
SIDELIGHT ON THE EGYPTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CRETAN QUESTION

1866 — 1867

by

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In the middle of 1866, the revolution broke out in the island of Crete against the Ottoman rule. This took place when the Cretans presented a petition to the Sultan asking for the reduction of taxes and customs, repairing roads, the improvement of ports, building schools, the establishment of an agricultural bank and the observance of religious tolerance and personal freedom⁽¹⁾. Waiting for the Sultan's reply, they started to arouse troubles and disturbances in the different parts of the island in support of their demands.

Yet, the real reason of the revolution can be retraced generally to the Cretan's hope of acquiring complete independence⁽²⁾ in 1831 as a result of the intervention of the European Powers, Britain, France and Russia. Therefore, the Cretans seized the opportunities to renounce their allegiance to the Porte, and to create a state of disorder which would ultimately lead to similar intervention of the European Powers such as had happened in the question of Greece⁽³⁾.

The rebels were encouraged to follow this way by the intervention of the European Powers on their part, and also of some Italian societies such as the Garibaldi group, following the unification of the policy of both Italy and Bismarck over the Eastern Question. This united policy aimed at partitioning the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the Cretans began to increase their demands, relying on the support of Greece⁽⁴⁾. Moreover, the conduct of the Russian Consul-General and his contacts which the Cretans played an important rôle in the inflaming the revolution⁽⁵⁾.

(1) Douin, *Hist. du Règne du Khedive Ismail*, vol. I, p. 352.

(2) Mahfaza 281 Abdin, A note presented from the Cretan rebels to the European Consul-General, Muharram 1283.

(3) Mahfaza 281 'Abdin, *Shahin King (Commander of the Egyptian forces) te Mahr dar al-Khedeivi* 19 Rabi 'Awal 1283 (1 Aug. 1866).

(4) Mahfaza 281 A note from the rebels to the Consuls, Muharram 1283.

(5) Mahfaza 281 Abdin, Abstract from *Le Monde*, Muharram 1283.

Khedive Isma'il of Egypt (1863 — 1879) intimated that the cause of the revolution was the Ottoman maladministration of the island and not the religious persecution⁽¹⁾. However, we must treat Isma'il's view with caution because we cannot refute the existence of religious persecution among the Christian inhabitants of the island. This seems clear in a report presented by Shahin King, the Commander of the Egyptian expedition in Crete, to the Wali of Egypt, stating that the Christians of the island had gathered in their churches and swore « not to keep any secret with the Muslims and not to become sincere in their obedience, even if this will lead to their entire annihilation ⁽²⁾ ».

There were also a number of reasons which conduced the spread out of the revolution. The number of the Ottoman soldiers was small and they were lately recruited into the service. They were inexperienced and their pay was put in arrears. Accordingly, these soldiers became the laughing-stock of the Cretans who showed their contempt of them as well ⁽³⁾.

In addition, the lack of money forced the Commander of the Ottoman garrison in the island to refuse to pay the value of rations provided to the Ottoman soldiers by the Cretan contractors. This aroused the anger of the island's merchants.

During the negotiations which took place between Sultan 'Abdül 'Aziz and Isma'il concerning the ferman of succession, the Sultan asked Isma'il to provide him with some military detachments in order to send to Crete. Isma'il was compelled to accept in accordance with the stipulations of the fermans. He expressed this feeling in a note sent to the Commander of his forces in Crete by saying that « the truth is that we did not want our troops to be where they are today and Europe is involved in her affairs and the Ottoman Empire is in a disturbed state. But what can be done and the question of succession had obliged us to do so⁽⁴⁾ ». This means that Isma'il intended, by offering this military help, to get the ferman which would realize his wish in the succession of the Egyptian throne.

(1) Mahfaza 281 'Abdin. Shahin King to Mahr dar al-Khidivi, 19 Rabi 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(2) Letter-book 24 'Abdin. Ismail Selim to al-Janab al-Ali, 24 Muharram 1283 (Jan. 1866).

(3) Mahfaza 281 'Abdin. Shahin King to Mahr dar al-Khedivi, 29 Rabi I, 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(4) Mahfaza 281 'Abdin. Ismail to Shahin King (unofficial note), 19 Rabi I, 1283.

But the sending of this military assistance made a bad reaction in both the French and British circles. The French Foreign Minister told Nubar Pacha that Egypt's assistance to the Porte would lead her to political entanglements, and that wisdom would impose on the Wali of Egypt to seize the first chance to withdraw his forces from these parts without causing any harm to the Sultan⁽¹⁾. The British government also did not welcome Isma'il's step. Disraeli, British Foreign Secretary, commented on that by saying that « Turkey was not attacked, and she was not threatened by the danger of war so that Egypt hastens to send her military help⁽²⁾ ».

But Isma'il's attempt to annex Crete to Egypt was the most important matter concealed behind his assistance to suppress the Cretan revolt. In the instructions sent to Shahin King, the Commander of the Egyptian forces in Crete, there is a clear evidence of Isma'il's desire to subject Crete to his rule through attracting the hearts of the Cretans by financial assistance and good treatment. He hoped to achieve this dream as had happened under Muhammad Ali from 1832 to 1840, when the inhabitants enjoyed a period of peace and silence.

