, the ambassador feared, would destroy the influence he had "laboured so hard to gain" and would restore "the old suspicions of the Porte" that the British were in league with Mehemet Ali. After this danger of war had passed, Ponsonby admitted that he had neglected to obey his orders literally, but he asserted that he had indirectly attained the ends desired by his superior.⁵⁹ Apparently, in 1839 the British ambassador at Constantinople evaded even more directly instructions of which he did not approve. Although he received Palmerston's ciphered dispatch on April 8, he delayed action in its execution until May 9. Then he wrote to Palmerston briefly as follows: "It was found impossible to decypher Your Lordship's Instruction No. 38, which was received here by Vienna Post on the 8th ultimo."⁶⁰ Indeed not until May 19, after a duplicate of the ciphered dispatch had arrived at the Turkish capital, did Ponsonby report that he had communicated its substance to the *reis effendi*. Even at that late date, his communication of the dispatch must have been sorrowfully lacking in force, for the Porte promptly announced that it had resolved upon war, and at the same time it made advances to Ponsonby for British aid. Moreover, Ponsonby in his reports upon these developments argued eloquently in defense of the Sultan's cause.⁶¹ He maintained that the move

⁵⁸ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 88, April 6, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/355

⁵⁹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 230, December 29, 1835, *ibid.*, F.O. 78/256.

⁶⁰ Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 110, May 9, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/356. Cf. also Ponsonby to Palmerston, April 9, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/355.

⁶¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, Nos. 120 and 122, May 20, 22, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/356. Cf. also F. S. Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question in the Relations of*

which Mehemet Ali had made for independence in 1838 was universally considered to be a demand for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In a war the Sultan's army might be defeated by the Pasha, but such a defeat would be less calamitous to British interests than a partition of the Empire effected without British concurrence. Great Britain might repair the mischief which a defeat would occasion, "but the slow, silent and perpetual action of universal discord inherent in the partition of the Empire" would defy her wisdom and baffle her "power to resist and remedy."⁶²

Palmerston, one may venture to think, must have entertained grave doubts upon the validity of Ponsonby's story about the ciphered instructions. At any rate, in August, 1839, after he knew that his instructions of March 15 were obsolete, he wrote to the ambassador:

Upon receiving Your Lordship's dispatch No. 110 stating that it was found impossible to decypher my instruction No. 38, I enquired whether it was the fault of the person who put the letter into cypher or of the person who tried to decypher it.

To ascertain this it was necessary to refer to the cyphered dispatch, and, an application for it having been privately made to Mr. Bankhead [the secretary of embassy], it was received from Constantinople a few days ago. The dispatch has been found to be correctly cyphered, and to be in cypher A which was sent to Constantinople in 1831, and which appears by a letter from Mr. Bankhead to the Under Secretary of State to be now in the Embassy.

If your Excellency had referred to my dispatch to Sir Stratford Canning No. 7, of the 12th of November 1831, in which cypher A was

England, France, and Russia, 1832-1841 (Urbana, Ill., 1924), pp. 85-86. The *reis effendi* had virtually admitted to Ponsonby almost a month earlier that the Porte had decided for war. Cf. Nouri to Ponsonby, April 28, 1839; Public Record Office MSS, F.O. 78/356.

⁶² Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 131, May 27, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/356. After the Turks had been defeated at Nezib in June, 1839, Ponsonby had Chrzanowski draw up a report upon the battle and in a comment upon this report declared: "The indecision of Sultan Mahmoud as to the attack to be made in Syria, and the delay mentioned as disastrous by the writer [Chrzanowski], and which appears to have occasioned the failure of Mahmoud's projects, are things not justly attributed by the writer to that Sultan; they were occasioned mainly if not wholly by the exertions made by the Great Powers to force the Sultan to preserve what has been called the 'status quo.'" Cf. Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 183, July 20, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/357.

transmitted, you would have found enclosed therein full instructions for the use of that cypher. But it is certainly extraordinary that Mr. Bankhead, even without reference to those instructions, should have failed in decyphering the dispatch, since it appears upon referring to Mr. Bankhead's dispatches while chargé d'affaires at Washington in the year 1836, that Mr. Bankhead made use of Cypher A, in the same manner in which it was used in my dispatch above mentioned.

I now return to Your Excellency the cyphered dispatch No. 38, in order that Mr. Bankhead may try again to decypher it.⁶³

In conclusion, it may be stated that in 1839 Palmerston's plan to preserve peace in the Levant and to direct the attention of the Porte exclusively to questions of reform failed. During the period between 1833 and 1839 numerous experiments had been undertaken by the British secretary of foreign affairs to promote his favorite plan for the rejuvenation of Turkey. If the results of those experiments are to be classed as discouraging, it should be remembered that the difficulties which had to be overcome to enable such a program to succeed at that time were very formidable. It remains to be seen what was to be accomplished in the attainment of the same object during a period of civil war in the Ottoman Empire, when rivalries between the great powers were intensified and when the whole of Europe was threatened with the development of a first-rate international crisis.

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⁶³ Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 116, August 15, 1839; *ibid.*, F.O. 78/353.