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THE FRENCH CONQUEST OF ALGIERS

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Summary

The article is an attempt to present and discuss – based on the struggle against Barbary pirates and corsairs waged in the Mediterranean Sea – dynamic and complex political and economic processes as well as diplomatic efforts that contributed to the French conquest of Algiers in 1830. The first three decades of the 19th century were among the most turbulent periods in the history of the French nation. Defeated and humiliated by the enemy coalition in 1815, France did not give up on her “imperial dream”, this time trying to make it come true in a non-distant Maghreb. The way to achieve this goal was, however, quite bumpy. At that time, the western part of the Mediterranean Sea was an arena of competition, mainly between the United States and Great Britain. After all, this turned out to be very favourable to France. Wishing to introduce an extra element into the game, eliminate rivals for overseas supremacy, as well as win Russia – that was gradually strengthening her influence in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea – as an ally, at the end of the 1820’s Great Britain became an advocate of her neighbour across the English Channel. Gradually regaining her economic potential and international importance, France reached for Algiers by entering the armed conflict. However, the French stronghold in Maghreb would soon pose a major challenge to the British colonialism in Africa. Expressing their major concern over the security of so-called “imperial route” leading via the Mediterranean sea, British politicians and statesmen adopted a new political stance

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toward the declining Ottoman Empire. Owing to their “independence and integrity” doctrine (formulated in 1830’s), the rich Ottoman heritage managed to “survive” by the outbreak of World War II.

Once the wars of the Napoleonic era had come to an end, superpowers – particularly western Europe and Great Britain – did not involve much in the matters of the Middle East. The old continent was recovering after the violent conflict, while Great Britain faced serious internal social and economic problems.¹ Initiated in 1798 by the French invasion of Egypt, the crisis was gradually becoming less severe in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. However, the emerging political situation did not entail the dawn of peaceful era in this region. In fact, already during the war with Napoleonic France, and particularly once it was over, in the west part of the above mentioned sea a new hotbed of international conflict emerged and began to escalate. The conflict that would soon lead to serious political and economic consequences.

Shortly after the outbreak of war with republican France, British authorities introduced modifications into the international law of the sea announced at the beginning of the seven-year war (1756). The law, also known as The Rule, was enacted against hostile countries and their allies, and allowed to search merchant ships and confiscate American goods on their way to the states belonging to European coalition.² American maritime trade suffered major losses due to these restrictions. These were even more severe since the government headed by William Pitt the Younger appropriated the law also referred to as impressment on the strength of which the Royal Navy vessels – while searching the ships – had the right to impress British soldiers who served in the U.S. merchant marine. In order

¹ See Z.S. Zalewski: *Wpływ wewnętrznych przeobrażeń gospodarczych i społecznych na rozwój Imperium Brytyjskiego w XIX w.* [Effect of internal economic and social transformation on the rise of the British Empire in the 19th century], in: *Echa Przeszłości* [Echoes of the Past] ed. W. Gieszczyński, vol. X, Olsztyn 2009, p. 113, passim.

² See *The Rule of 1756*, in: C.J. Colombos: *The International Law of the Sea*, Forth Revised Edition, London 1961, pp. 613–614; The aforementioned doctrine was formulated in the 17th century when, after naval warfare with Holland, Great Britain abandoned a mediaeval principle known as *Consolato del Mare* and followed a ruthless French theory of “becoming infected” (la théorie de l’infection) according to which a ship or a cargo travelling from a neutral country became “infected” the moment they had any contact with a ship or a cargo travelling from a country at war, and in line with the 17th century principle of the contraband of war, the Royal Navy reserved the right to confiscate such a cargo, sometimes together with the ship. See R. Bierzanek: *Morze otwarte ze stanowiska prawa międzynarodowego* [The Open Sea and the International Law], Warszawa 1960, pp. 34–35.

to prevent that from happening, the Americans began to direct merchant ships traffic through the Straits of Gibraltar toward French ports located on the Mediterranean coast. However, these routes were not safe either. It was in this part of the world that merchants had for ages dealt with a great plague of Barbary pirates.

It can be assumed that, mainly for economic reasons, the United States were the first country which in modern history took planned and successful actions against the widespread plague of buccaneers in the western part of the Mediterranean sea. Throughout the period 1801–1804, they waged the so-called First Barbary War during which on the order of Thomas Jefferson the U.S. navy undertook a number of military operations, mainly against Hamet Caramanly Paşa, the Dey of Tripoli.³ After a series of dramatic battles and several blockades on the port of Tripoli, representatives of both parties entered negotiations, following which on 23 February the so-called Eaton-Hamet convention was ratified. Soon, on 4 July 1805, the USA signed peace and friendship treaty with Hamet Caramanly Paşa.⁴

In 1975, agreement was reached with the Ottoman governor of Algeria who was a principal and patron of corsairs and pirates active on the Algerian coast. On the strength of this agreement, the U.S. government undertook to pay annual tribute to the dangerous satrap which was supposed to strengthen the security of American maritime commerce. However, as the war with the fourth Napoleonic coalition (1806–1807) escalated, Great Britain intensified her anti-American action in the Atlantic. As a result, since 1807 Americans paid small amounts of money to Hadzi ‘Ali ben Khrelil Paşa (1809–1815) and after the American-British war outburst in 1812 they stopped paying at all.⁵ In 1810, the irritated Ottoman governor declared war on the United States, thus giving free hand to corsairs and pirates who very soon nearly completely pushed the American trade shipping to the east, but also west of Gibraltar, i.e. in a non-distant Atlantic.⁶

In September 1812, Algerian corsairs hijacked a small American brig together with an eleven-man crew.⁷ Needless to say, this act of violence outraged the

³ See S.P. Waldo: *The Life and Character of Stephen Decatur: Late Commodore and Post-captain in the Navy of the United States, and the Navy Commissioner*, Hartford 1821, p. 65.