As soon as Zygomelus, the Greek Consul-General in Egypt, knew of sending the expedition, he hastened to meet Isma'il on 24 July 1866 to know why Isma'il took action. Isma'il informed him that he could not refuse to help the Sultan, but he, at the same time, instructed the Commander of the Egyptian troops in Crete to respect churches, not to expose the inhabitants to any harm, to investigate the causes of the revolution and to submit them to the government of the island⁽³⁾.

Then the Consul-General tried to learn something about Isma'il's policy towards the question of Crete by telling him The Ottoman Porte spends on this island more than its revenues. « Is it not wise that the (Ottoman) Porte should relinquish the island and grant it independence since the Cretan question began to acquire a paramount political importance? What is your opinion about this matter⁽⁴⁾ ».

Isma'il replied that « the revenues of the island are few and its expenditure is too much, and the present circumstances require the Sublime Porte to keep a big military force there and to endure such

(1) Douin, *Hist. du Règne ...*, vol. I, p. 352.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Politis, *Un projet d'Alliance*, p. 20.

(4) Letter-book 24 Abdin. Doc. no. 88, a private message from the Khedive to Kapu Katkhuda, 22 Rabi II, 1283.

expenditure now. This problem would re-open the Eastern Question and the Sublime Porte would not accept this. This is my opinion⁽¹⁾ ».

At the end of the conversation, the Consul-General referred directly to his aim and told Isma'il « I learned that the inhabitants of the island wish to be connected with the Egyptian administration. If they were granted this demand, there will be no existence for the Cretan question, or re-opening the Eastern Question⁽²⁾ ».

Isma'il cunningly tried to dismiss such idea from the mind of the Greek Consul-General by saying : « true, the expenditure of the island exceed its revenues, and the state of the island necessitates that a big military force should be retained there, and this increases its expenditure. Egypt's share of this expenditure would naturally be in accordance with her ability. That the Ottoman Porte would not ask Egypt for anything she cannot afford⁽³⁾ ».

Autrey, the French Consul-General in Egypt, informed Isma'il that the made a great mistake by interfering in the external political problems of the Ottoman Empire. That the financial and human sacrifices would weaken Egypt and could not strengthen the Sublime Porte⁽⁴⁾. The policy, which France aimed at achieving, was to make Egypt a strong country and independent of the Sublime Porte in order to balance between her influence in Egypt and the increasing British influence in Constantinople.

Now, we can divide Isma'il's policy towards the Cretan question into two periods. The first one starts from the landing of the Egyptian troops in Crete, and includes Isma'il's many attempts in the different directions to annex Crete to Egypt's rule. The second one immediately begins the victory of the Egyptian troops over the rebels and the revenge for its military honour in the second battle of Abi Qurün. This happened when Isma'il began to realize the impossibility of achieving his project because of the negative attitude of France whom he reckoned on her support to achieve this project. Consequently, he made his utmost to withdraw his troops from the island and to get rid of this problem which cost Egypt money and human beings.

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Douin, *Hist. du Règne*, I, p. 354.

The First Period :

On, 25 July, 1866, Isma' il sent his troops to Crete under the Command of Shahin King, who was provided with certain instructions to attract the inhabitants towards Egypt by different means. Once he settled down in Crete, Shahin visited the Consul-General of the European Powers, the Muslim and Christian notables, the ulema and priests, and also the mosques, churches, hospitals and the poor jews. He gave charity to the poor people from every religion in order to establish good relation with the inhabitants (1). Shahin also received in his camp the Consuls-General and the notables, who came to repay his visit (2).

Perhaps this policy, adopted by Shahin, suited the current circumstances at that time in Crete because, « the Egyptian and Turkish troops present in the island were not enough to punish and suldue the rebels(3). ».

Isma' il great interest in the island's affairs indicated his desire of annexing Crete to Egypt. He sent to Shahin King, the Commander of his forces, a secret note stating down some important questions which occurred to his mind, and to which he tried to find a satisfactory answer in order to adjust his future policy in the light of his information. He wanted Shahin to write him in details about the origin of this question, the causes which persuaded the inhabitants to revolt against the Ottoman government. Moreover, he wanted to know what is in the rebel's minds, their objects, and the former and present treatment of the Muslims and the Christians, supporters and opponents by the Ottoman government. He also tried to know the measures by which the Ottoman government would deal with this problem. He ordered Shahin to make sure of the existence of foreign intervention in this revolution, whether it was religious ? What did it intend to ? Was there an enmity between the Muslims and Christians that required such struggle ? What was the opinion of the Muslim and Christian inhabitants of the island in the government of Egypt, especially the view of the opponents ? (4)

That is to say that Isma' il not only sent Shahin King to undertake the necessary military operations to suppress the revolution within

(1) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit. no. 44, Autrey to Min. des Aff. Etr. Alex. 27 Aout, 1866

(2) Mahfaza 281 Abdin. Shahin King to Mahr dar al-Khedivi, 19 Rabi I. 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(3) Mahfaza 281 Abdin. Khedivi to Shabin King (unofficial note), 15 Rabi I. 1283 (28 July 1866).