⁴ See “War” and Peace: *The United States and the Garrison of Tripoli*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics. A Documentary Record. European Expansion, 1535–1914*, vol. I, ed. J.C. Hurewitz, New Haven–London, Yale University Press 1975, pp. 157–161.

⁵ Ottoman governors of Algeria were addressed: Paşa (1517–1700), Dey (1700–1718) and Paşa-Dey between 1718 and 1830. They were also addressed Beylerbeys, i.e. Bey of Beys.

⁶ See *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 202.

⁷ See *ibidem*.

American society. Therefore, shortly after signing peace treaty with Great Britain in Ghent (24 December 1814) and once military actions had finally been over (13 February 1815), on 5th March Congress passed the act on launching punitive expedition against Algiers.

In the second half of May, two strong squadrons of the U.S. navy, under the command of two Commodores Stephen Decatur and William Bainbridge, left the U.S. coast and headed for the Mediterranean Sea. The first squadron raised anchor on 20 May in New York, whereas the other left Boston shortly after.⁸

On 14 June, a nine-warship squadron under Decatur's command went through the Straits of Gibraltar.⁹ Three days later, near the Spanish coast (to be more specific Cabo di Gata) the Americans came across the main squadron of Algerian fleet. *USS Constellation* attacked *Meshuda*, a flagship frigate, and pushed it under the fire of *USS Guerriere*. After two gun salvos, the enemy vessel attempted to escape but was cut off by the fire of *USS Epervier* and eventually had to surrender. In this battle, Admiral Rais Hammidu, under whose command Algerian squadron took military actions, and 30 seamen were killed, while 406 became prisoners of war.¹⁰ On 19 June, *Estedio*, a brig equipped with 22 guns, was conquered. Several days later, on 28 June, commodore Decatur's warships casted their anchors in the roadstead of Algiers, blocking it completely from the sea.¹¹

On 30 June, representatives of Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa (1815–1817), Algiers harbour master and Swedish consul came onboard of the flagship *USS Guerriere*. Peace treaty, the content of which was beforehand accepted by both parties, was signed by the Dey of Algiers the same day and the American party, represented by American consul William Shaler and commodore Stephen Decatur, concluded the document on 3 July. Under clause 1 of the treaty, the American navy and merchant marine regained their freedom in the western part of the Mediterranean sea. According to clause 2, both parties agreed to annul the obligation assumed by the USA to pay annual tribute to the governors of Algiers.¹²

⁸ See *The Navy*, ed. W.J. Holland, Washington 2000, p. 27; *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., pp. 156–161, 202.

⁹ The squander comprised of: three frigates (*flagship USS Guerriere*, *USS Macedonian*, *USS Constellation*), two sloops of war (*USS Ontario*, *USS Epervier*) and four schooners (*USS Flambeau*, *USS Spark*, *USS Spitfire*, *USS Torch*). See S.P. Waldo: op. cit., p. 274.

¹⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 275; W.M. Fowler Jr.: *We Have Met the Enemy and They Are Ours; 1775–1815*, in: *The Navy...*, op. cit., p. 27.

¹¹ See S.P. Waldo: op. cit., p. 276.

¹² See *The Treaty of Peace, 30 June and 3 July 1815*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 203 f.

The peace treaty did not, however, bring about the expected results. Unfortunately, both versions went missing on its way through the Atlantic to Washington to be ratified by Congress. Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa, on whose stance the British had a profound influence, considered this an act of American dishonesty, nearly dishonour, and used it as an excuse for breaking the agreement signed at the end of June and the beginning of July. Subsequently, he demanded that the treaty of 1795, favourable to Algiers, was reintroduced.¹³ The Barbary corsairs and pirates were again given the right to plunder merchant ships. Having accepted the Algerian challenge, the command of the U.S. navy decided to join forces, i.e. Stephen Decatur's and William Bainbridge's squadrons, and under the command of the latter formed a strong Mediterranean Squadron comprising of 18 warships the guns of which were supposed to make it possible again to sail safely in Barbary waters.

At the same time, the concentration of the U.S. naval forces near Gibraltar caused unrest in London. Since 1757 (i.e. after Robert Clive's victory over Sirāj-ud-Dawlah's troops under Palāshi in west Bengal and once the British Parliament had passed India Act in 1784) Great Britain began to develop on Indian subcontinent a leading economic centre for her overseas empire and a solid military base to defend the centre.¹⁴ For the sake of her imperial ambitions, it was also then that the so-called British "imperial route", leading through the Straits of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and Aden toward India and the Far East, was "under construction". Therefore, since the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries every sign of hostile activity near this route caused a big stir and concern in London. This time it was no different. Lord Liverpool's¹⁵ government responded to the challenge presented by the Americans.

In spring 1816, a strong team under the command of the Admiral of British Mediterranean Fleet, Lord Exmouth,¹⁶ reached major ports on the Barbary coast. Revealing the military power of Royal Navy was to make the Ottoman governors in Tunis, Tripoli and most of all Algiers conduct negotiations with Great Britain,

¹³ See Ömar Paşa to President James Madison, 24 April 1816, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁴ *The Swing to the East*, in: V.T. Harlow: *The Foundation of the Second British Empire. Discovery and Revolution*, vol. I, London–New York–Toronto 1952, p. 63, passim.

¹⁵ Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool. British prime minister in the years 1812–1827.

¹⁶ Edward Pellew (1757–1853), Baron Exmouth, after the victory over Algiers upgraded to become 1st Viscount Exmouth.

and make it evident for the Americans that the British empire dominated in this part of the globe.

Shortly after, the heads of the semi-countries under discussion were given a written ultimatum in which the British Admiral demanded, among other things: *that each corsair garrison concluded a separate treaty with Great Britain, (...), and governors of Tunis and Tripoli signed a declaration on the strength of which Christians taken hostages for ransom by pirates or corsairs shall be released.*¹⁷ The most powerful, Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa, asked the British Admiral to extend the deadline they had for specifying how much time they needed to make consultations with a suzerain in Constantinople – sultan Mahmud II.¹⁸ The Englishman agreed and returned to London.

Soon, however, new circumstances emerged and speeded up the sequence of events that were about to happen. To be more specific, Algerian Arabs revoked permit for coral divers in the bay near Bône city (Annaba) they had granted to the British and brutally attacked Italian and Corsican divers.¹⁹ The horrifying and bloody incident outraged London and was used by the British government as an excuse to crush the governors of Ottoman provinces in Maghreb. Anti-Barbary “crusade” launched by Lord Liverpool’s government was joined by Holland.

Commanding a strong nineteen-warship Royal Navy squadron, Admiral Lord Exmouth headed for the Mediterranean sea again.²⁰ Near Gibraltar, the British fleet was joined by a small Dutch squadron under the command of Vice-admiral Theodorus Frederik van Capellen. The naval forces sailed toward the Barbary coast and soon floated at anchor in the roadstead of the port of Algiers. After an unsuccessful attempt to take British consul and his family on board of the Royal Navy vessel, on 27 August 1816 Admiral Lord Exmouth, under whose command the joined forces took action, sent Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa another ultimatum, this time in a very firm tone. If the conditions presented in the ultimatum were not met, the Englishman threatened to destroy the enemy fleet, storehouses on

¹⁷ PRO, *British and Foreign State Papers* 3, pp. 509–516.

¹⁸ See *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 209.

¹⁹ See *ibidem*.

²⁰ The squadron under the command of Rear-Admiral Exmouth comprised of 19 vessels: 6 liners (*HMS Queen Charlotte*, *HMS Albion*, *HMS Impregnable*, *HMS Superb*, *HMS Minden* and *HMS Leander*), 4 frigates (*HMS Granicus*, *HMS Glasgow*, *HMS Hebrus* and *HMS Severn*), 5 sloops of war (*HMS Britomart*, *HMS Mutine*, *HMS Heron*, *HMS Prometheus* and *HMS Cordelia*) and 4 gunboats (*HMS Belzebub*, *HMS Hecla*, *HMS Fury* and *HMS Infernal*) See C.H. Gifford: *History of the Wars Occasioned by the French Revolution, from the Commencement of Hostilities in 1792, to the End of 1816 (...)*, vol. II, London 1817 p. 1713.

the coast, arsenal and fortress units.²¹ Furthermore, the document specified how the hostile party was to show its agreement or disagreement with the ultimatum. If the former was the case, a salvo of three Algerian guns was to be fired three up to four hours after receiving the document.²²

By noon, no salvo could be heard. Seeing that the ultimatum was rejected, at 2:30 p.m. Admiral Lord Exmouth ordered the British and Dutch vessels to form a battle array. Twenty minutes later all crews headed slowly for the port and fortifications in Algiers. Having approached the land so close so that the gun fire could reach the warships, the crews began to lower the upper sail when all of a sudden fortress guns fired. Several minutes after 3 p.m. the British and Dutch responded by firing their guns and battered Algerian action stations.²³ During a nine-hour battle lasting till midnight, the coalition fleet destroyed 33 out of 37 corsair ships moored at the port and half of guns located in the forts on the coast.²⁴

On the following day, defeated Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa signed three vitally important documents, namely peace treaty with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, peace treaty with Great Britain, and Declaration on the Abolition of Christian Slavery. The treaty with Great Britain provided for: *from, now on an absolute and inviolable peace will reign between His Majesty the King of Great Britain and the Kingdom (sic!) of Algeria (...)*²⁵. *The parties to the treaty have agreed that (...) ships as well as citizens and subjects representing the parties shall not harm each other, more specifically they shall not attack each other both in words and in deeds, but shall have deep respect and genuine sympathy for each other.*²⁶

As a signatory of the Declaration on the Abolition of Christian Slavery, Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa had to immediately release the Europeans kidnapped for ransom. In a report sent on 24 September 1806 to the Board of Admiralty, Admiral Lord Exmouth wrote that 1083 persons were set free in Algiers, the only exception were two Spanish men, a merchant and vice-consul who had to remain imprisoned by the time they paid back their debts.²⁷

²¹ See *Admiral Lord Exmouth's Second Ultimatum to the Dey of Algiers*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 210.

²² See *ibidem*.

²³ See C.H. Gifford: op. cit., p. 1720.

²⁴ See *ibidem*; *Admiral Lord Exmouth's Second...*, op. cit., p. 210.