(4) Ibid.

the limits of his ability as an officer, but his mission also had a political bearing more than a military one.

If we throw sufficient light on this secret note ⁽¹⁾ from Isma'il to Shahin King, we perceive the policy he had adopted towards this question, and which express his view point in the first period. He said « What is known to you is that, whatever our policy coincides with the Ottoman policy, the geographical position of our country obliges us that our policy should be compatible with what the circumstances require. Since we are certain of your good administration and experience, we did not see any necessity to send private instructions concerning this, but we explain to you what is in our minds of matters that should be thoughtfully looked at.

« Those Istanbulians (Turks) are odd and eccentric. Therefore, they will not hesitate, when they enter the war against their opponents, to hit, kill and torture the captives among the officials, soldiers and notables and priests of the island, accusing them of being from their Christian opponents. They wrongly believe that they are doing good, and it is likely that they would ask you to execute these horrible things.

« If they do so, refuse their orders by finding out some excuses. You can tell them that the task we are asked to do is to send the soldiers to fight when necessary, and try to show your sorrow in the name of humanity, for the victims of war from both sides. We cannot kill, destroy or torture the captives. They might not ask you to do so at once, but they will deliberately take your opinion first. Then avoid this and say our interference or expressing an opinion is beyond our official capacities, and let them do what they are doing. Beware of agreeing or taking part with them.

« You must also pay attention to prevent inhumane actions from our soldiers such as torturing the prisoners of war because of blind zeal and insulting what is holy and respected in their religion and traditions ».

To achieve the policy which Isma'il had adopted, the Egyptian troops were not incorporated with the Ottoman troops under one command. The Egyptians encamped near the Ottomans and pretended that the consolidation of the two forces would cause instability in the military administration because the Egyptian soldiers did not know the Turkish language. The Turkish troops did not know the Arabic

(1) *Ibid.*

language either⁽¹⁾. Therefore, every attempt to consolidate the two forces had temporarily failed, although the Ottoman government was very keen on uniting them so that the Egyptian troops could not take a certain action which would endanger Ottoman interests in the island.

The Egyptian troops, under the Command of Shahin, encamped in the Abi Qurun rejoin, which was the strongest-hold of the rebels. The troops easily reached this situation as a result of the flexibility of Shahin's policy since he had arrived in Crete. But this policy did not last longer. While the Egyptian side treated the inhabitants kindly, the Turkish side behaved exactly the reverse⁽²⁾. So, the Egyptian Commander found it difficult to maintain his peaceful attitude for a long period. He hoped that the situation would continue for a month or two till winter came, when the rebels would recourse to tranquility and stillness. The reason was the difficulty of providing them with provisions and ammunitions, and of seeking refuge on the summit of mountains at that time of the year⁽³⁾.

Because the Egyptian and Ottoman troops adopted a contrary policy to each other towards the Cretans, the latter used to come to the Commander of the Egyptian forces to complain of the maltreatment of the Ottoman soldiers⁽⁴⁾. Furthermore, the Commander got into favour with the rebels. He communicated with them and negotiated their subordination to the Khedive of Egypt, for this would protect them from the Ottoman Wali of the island and from the Ottoman Sultan⁽⁵⁾.

The French Consul-General in Egypt did not overlook this policy. He explained to his government that the attitude of the Egyptian troops could not help the Sultan to reach a settlement for this question⁽⁶⁾.

Khedive Isma'il asked the French Consul-General to explain to him his government's point of view about this question, and showed his readiness to adopt it. But the French Consul-General was cautious and skillfully apologized that he did not have any information from his government concerning this subject⁽⁷⁾.

(1) Mahfaza 281 Abdin. Shahin King to Mahr dar al-Khidivi, 19 Rabi I, 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(2) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit. No. 44, Autrey to Min. des Aff. Etr., Alex. 27 Aout 1866.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Mahfaza 281 Abdin. Report from Shahin King to Mahradar al-Khidivi. 29 Rabi I, 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(5) Ibid.

(6) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit. No. 45, Autrey to Min. des Aff. Etr., Alex., 8 Sept. 1866.

(7) Ibid.

We find that Cretan rebels understood the differences between the two points of view, of the Egyptian and Ottoman troops. So they attempted to exploit the situation in their favour. They besieged the Egyptian troops in the Abi Qurun area, when the Sultan declared his refusal of their demands. They took the Egyptians by surprise and inflicted some losses upon them, at the same time when the Egyptian Commander still believed in what the rebels had pretended that would not fire a shot against the Egyptian soldiers (1).