²⁵ *Treaty of Peace: Great Britain and Algiers, 28 August 1816*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 210.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 210–211.

²⁷ See *Admiral Lord Exmouth's Final Report to the Admiralty, 24 September 1816*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., s. 212.

Consequences following from a spectacular military victory of Great Britain in the so-called Second Barbary War can be analyzed in several dimensions. First and foremost, the British Empire assumed greater authority among Christian countries which for centuries (by 1816) suffered major economic losses and moral damage from the Barbary pirates.²⁸ Moreover, the coerced treaties eliminated the main reason behind the American military intervention and consequently made the presence of the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean Sea completely unnecessary. Analyzing the events in the context of the then European and global politics, it is beyond doubt that defeating the rulers of Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli provided Great Britain with enormous benefits but, at the same time, posed increasingly difficult challenges to her. Although the British Empire had strengthened her political and military position on the “imperial route”, her successes aroused growing suspicion from the authorities in Vienna, Petersburg, Berlin, Paris and Constantinople. British political circles were perfectly aware of this and therefore had decided to follow the old Tudor doctrine, also known as balance of power in Europe, even more consistently. In fact, a chance of doing so would soon come their way.

On 20 November 1818, Austria, Russia, Prussia and Great Britain, participants in the “Concert of Europe” formed during the Congress of Vienna, addressed issues relating to the occupation of defeated Napoleonic France in the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle.²⁹ However, their attention was attracted by another thing of major importance. They knew that, defeated by British, Ömar ben Muhammad Paşa and particularly his successors, namely Ali IV Paşa (1817), Muhammad VI ben Ali Paşa (1817), Ali V ben Ahmed Paşa (1817–1818) and Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa (1818–1830), would attempt to re-build the corsair power of their country disregarding the peace treaties signed. Shipwrecks, drown during the battle of 27 August 1816, were removed from the fairways, four warships were

²⁸ Christian slavery had been the case with Islamic countries since the 12th century. To save the oppressed, Jan de Matha formed the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of the Captives six years after the 3rd crusade. Pope Innocent III granted the Order his approval with a papal bull *Operante divine dispositionis*. The Order was particularly active in the Orient and North Africa. Over the centuries, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian Trinitarians, also referred to as Redemptorists, ransomed thousands of their compatriots from Turkish and Arab captivity. See Z.S. Zalewski: *Lwowskiego Zakonu Przenajświętszej Trójcy dzieło redempcji Polaków z niewoli tureckiej w końcu XVII w.* [Lvov Order of the Most Holy Trinity Act of Releasing the Poles from Turkish Captivity at the End of the 17th Century], in: *Echa Przeszłości* [Echoes of the Past], ed. W. Gieszczyński, vol. XI, Olsztyn 2010, p. 114.

²⁹ Aix-la-Chapelle is a French name. Akwizgran is a historical name, nowadays German name Aachen is used. Town situated in Rhineland-Palatinate.

bought and several more were under construction, funds were raised and yet, regardless of the treaty provisions, corsairs and pirates did not give up on their dirty business.³⁰

Algeria was an issue raised providently in Aix-la-Chapelle by British diplomats who, in accordance with the aforementioned Tudor doctrine, had become the advocates of France and made serious attempts to help her re-attain a strong position in Europe. As a major player in European and global politics, France was to become a crucial element of its Mediterranean segment and at the same time perform an important function, particularly in the face of the unwanted American presence in Barbary waters and fierce competition among Great Britain, Russia and Austria in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

To apply the aforementioned principles, the Duke of Wellington and his diplomatic service had contributed to a decision on withdrawing occupation troops from France, incorporating them into so-called Quadruple Alliance formed on 20 November 1815 in Paris and establishing European Quintuple Alliance based on the arrangements made by the aforementioned „Concert of Europe”. Furthermore, participants in the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle decided to send Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa a note, despite objections stated by a Russian representative Count Ioannis Antonios Kapodistrias. Furthermore, they had decided to form a British-French naval squadron the commanders of which would undertake diplomatic mission in Algiers or, if necessary, military operation against the Dey of Algiers.³¹

As a full participant in the “Concert of Europe”, France willingly joined the operation planned by the British. In 1819, both countries selected a few ships from their fleets to form the aforementioned British-French squadron. Under the command of Vice-admiral Sir Thomas Freemantle and Rear-Admiral Jurien de la Gavière, the vessels reached the Mediterranean Sea and at the beginning of September blockaded the port of Algiers. On 5 September 1819, three identical notes were sent to the Deys of Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers. Appointed as commissioners representing all the countries taking part in the “Concert of Europe”, the commanders of the British-French squadron handed the note over to the Dey of Algiers during an audience. To quote a fragment of the note or at least the threatening message it conveyed: *The allied superpowers expect the Barbary states to obey the law and norms respected by all civilized nations. If the aforementioned*

³⁰ See *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 213.

³¹ See *Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, Protocol No. 30*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 213.