At the same time (Aug. 1866), Isma'il began to prepare at the Sublime Porte, by different means, for the annexation of Crete to his rule. He sent inaccurate report to the Sultan on the affairs of the island and pretended that it was based on thorough investigation. He started the report by the reasons of the revolution, and stated that religious persecution had nothing to do with it, but the real reason was the mal-treatment of the inhabitants by the Ottoman Officials and soldiers. He tried to justify this by referring to the good treatment which the Egyptian soldiers received from the inhabitants wherever they went. He also referred to the smallness of the Ottoman garrison in the island, its military inexperience and the insufficiency of the provisions owing to the lack of money. The Egyptian soldiers were in a much better position.

He talked in his report about the appointment of His Highness Mustafa Naili as the Sultan's plenipotentiary, who was commissioned to solve the question of Crete. He opposed this unsuccessful appointment of such man, because, as Isma'il said, he was a former Wali of the island, who was reputed for his maladministration.

Isma'il cunningly added that the Ottoman Empire is mistaken to believe that the Cretan revolt « is due to their desire to overthrow Ottoman subordination and to unite with Greece. But this is not the truth (2) ». To justify this, he informed the Sultan that the rebel leaders had acquainted Shahin King of their desire to remain under Ottoman supremacy. But because of the official's mal-treatment « they presented a petition to the Sultan in which they hoped that the island would be interfere in this subject.

Trying to deceive the Sublime Porte, the Viceroy of Egypt said that « by mentioning this incident, he did not wish to annex the Island to the Egyptian administration because the Egyptian Treasury could

(1) Letter-book 24 Abdin. Doc. No. 88, Khedive to Kapu Katkhuda (Kamel Bey), 15 Rabi II, 1283 (Aug. 1866).

(2) Ibid.

not afford to keep his forces, composing of four regiments, in Manascur and the island permanently. The total of the island's revenues did exceed 26,000 purses, and about 6,000 of them are not permanent revenues. But the annual expenditure of the military administration amounts to 46,000 purses. It requires according to the Egyptian administration procedure to 30,000 purses.

Therefore, the Egyptian Government would be obliged to spend on the island 40,000 purses or more annually in addition to the latter's revenues. This was an addition to the enormous troubles which Egypt would face. Therefore any attempt to annex it is an unwise step⁽¹⁾ ».

If we thoroughly consider this report, we find that the Viceroy of Egypt tried at the beginning of his report to dismiss from the Porte's mind that the revolution was owing to the religious intolerance, because this belief does not serve his aim of annexing the Island. If the Island's inhabitants refused the supremacy of the Muslim Ottoman Sultan, they did not wish to be annexed to the administration of the Egyptian Viceroy of Egypt either.

The incorrect information given about the Ottoman forces in the Island was deliberately made. The Viceroy knew that the number of the Ottoman forces in the Island exceeds the Egyptian forces. Moreover, they were not in that bad state as illustrated by the Viceroy.

He objected to the appointment of Mostafa Naili as a plenipotentiary to solve the Island's problem because of his activities and long experience of the Island's affairs. He also knew of the Viceroy's intention to annex the Island and attempted to prevent the realization of this aim, as will be seen later on.

The Viceroy refused in his report to the annexation of the island to Egyptian rule by a twisting way. He mentioned this at the request of the revolutionary leaders, but he showed his repugnance because the administration of the island required material sacrifices which the Egyptian Treasury could not bear. The Viceroy's assumption was not right. At the same time he sent his report to the Porte he despatched another contracting⁽²⁾ report to Hassan Rasem (Khedival representative at Istanbul) informing him of the contents of the first report. He drew his attention to the passage stating that he did not wish to annex the island because of the financial burden. He did so to conceal his wish from the officials of the Ottoman Court, « who », he said, « if they

(1) Ibid.

(2) File 24 Abdin. Doc. no. 91 order from the Khedive to Hassan Rasem in 25 Rabi II 1283 (Sept. 1866).

know would extract our money, and that is why we wrote officially showing our undesirability⁽¹⁾ ».

Towards the manoeuvres of the Ottoman Government, the revolutionary leaders met in Sfakia on 2 Sept. 1866 and decided to declare the annexation of the island and its independencies to Greece⁽²⁾. They supported this decision by attacking the Egyptian forces in Abi Qurun on 5 Sept. 1866, and besieged them. The number of the revolutionaries amounted to about 15,000.

When the Egyptian authorities in Egypt knew this, they prepared, within 48 hours, 6000 soldiers⁽³⁾, which sailed under the command of the Minister of War Lieutenant-General Ismail Selim to lift the siege. He was ordered not to pursue the rebels or commit actions contrary to the policy laid by him to annex the island⁽⁴⁾.

A meanwhile, he asked his Foreign Minister to report the developments of the situation to the British and French consuls-general. The Egyptian Foreign Minister told the French Consul General of the Viceroy's wish to have France's help, whether by maintaining his position in the island or by an honourable evacuation⁽⁵⁾. The French Consul General did not express his opinion because he did not know his government's point of view⁽⁶⁾.

The Egyptian troops managed to lift the siege after seven days, as they had provisions for two days only since the beginning of the siege⁽⁷⁾. Many were killed from both sides. The rebels families on the top of the mountains, had suffered a lot⁽⁸⁾.