*Regencies feel like hindering trade conducted by other countries, the entire Europe will use her weapon.*³² These words left no illusions. To add to the picture, the Admirals informed the Dey that the British and French governments expected him to present his stance in writing.³³

On 9th September, during another audience Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Fremantle and Rear-Admiral Jurien de la Gavière tried to convince Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa into signing and sealing the declaration they had submitted in which he was to state that: „*from the moment he was appointed Dey of Algiers, he has never harmed any European nation and so is his intention in the future.*”³⁴ Needless to say, the Dey did not sign the declaration and, what is more, at the end of the meeting he was arrogant enough to state that he would consider friendly only those countries which were officially represented in Algiers, while as long as the rest did not establish peaceful relations with Algeria, they would be treated as enemies.³⁵ That being said, the European “envoys” realized that the Algerian tyrant’s did nothing else than uttered a threat of pirate attacks against merchants unless their mother countries paid so-called protection money. That is why, the only thing they could do at the end of the meeting was to state that: *such behaviour may be a major threat to his existence in the held position.*³⁶

Eventually, the British-French mission turned into a fiasco. Taken under the wings of the clever Dey of Algiers, the Barbary pirates – though decimated – were still active. Therefore, European superpowers expressed their growing concern. Among them particularly alarmed was Great Britain since where the Royal Navy operated, both international and her own merchant fleet continued to suffer major losses. Hence, Lord Liverpool’s government decided to face a new challenge.

In the spring of 1824, two British vessels *HMS Naiad* and *HMS Cameleon* bombarded the port of Algiers and destroyed corvette *Tripoli*. On 23rd May, the British fleet sunk one more enemy vessel near Bône.³⁷ When the Mediterranean Fleet under the command of Admiral Sir Harry Burrard-Neale approached the

³² *Identic Note to the Dey of Algiers and the Beys of Tunis and Tunisia*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 214.

³³ See *Summary Minutes of British and French Admirals’ First Audience with Hüseyin Paşa, the Dey of Algiers, 5 September 1819*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 215.

³⁴ See *Summary Minutes of British and French Admirals’ Second Audience with Hüseyin Paşa, the Dey of Algiers, 9 September 1819*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 216.

³⁵ See *ibidem*, p. 217.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ See *Dictionary of Battles and Sieges. A Guide to 8,500 Battles from Antiquity through the Twenty-first Century*, ed. T. Jaques, Greenwood Press, Westport CT. USA 2007, A–E, p. 33.

coast backed up by reinforcements and threatened to open shellfire, Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa accepted the ultimatum,³⁸ yet when the British sailed away, the pirates continued their dirty business. Needless to say, another anti-pirate operation did not produce the expected results.

At the same time, accepted as a participant in the “Concert of Europe” during the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, France dared to pursue her increasingly imperialistic policy. Removed forcibly from the Middle East in 1801, she did not abandon her imperial ambitions but, having regained her international importance and economic potential in the 1820’s, decided to put her plans into effect closer to her southern frontier, i.e. in Maghreb.

While the Mediterranean Fleet under the command of Admiral Burrard-Neale made an attempt to regulate British-Algerian relations, the squadron of French warships blockaded the port of Tunis. After the city had surrendered, France offered the defeated Husayn bin Mahmud (1824–1835) to sign a peace treaty that was extraordinarily favourable to her. Tunisian Berleybey had to declare, among other things, that *The French residing in the Kingdom of Tunis shall enjoy their privileges and concessions and shall be treated as citizens of the most favoured nation*.³⁹ Under clause 4 of the treaty, the conquerors enforced on the defeated an extremely low, namely 3% level of tariffs on goods imported to Tunis by French merchants or citizens.⁴⁰ To the above provisions clause 15 added perfectly well, namely giving priority to French ships in the port of Tunis.⁴¹ However, what draws attention is the following fragment of clause 3: *neither privilege nor advantage will be given to other nations which may not be equally shared by the French nation, even though they have not been specified in the said capitulations and treaties*.⁴² In this way, the French government announced they would pursue colonial policy in Africa. Major French battle for establishing a stronghold in Africa took place in Algeria six years later.

At first with purely economic background, the Algerian-French conflict had been escalating for nearly thirty years. To deal with the consequences of the British sea blockade (particularly in the Atlantic), in 1792 as well as between

³⁸ See *ibidem*, pp. 33–34.

³⁹ See *Treaty of Peace and Renewal of Capitulations: France and the Garrison of Tunis 21 May and 15 November 1824*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 222.

⁴⁰ See *ibidem*.

⁴¹ See *ibidem*, p. 223.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 222.

1795 and 1797 the government of Republican France bought substantial amount of grains in Algeria, mainly to provide the troops involved in military operation in Italy with food supplies. The transaction was credited by the then Dey and guaranteed by two banker's families living in Algiers, namely the Bakris and the Bushnaqs. By 1798 the French government paid off certain amount of the debt.⁴³ Nevertheless, at the end of the administration period, the French Directory (1795–1799), followed by the Consulate (1799–1804), and finally the Napoleonic Empire accused Jewish bankers of cooperating with Great Britain, the chief enemy of France, and refused to pay the rest of the abovementioned debt.

After the collapse of Napoleonic Empire, the government formed by King Louis XVIII (1814–1824) decided to put an end to unpleasant situation that had lasted for over twenty years. It was in 1819 that a select committee was established to oblige France to pay off 7 million francs to the Bakris and their creditors. The committee's decision, however, did not impose any obligation to repay about 70,000 francs to the Dey⁴⁴ who, having found that out, reminded the French government of his 70,000 and demanded 2.5 million francs from the debt owed to the Jewish bankers.⁴⁵ Although Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa's demand caused confusion over the issue that after all bothered both parties, France considered it ungrounded and simply ignored it.

The Algerian tyrant did not, however, abandon his claims. After Charles X had taken the throne (1824–1830), he posted three letters to the French king in which he addressed issues relating to the debt settlement. Since there was no reply, on 30 April 1827 Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa invited Pierre Deval, the then consul general of France in Algiers, for a private audience in his palace to demand explanations as to why the French king had been ignoring him. When the embarrassed diplomat could not provide an exhaustive answer, the Dey got upset, came up to him, hit him three times with a fly-whisk and ordered him to leave.⁴⁶

The incident had led to a number of far-reaching consequences since the behaviour of the Dey of Algiers was nothing else than recognizing Deval a persona non grata and making him leave Algeria. Needless to say, this had dramatically deteriorated Algerian-French relations and, to a lesser extent, Turkish-French

⁴³ See A. Dziubiński: *Podbój Maghrebu przez Francję* [The French Conquest of Maghreb], Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1983, p. 17.

⁴⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ See *ibidem*.

⁴⁶ See *The Deval Report, 30 April 1827*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 228.

relations, and was the main reason behind international diplomatic dispute that was soon to lead to a serious military conflict.

At the end of May, into the port of Algiers came French schooner the commander of which ignored the Ottoman regulations and got in touch directly with the Consul. What the captain did contributed to the escalation of disagreement between the court of Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa and Deval. The French diplomat found himself in an extremely difficult situation which improved a bit when on the following day four French warships reached the roadstead of the port of Algiers. The Admiral sent Hüseyin an ultimatum that demanded flying French flags in front of a citadel, which was the Dey's seat, and at the top of the main tower (Bure Mawlay Hasan) and below them the green flags of the Prophet within the following 48 hours. Otherwise France was to launch military operation against the fortress.⁴⁷ The ultimatum offended religious feelings of the Muslims who were deeply hurt and humiliated, which was probably the main goal of French diplomats.

Apart from the above, one more thing deserves attention. There was a time when French settlers established a number of towns on the Mediterranean coast, and to be more specific in Bône province. On a patch granted by the authorities in Constantinople at the end of the 17th century, French fishermen and coral divers built houses which were eventually destroyed by the Arabs during the Napoleonic Wars. However, it was in the 1820' that they were rebuilt as a consequence of enormous pressure placed on Algerian authorities to abolish Christian slavery and once the plague of the Barbary pirates had been halted. Mindful of the tragic end of their predecessors, new settlers build fortifications in Bône and La Calle that were referred to as "French bastion" and comprised of eighteen guns and a garrison of over one hundred soldiers.⁴⁸ However, as their position in Africa had gradually strengthened, the French began to incite the Kabyles – ancient people who inhabited mountainous part of north-east Algeria.⁴⁹ They were given guns, gunpowder and other materials they were supposed to use for fighting the Turkish as well as local Ottoman and Arab authorities.

Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa got upset and decided to get rid of European troublemakers from Algeria for good. He gave orders to attack European villages in

⁴⁷ See *Report of the Dey Hüseyin Paşa, to the Ottoman Grand Vezir, 19 December 1827*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., pp. 228–229.

⁴⁸ See *ibidem*, p. 229.

⁴⁹ See *ibidem*.

Bône and La Calle. Soon the French navy began to evacuate survivors and on 12 June 1827 took a retaliatory action, i.e. blockaded Algiers from the sea.⁵⁰ From that moment a series of minor incidents took place between the feuding parties. On 4 October 1827, a naval battle, lasting for over three hours, was fought at the entrance to the port, during which, according to a report prepared by Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa for sultan Mahmud II, the French squadron was defeated and the ships that “survived” *were fleeing like birds from a hunter*.⁵¹ The actual result of the battle was quite different. The Dey’s fleet did not manage to get through the blockade and had to hide behind the seawall to find shelter under the fire of fortress guns.⁵²

The Ottoman governor was perfectly aware of serious consequences following from the above. From that moment on, the conflict with the European superpower entered a new phase and its outcome (potentially favourable for Algeria) depended on political or maybe even military support from the authorities of Constantinople. On 19 December 1827, Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa sent – through Grand Vezir Benderli Mehmed Selim Sirri (Serasker) Paşa⁵³ – a report to sultan Mahmud II in which he referred to increasingly deteriorating situation in the province and asked him for help. The sultan read the report and, apart from several words written in the margin to express his content about the “victory”, he ignored Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa’s request.⁵⁴ Mahmud II had a reason to be so reserved. Having in mind Greek struggle for independence waged since March 1821 and growing threat from the outbreak of war with Russia, he did not want to come into another military conflict in the western frontiers of his empire.

At the same time, the Turkish forces were completely absorbed by war with Russia (1828–1829) and focused their attention on a Greek province striving for independence. Being directly involved in Algerian matters, France did not remain indifferent to this, either. Since the Ottoman monarchy faced a particularly dramatic situation at the end of 1820’s, Algerian-French conflict reached deadlock.

On 14 September 1829, the Treaty of Adrianople concluded the Russo-Turkish war and both parties of the conflict in Maghreb came to conclusion that it was

⁵⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 230.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² See A. Dziubiński: *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵³ The then Grand Vizier Benderli Mehmed Selim Sirri (Serasker) Paşa came from Bendera, a city situated in the present-day Moldova. He held the highest office in the Empire from 15 September 1824 to 26 October 1828.