It seems that the defeat of the Egyptian troops at Abi Qurun had an effect on the Viceroy. It badly affected the reputation of the Egyptian troops, and weakened the Viceroy's claim of his ability to govern the island. So, he sent new instructions to Hassan Rasem, his representative at Constantinople, to stop talking with the Grand-Vizir

(1) Ibid.

(2) Aff. Etrang. Corr. Polit. teleg. Donnières au Ministre, Constantinople. 17 Sept. 1866.

(3) Aff. Etrang. Corr. Polit. La Valette à Moustières, Paris 14 Sept. 1866.

(4) Aff. Corr. Polit. Ann III de la dépêche du 27 Sept. 1866.

(5) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit. teleg. Chif. Le Consul de France au Miistre Alex 13 Sept. 1866.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Aff. Etr. Polit. Ann. à la dépêche d'Alex. du 27 Sept. 1866.

(8) Ibid.

about the annexation of Crete, because of the unsuitable circumstances. He advised him to follow his saying that « things realize in its paper time ⁽¹⁾ ».

When general Ismail Salim, Minister of War, arrived at Crete he studied the military conditions of the island and included this in a report sent to the Viceroy. The result of his report was the dismissal of Shahin, the commander of the Egyptian troops in the island, because of his carelessness ⁽²⁾. General Ismail Salim replaced him as commander of the forces. « It was rumoured among the Egyptian officers that the reason of this change was the Ottoman Commander's complaint of Shahin's interference with the rebels in matters affecting the rights of the State ⁽³⁾ ».

It seems that Ismail dismissed Shahin because of his mismanagement which led to the defeat, and the failure of his policy towards the rebels, and to satisfy the Porte who suspected his actions. He appointed Salim in his place in order to execute the policy he planned individuals but did not touch the policy.

Mustafa Naili, the Ottoman Plenipotentiary, found that the military necessities forced him to collect the scattered troops in the island in one place and under one command ⁽⁴⁾. This would enable him to take a positive action in the suitable time if it was necessary, and to avoid the existence of two commands. His aim was to put the Egyptian troops under strict control ⁽⁵⁾, and to get rid of the policy of inflexibility and rapprochement which had been followed towards the rebels since the arrival of these troops in the island. The attitude of Constantinople which, Naili had to execute was « not to praise the Egyptian troops, and not ask them to do any work which would draw the satisfaction of the world, but to mix them, little by little, with the Sultan's troops so that they would not enjoy an independent existence ».

The new Egyptian Commander, Ismail Salim, probably agreed to unite the two military forces (Ottoman and Egyptian) lest he should

(1) File 24 Abdin. Doc. no. 133, from the Khedve to H. Rasem, on 15 Jamada I, 1283 (Sept. 1866).

(2) Aff. Etr. Corr. polit. Autrey au Ministre, Annex à la dépêche No. 52 du 9 Oct. 1866. Lettre de Mostapha Pacha en date du 1er Djamad Awal 1283.

(3) Ismail Sarhank, Haqaiq al-Akhbar, vol. 2, p. 296.

(4) Aff. Etr. Corr. polit. Ann. à la dépêche No. 52 du 9 Oct. 1866. Lettre de

(5) File 281 Abdin, from Ismail Sallm to the Porte, Dajam. II 1283 (Oct. 1866). Mostapha Pacha, 1er Doj 1283.

undertake an unsuccessful military operation, as what had happened to Shahin, the former Commander. On the other hand, the situation in the island required the co-operation of two forces to ensure their security. But this action greatly angered the Viceroy because this did coincide with his policy towards the question of Crete. So he sent a letter to rebuke his commander and told him « did you think it was possible to make this fact clear to the people if the Egyptian and Ottoman troops mixed and fought together, and as if the Egyptian troops won the battle ? Was it possible to make the people believe this ? On the contrary they would consider the existence of non-existence of the Egyptian troops the same, and attribute to the Ottoman troops the whole work. They would declare this to the people and publish it in the papers and would the people believe this even his Highness the Sultan. They used different tricks to prevent the independence of the Egyptian troops, and not to raise the esteem of the Egyptian troops in the eyes of the world. How did you approve the incorporation of the Egyptian with the Ottoman troops ? How did you agree to distribute Egypt's troops at numerous and distant spots ? How did you accept the employment of Egypt's troops under the Command of Ottoman officers ? If I had ordered you to work in accordance with Mustafa Naili's instructions, I did not ask you to be involved to the extent that the Ottoman would attribute pride to themselves and accusations to the Egyptian troops. Our aim to provide you with that great number of soldiers and munitions was to regain the military honour lost at Abi-Qurun. But the Ottoman-Egyptian joint advance did not remove this disgrace at the above mentioned battle⁽¹⁾ ».

It is clear that the Viceroy wanted the Egyptian troops to crush the rebels alone, because the victory of the two united forces would not be interpreted in Egypt's favour. This exactly happened. It was said that because of the participation of the Ottoman troops, the Egyptian troops would have never acquired victory over the rebels at the second battle of Abi-Qurun and Arcadi. This what the Viceroy had wanted to avoid but he could not.