⁵⁴ See *The Middle East and North Africa...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 228–231.

the right moment to resolve it. Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa counted on support from Turkey (an official province of which Algiers still was). Of certain importance to his political plans were also silent (and eventually hollow) promises made in 1827 by the British consul in Algiers about strong support from the British government.⁵⁵ On the other hand, France realized that a three-year and extremely costly blockade of Algiers caused minor economic damage to her enemy.⁵⁶

Mounting tension over the Ottoman province in Maghreb was used by King Charles X and French political circles, especially having in mind that the Bourbon restoration together with ancien régime doctrine caused serious internal economic and political crisis. It was generally believed that the Algerian war could be a solution to increasingly serious internal problems, and conquering Algeria along with her ports would substantially contribute to expanding lucrative trade with North Africa, already carried on by Marseilles. All things considered, decision was made to accelerate the course of events.

On 2 August 1829, the French naval forces, which continued to blockade Algiers, headed for the Algerian coast provocatively. Having noticed the French warships approaching the land, the crew of fort defending the access to Algiers opened fire and coastal artillery bombarded the French flagship.⁵⁷ This serious incident was immediately used by the French authorities to pursue a stricter policy not only toward their enemy, but also toward North Africa, prospectively in the Mediterranean Sea, and toward other areas neighbouring Africa. From that moment on, the events took place at a breakneck pace.

Soon, King Charles X dismissed as a matter of urgency French ambassador in London, ultra royalist Jules Auguste Armand Marie, the Duke of Polignac, and on 8 August 1829 appointed him prime minister and at the same time minister of foreign affairs. Holding absolute power over the country, the Duke soon formed his political circle that opted for the then promoted colonial idea and wished to use the Algerian military incident as an excuse as soon as possible.

In the context of the then international political situation, Algerian plans were neither simple nor easy to implement. The Duke of Polignac decided to seek allies and made an attempt to convince the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Alī, into taking military action against the Dey of Tunis and the Dey of Tripoli

⁵⁵ See *ibidem*, p. 242.

⁵⁶ See A. Dziubiński: *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ See *The French Conquest of Algiers, 12 March–5 July 1830*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

which the governor was to carry out under the French protective umbrella.⁵⁸ The Wali of Egypt accepted de Polignac's offer and declared he would send the army of 40,000 to Maghreb, however on condition that France would lend him 20 million francs (on favourable terms) and four warships.⁵⁹ The price of alliance with Muhammad Ali seemed, however, too high. The French authorities, afraid of the empowerment of the Ottoman governor struggling with Turkey for Egypt's independence, decided to undertake operations on her own.

As could be expected, French political actions taken in the Mediterranean Sea, and particularly her military operations, disturbed the balance of power achieved only fourteen years earlier during the Congress of Vienna, but were above all taken against the strengthening position of Great Britain in the region under discussion. Under new circumstances, it came as no surprise that Great Britain, participants in the „Concert of Europe” and the Ottoman Porte had no choice but to respond. Having understood the complicated nature of things, attempts were made to allay suspicion expressed by the British authorities who were particularly sensitive to heightened activity of France along the developed “imperial route”.

Critical were years 1829–1830 when political efforts were intensified. The Duke of Polignac and his government held talks with the countries that had entered Quintuple Alliance over necessity to come up with a final solution to problems posed by the Barbary pirates and corsairs, and presented their ideas for resolving the Algerian crisis. Two continental superpowers, namely Prussia and Russia, at first provided support to France. They, and particularly Russia, found the hegemony of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean Sea unacceptable for it might have led to the political domination of Great Britain in the region under discussion. On the contrary, Austria remained friendly neutral.

At the same time, France faced serious difficulties while implementing her plans, the most acute was resistance from the British government. Soon, Lord Goderich's cabinet exerted political pressure on Russia, Prussia and Austria, which made them withdraw from the already provided support. Appointed prime minister on 22 January 1830, the Duke of Wellington, famous conqueror in the Battle of Waterloo, expressed his deep mistrust toward the restitution of the French “imperial dream” and adopted a tough stance on the matter. Consequently, cooling

⁵⁸ See M.E. Chamberlain: *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789–1914*, London–New York 1988, p. 83; *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 242.

⁵⁹ See A. Dziubiński: op. cit., p. 24.

of relations between London and Paris was observed. Colonial plans that France had about Africa were also questioned by the Sublime Porte. In the face of international isolation and strong objection from other countries, the Duke of Polignac once more turned to Muhammad 'Alī to ask for his participation in the campaign. However, the Walī of Egypt refused the French offer. Ignoring the circumstances, the French government decided to launch military invasion in Algiers.

In February 1830, King Charles X ordered to mobilize his forces, which, needless to say, deteriorated the French-British relations. In order to ease mounting political tension, the French prime minister sent an instruction to the ambassador in London, the Duke de Laval,⁶⁰ which obliged him to present to the British authorities an official French stance on the matter. It stated, among other things, that France would intervene militarily as a representative of the Christian world in order to: *a) eliminate piracy, b) abolish Christian slavery, c) abolish obligation imposed on the Christian countries to pay protection money to the Dey.*⁶¹

Two weeks before launching military operation in Algiers, ambassador de Laval received one more note which he was to present to the British government the moment the military actions were launched. According to the instructions, he, based on the accomplished fact, was to inform that King Charles X could not halt his offensive which he had launched for the sake of Christians, while in case of victory: *the issue would become open and unaffected by individual interests, and: the King asks his allies to send their ambassadors in Paris adequate instructions on the matter.*⁶²

On 25 May, the great fleet, under the command of Admiral Victor Guy Duperré, comprising 103 warships and 572 cargo ships manned by 37,000 soldiers, departed from Tulon and headed south, for Africa.⁶³ Led by Louis de Bourmont, Lieutenant General and Count de Ghaisnes de Bourmont, on 14 June the French troops landed near Cape Sidi Ferruch. Expanding the operation to the east, toward the capital, three-division French corps defeated Algerian forces of 50,000 soldiers

⁶⁰ Anne Pierre Adrien de Montmorency, Duc de Laval (1768–1837).