He thought that the incorporation of the two military forces was the result of the Sultan's perception of Ismail's wish to annex the island. Furthermore, the Egyptian troops would not remain independent of the Ottoman troops⁽²⁾.

(1) File, 281 Abdin. From His Highness to Minister of War at Crete dated Dijam. I, 1283 (Sept. 1866).

(2) Douin, *Hist. du Règne ...* vol. I, p. 371.

Ismail's retaliated to this action taken by Mustafa Naili, the Ottoman Plenipotentiary by appointing his private guard as the general inspector of Egyptian troops in Crete ⁽¹⁾. In a matter of fact, his principal task was to watch the actions ⁽²⁾. As a matter of fact, his tive and to convey them to the Viceroy to oppose or suspend them in the suitable time.

The Viceroy threatened to withdraw his forces from the island if they remained under the command of Turkish officers. This would destroy the status of the Egyptian troops and would involve him in an unacceptable actions to him. This would perhaps cause him international problems. He tried to know the opinion of the French government about this matter before deciding the withdrawal operation, because he was keen on France's support of his policy towards the island.

The policy of the British government concerning the question of Crete was, in fact, a part of the British policy towards the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern question. This policy, which had been followed for three-quarter of the 19th C., aimed at the preservation of the intergrity of the Ottoman Empire. The British government did not attempt to change this policy except when he realized that his interests necessitated this. This was at the begining of the last twenty five years of that century. Britain tried, as possible as she could, to maintain the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean for the realization of her interests.

For this, she did not approve the annexation of the island to Greece. She found that Greece would not be able to grant the island a better rule than she had inside Greece itself. She was of opinion that the island should remain under Ottoman rule on condition that action ought to be taken to eliminate the causes of complaint in a way that would secure the rights of the christian inhabitants.

Although Britain was sure of Egypt's capability to run the affairs of the island much better than the Ottomans, she saw that Ismail was to a great extent under French influence. She could not wish to see French influence extended to the island as well, particularly it was situated on her sea-route to India.

Although French attitude towards the Ottoman Empire was similar, to a great extent, to Britain's attitude concerning the preserva-

(1) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit. No. 52, Autrey au Ministre. Alex. 9 Oct. 1866.

(2) Douin, Hist. du Règne ... vol. I, p. 372.

tion of the integrity of the Ottoman 'Empire and standing against Russian ambitions and the maintenance of the treaty of Paris of 1866, France tended to encourage Ismail and to grant him a greater measure of Independence under Ottoman supremacy. That she adopted the policy of creating a strong young nation in the eastern Mediterranean over which she would practice a greater influence. She adopted this in order to make a sort of balance between her influence in Egypt and the dominating British influence at Constantinople.

Ismail saw that the annexation of the island to his rule had two obstacles. The first was the Porte's opposition, but this could be overcome by paying money (by corruption). The second was Britain's opposition, which represented an insurmountable obstacle which could not be overcome except by French support. Autrey, the French consul-general in Egypt advised his government to put an end to Ismail's illusions as soon as possible if she did not wish to help to achieve his project. But if it was of her opinion to support Ismail's projects, Ismail would, undoubtedly, be grateful France, and this action would encourage him to continue his Francophile policy, such policy which he had adopted in the last days. This would be of greater help to French policy and interests in Egypt.

As a matter of fact, the French government could not support the Viceroy of Egypt to annex the island in front of British opposition. Moreover both Russia and Greece could not view this action favourably, particularly Russia who had considered this area of the Mediterranean as an important axis in the Russian policy⁽¹⁾. This policy was based on creating troubles and obstacles to Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Furthermore, France considered that the annexation of the island to Egypt would be a loss to her, because of what she would spend to reform the affairs of the Island⁽²⁾.

Finally, Britain and France saw, in order to maintain the peace and the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean, to advise the Sublime Porte to comply with Ismail's request to grant him the title of Khedive so that he might not withdraw his forces from Crete while the Ottoman Empire needed them very badly⁽³⁾.

Pretending that he would achieve his requests by force, Ismail began to strengthen the fortifications surrounding Alexandria⁽⁴⁾.

(1) Dossier de 1866. Lettre de Nubar, de Paris, en date du Sept. 1866.

(2) Douin, Hist. du Règne ... vol. I, p. 386.

(3) Dossier de 1866. Lettre de Nubar, de Paris, en date du 18 Dec. 1866.

(4) File 40 Turkish Maiyya. Doc. No. 5 from D. Fahmy to Maiyya Saniyya dated 3 Rajab 1283 (Nov. 1866).

Egypt and Greece get closer.

Greece tried to exploit the strained relations between the Porte and Egypt by getting closer to her and establishing and with her against the Porte. Zygomalas the Greek Consul-general met Ismail on 19th January 1867 and advised him to withdraw his forces from the Island because of his financial and human losses. He warned him from committing the same error of his grandfather Muhammad Ali and what had happened to him in the battle of Navarin. He explained to him that world opinion sided with Greece who would intervene in favour of Crete. He also warned him against relying on the British and French governments because both of them had interests in Egypt, and that Ismail could benefit from the rivalry between the two governments by not joining, any of them and trying to find another ally. By this, he meant Greece.

Although Ismail had no wish to make an alliance with Greece, he did not close the door against this attempt. He used it as a means to force the Sublime Porte to grant him the title of Khedive.

At this time, Ismail ordered the Commander of his forces in the island to take a negative attitude, and to pretend that he was ill so that he might not take part in military battles. He added, « if Egypt had sacrificed that great number of soldiers and money, she did so for her own benefit and not for the sake of the people of Istanbul whom I could not wish to spend one para for their sake⁽¹⁾ ».

The Second Period.

When Ismail found it difficult to dissuade Britain from her opposition, and that no benefit could be gained from French support, Ismail turned to exploit the critical position of the Ottoman troops in the island by acquiring more privileges. He also decided to withdraw his forces from the island immediately after their victory over the rebels in a decisive battle to efface their defeat at the battle of Abi Qurun. So this time his aim was not to suppress the revolution or to annex the island, but to eliminate the consequences of defeat, and then to effect an honourable withdrawal.

Egyptian troops joined Ottoman forces under the command of Mustafa al-Kiritly, the Turkish Commander, and succeeded to capture

(1) File 281 Abdin, From His Highness to Nazir al-Jahadiyya in Crete dated 21 Jamada I, 1283 (Oct. 1866)

the rebel headquarters such as Lakkos, Trisso and Drocona, and managed to capture the area if Abi Qurun and inflict heavy losses on the enemy. By this victory, the Egyptian troops regained their military reputation which had been affected by the previous defeat. Again, this victory was supported by another one by Ottoman and Egyptian forces over Arcadi, the largest fortress in the island ⁽¹⁾.

The victory prepared the way before Ismail to withdraw his forces from the island, without any opposition from the British and French governments. Both governments had apprehended the results of this withdrawal before the affairs of the island could be settled.

At the beginning of 1867, Ismail began to worry. The question of Crete had not been solved yet. He could neither annex the island to his rule, nor withdraw his forces from it. This seems clear in his letter sent to the commander of his forces in Crete. He said « we offered great financial and human sacrifices to serve the Empire, and we are still offering it. But we could not see the result of this. They withheld the slight privileges which had been promised by His Highness. When we wanted to increase the number of our forces, they suspected us, and said we fear that you could use it against us. Then, what benefit can we get from them ? So we must withdraw our forces and turn to what concerns us ⁽²⁾ ».

Yet Ismail could not completely lose hope, particularly the French government did not take a decisive attitude about this subject. She neither supported it openly nor stated to him clearly that she could not help him in respect of the opposition of the British government.

When the French government found herself in a critical position as a result of Ismail's continuous request for advice, and because she was unable to support Ismail's policy, the French Foreign Minister advised Nubar Pacha that « Egypt must withdraw her troops from Crete without telling anyone, and do not interfere in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire ». This solution, which France had suggested, was a way-out for Ismail. Ismail resorted to this solution to reduce his forces in the island secretly before the Porte would approve on their return to Egypt.

Ismail could not dare to reduce his forces openly. This was not because of his fear of the Porte's fury, but because this action might

(1) File 281 Abdin, from Ismail Salim to the Porte, 13 Rajab 1283 (21 Nov. 1866)

(2) Aff. Etr. Corr. Polit., Le Ministre à Autrey, Paris, 13 Mars 1867.

make it difficult for him to get his privileges⁽¹⁾. He did not urge the Porte to approve the withdrawal of his forces because of this reason as well. Waiting for the solution of the question of Crete and the Porte's compliance with the Egyptian demands, Ismail sent secret orders to the commander of his forces in Crete to seize, as long as possible, the opportunity of his illness. This would enable him to be neutral and not to take part in the current affairs of the island⁽²⁾.

Nubar Pacha tried during his presence at Constantinople in March 1867 to get the Porte's action for the withdrawal of the Egyptian troops from Crete in return for Egypt's help to suppress the revolt of Prince of Asir⁽³⁾. But Ismail did not approve to raise this new question before acquiring the title of Khedive and other privileges from the Porte⁽⁴⁾. Ismail only sent a letter to the Prince of Asir threatening to send an Egyptian military force against him if he did not declare his obedience to the Sultan.

When the French consul general knew of Ismail's orders to his commander in Crete, he advised him to wait so that he might not cause new troubles for the European Powers and damages for the Ottoman Sultan.

Ismail became increasingly perplexed during the few months which preceded the issue of the Ferman of 8 June 1867 (granting him the title of Khedive) because he wanted to rid himself of the question of Crete as soon as possible when he realized the impossibility of its annexation to Egypt's rule. He sent to consult Nubar at Constantinople whether it was appropriate to declare his intention of withdrawing his troops and reach an understanding with the European Powers about this subject and to sign a treaty with the Russian government, or to continue his negotiations with the Ottomans.

Until that time, the Greek government still had some hope about the possibility of concluding an alliance with Egypt. But Ismail could not deare to ally himself with Greece or to conclude a treaty with Russia, because such action would expose the Near East to danger. Both Britain and France wanted to avoid such danger.