⁶¹ *Prince de Polignac, Premier and Foreign Minister, to the Duc de Laval, French Ambassador (London), 12 March 1830*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., pp. 243–244.

⁶² *Prince de Polignac to the Duc de Laval, 12 May 1830*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 244.

⁶³ See *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., p. 242. According to Dziubiński, for her invasion of Algiers France used: 103 naval vessels, 675 transport ships, 27 000 seamen, 36 000 soldiers and 103 field guns. See A. Dziubiński: op. cit., p. 25.

on the plateau of Staoueli on 19 June.⁶⁴ Violent struggle lasted by 4 July and ended in the conquest of Algiers. On the following day, Hüseyin ben Hassan Paşa signed the act of capitulation.

Under the Treaty, Qasbash citadel and other fortifications of Algiers were to be handed over to the French army the same day by 10 a.m. on condition that the Dey would not be captured and, moreover, given the right to retain his personal possessions and choose if he and his family would stay in their motherland, under the protection of French authorities, or leave the country. The conquerors guaranteed that the followers of Muslim religion would retain their rights, enjoy freedom of trade, have right to property, etc.⁶⁵

Twenty-nine years after the Napoleon campaign in the Orient had been accomplished, French imperialism in North Africa had become a fact.⁶⁶ The conquered stronghold was, admittedly, less attractive than the one on the African-Asian frontier, yet it was Algeria that was a base for expansion to take place all over Africa. The French government immediately seized this opportunity and began to colonize neighbouring Tunisia.

Expanding since 1830, French colonialism in Maghreb had led to irreversible consequences for the Mediterranean states, West Africa and European superpowers. For over a century, it had exerted a profound influence on international policy pursued not only in the region under discussion, but globally. As for a complex series of political, economic, cultural and social processes initiated by the French conquest of Algiers in 1830, special emphasis shall be placed on the formulation of a new doctrine by Palmerston⁶⁷ and John Ponsonby⁶⁸ against the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. By 1914, i.e. when Turkey joined the Central Powers during the First World War, independence and integrity doctrine was a guide for the British politicians and government in defining major actions to be taken against the Ottoman Porte. As far as the period under consideration is concerned, Great Britain

⁶⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 26.

⁶⁵ See *Convention for Delivery of the Cities and Forts: France and the Dey of Algiers, 5 July 1830*, in: *The Middle East and North Africa...*, op. cit., pp. 242–245.

⁶⁶ See L. Bystrzonowski: *O Algeryi, a głównie o wypadkach zaszlych w tym kraju od zajęcia onego przez Francuzów* [On Developments in Algeria after the French Conquest], vol. I, Lipsk 1846, pp. 77–80, 191–192.

⁶⁷ Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), minister of foreign affairs between 1830 and 1841 as well as between 1846 and 1851, British prime minister in the years 1855–1858 and 1859–1865.

⁶⁸ John Ponsonby, 1st Viscount Ponsonby (1770–1855), ambassador of Great Britain in Constantinople in the years 1832–1841.

mounted her resistance (through political or military action) to the vision outlined by European empires – mainly Russia and France – to divide among them the vast yet disintegrating Ottoman Empire that was doing its best to remain independent and unaffected territorially. Last but not least, being grateful for the protection, Constantinople authorities let “Perfidious Albion” develop the “imperial route” leading through the controlled territories as well as conquer and govern Egypt informally.

PODOBÓJ ALGIERII PRZEZ FRANCJĘ

Streszczenie

Po zakończeniu wojen epoki napoleońskiej, mocarstwa – a głównie zachodnioeuropejskie z Wielką Brytanią włącznie – nie angażowały się zbyt mocno w sprawy Bliskiego Wschodu.

Jednakże wytworzona sytuacja polityczna nie oznaczała nadejścia ery pokoju w opisywanym regionie świata. Jeszcze podczas walk z napoleońską Francją, a zwłaszcza tuż po ich zakończeniu, w północno-zachodniej części Afryki pojawiło się oraz zaczęło nabrzmiewać nowe zarzewie konfliktów międzynarodowych, które w niedalekiej przyszłości miały doprowadzić do poważnych następstw politycznych i gospodarczych.

Po 29 latach od zakończenia kampanii napoleońskiej w Oriencie instalacja imperializmu francuskiego w Afryce Północnej stała się faktem dokonany. Zdobyty przyczółek – jakim była Algieria – stanowił niezłą bazę do rozwinięcia ekspansji we wszystkich kierunkach Czarnego Łądu. Rząd w Paryżu niezwłocznie wykorzystał tę okoliczność i jeszcze w tym samym roku rozpoczął proces kolonizacji sąsiedniej Tunezji.

Rozszerzający się od 1830 roku francuski kolonializm w Maghrebie przyniósł nieodwracalne następstwa państwom położonym w basenie Morza Śródziemnego, Afryce Zachodniej oraz głównym mocarstwom europejskim. Na ponad 100 lat wywarł poważny wpływ na kształtowanie się polityki międzynarodowej nie tylko na omawianym obszarze, lecz także w świecie.