(1) File 24 Abdin. Doc. No. 394 From His Highness to H. Rasem dated 21 Shawal 1283 (Feb. 1867).

(2) Dossier 1867, teleg. No. 27 du Vice-Roi à Nubar à Constantinople daté du Caire. Le 25 Avril, 1867.

(3) File 24 Abdin, Doc. No. 261 From His Highness to Nubar, dated 19 Dhul Aada 1283 (Mar. 1866).

(4) Ibid.

Moreover, Ismail was not sincere in his communications with the Greek Consul, but he wished to use these communications to urge the Porte to comply with his requests. So he remained perplexed and could not limit the direction he ought to follow because he was waiting for the result of negotiations with the Porte, Ismail had a sincere wish to have this problem, between him and the Sultan, solved by friendly means.

The news pointed at the Porte's refusal to grant the privileges for which Ismail had applied. This news had a bad effect on him. In his passion, he sent a telegram on 17 May 1867 to Nubar at Constantinople asking him to return, and to notify the Ottoman government that the Ottoman troops would be summoned from Crete.

He also asked him to convey this news to the ambassadors of the European Powers. On the second day he sent a telegram asking him to threaten the Ottoman government only and not to inform the ambassadors of the great powers.

But news was soon circulated that the Porte intended to satisfy Ismail. This news had calmed him down.

At this time, Ismail followed the policy of delusion in dealing with the question of Crete. While he urged the Egyptian troops to satisfy the Porte, he helped a large number of soldiers to escape to Egypt. When some soldiers caught disease in the island, he seized the opportunity and sent secret instruction to Dr. Salem at Crete urging him to send soldiers in small number to Egypt. Thus it was possible to reduce the number of troops to the minimum lit under the pretention of disease⁽¹⁾.

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE EGYPTIAN FORCES FROM CRETE

After Ismail had obtained the Firman of 8th June 1867 which granted him the title of Khedive and authorized him to introduce laws and ordinances of regulations for the Egyptian administration, and to conclude customs agreements as well, Ottoman Egyptian relation improved. Ismail began to endeavour at the imperial court to get the Porte's approval for the withdrawal of the Egyptian troops from Crete.

(1) File 281 Abdin, From Riyad to Dr. Salem, dated 9 Muharram 1284 (May 1867).

The deterioration of Anglo-Abyssinian relations and the insistence of the British government to send a punitive expedition against Abyssinia across Egypt, led the Egyptian government to take the necessary measures by posting sufficient military forces on the frontiers between Egypt and Abyssinia to protect her from aggression.

At the beginning of October 1867 the Ottoman government approved the Khedive's request of withdrawing the Egyptian troops from Crete, and most of them were immediately sent to the Abyssinian frontiers⁽¹⁾. Thus the curtain was drawn on the subject of Crete. Ismail's failure to extend his influence northwards was an essential reason to direct his activities southwards to reach the centre of the African continent and to control the Nile basin, from its source to its mouth.

In short Khedive Ismail responded to the Porte's request to help him in Crete for three reasons :

First : That Ismail was forced - according to the Firman of 1841 to offer the Porte military if it requested him to do so, because the Egyptian army was considered as a part of the Ottoman army.

Second : That Ismail's policy towards the Sublime Porte aimed at getting more privileges from the Ottoman Empire, for the achievement of antonomous rule. He tried to get it, not by war but peaceful means, and by offering military help to the Sultan, and to help the Powers particularly Britain and France. The result of helping the Powers was the European intervention and the British occupation at the end.

Thirdly : Ismail was tempted to annex the island to his rule as a price of his help to the Porte, as what happened in the time of his grandfather Muhammad Ali. To achieve thus he followed the policy of drawing the inhabitants of Greece to Egypt side to encourage them to claim for the annexation of the island to Egypt. At the same time he tried to convince the Porte to annex Crete to his rule as a solution of this problem, and as a reward for his services. He particularly relied on France's support for the achievement of this aim.

When Ismail's policy towards the rebels failed after they attacked his forces in the battle of Abi-Qurun, the curtain, was drawn on the political side for some time, and he took strong measures to eliminate

(1) Ibid.

this defeat. When he failed to convince the Porte, Ismail pretended that he could use force, and threatened to withdraw his forces from the island, in the hope of benefitting from new measures. But he failed because of British and French intervention.

Thus his policy towards France was not more successful than his policy towards the Porte. France, for some time, kept on showing her sympathy for his hopes, and not wish to present him with the fact so that she might not destroy his hopes. France did not want Ismail to draw away from the orbit of the French policy. France took a negative position, and the reason, she had given, was that the international situation was not clear at that time. Finally Ismail realized that France could not help him to achieve this project because of Britain's opposition. This result would affect Ismail's policy in future about offering help to the Porte. He would exploit this military assistance to acquire a wide range of privileges. Ismail would succeed, to a great extent, to execute that policy to the degree that Egypt became a the end of his reign an autonomous country.
