

Metternich and the Syrian Question: 1840–1841

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THE SECOND OTTOMAN-EGYPTIAN CRISIS from 1839 to 1841 was one of the most important chapters in the history of the Eastern question. At that time, the fragile structure of the Ottoman Empire trembled in its foundations under the pressure of the ambitious, powerful Egyptian governor, Mohammed Ali, who at the end of the 1830s controlled Egypt along with Sudan, Crete, a considerable part of the Arabian Peninsula, and even Syria. Although formally he was the sultan's subject administering some Ottoman provinces, in reality Mohammed Ali governed his dominions as an independent ruler, hence dividing the Ottoman Empire into two parts, one of them ruled from Constantinople and the other from Alexandria. The sultan's attempt to terminate the existence of this dual system ended in disaster; and in the midsummer of 1839, the empire found itself without its army, navy, and monarch, who died at the end of June.

The weakness of the “sick man on the Bosphorus” provoked five European powers to intervene on behalf of the new Ottoman ruler, Abdülmecid I, and caused the internationalization of what had hitherto been a localized affair. Most of the five powers agreed on the need to restrict Mohammed Ali's power to Egypt alone and to use force against him if he would not comply with their demands. On 15 July 1840, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and the Ottoman Empire concluded a convention in London agreeing on the conditions for a solution to the conflict in the Levant. France, however, remained apart from this coalition because it did not agree with a vigorous limitation of Mohammed Ali's power or with a possible military intervention. Because the Egyptian governor did not want to withdraw, the hostilities were finally opened in September when Ottoman, British, and Austrian forces landed in Syria.

As a result of the rupture within the diplomatic concert, in the autumn of 1840 there was a real fear of war erupting between the signatories of the London convention and France. Although in the end war with France did not happen and Mohammed Ali's power was restricted, the Near Eastern crisis had serious consequences for the future of both the Levant and Europe.¹ One consequence was the increased interest of the great powers in the situation

¹More information on the Near Eastern Crisis of 1839–1841 can be found in Eugène vicomte de Guichen, *La crise d'Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l'Europe* (Paris, 1921); Adolf Hasenclever, *Die orientalische Frage in den Jahren 1838–1841. Ursprung des Meerengenvertrages vom 13. Juli 1841* (Leipzig, 1914); Sir Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830–1841. Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question*, vol. II (London, 1951), 621–737;

of the Christian inhabitants of Syria. Expulsion of the Egyptians and the accession of an inept Ottoman administration facilitated the rivalry of the European states in this region. The Habsburg Empire also participated in solving the Syrian question,² and the Austrian Chancellor, Clemens Wenzel Lothar Nepomuk Prince von Metternich, became the driving force in the effort to ensure a secure existence for the Syrian Christians in 1840–1841. Therefore, it is surprising that despite the interest shown by a considerable number of historians in British and French policies in the affair, Metternich's role has never been thoroughly analyzed. Even Caesar E. Farah's important monograph *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon* deals only marginally with the Austrian diplomatic efforts in the Syrian question before the summer of 1841.³

The neglect of Austrian involvement in the Syrian affairs in 1840–1841 is also the cause of some misinterpretations of Metternich's attitudes and activities. Because historians paid too little attention to Austrian diplomatic correspondence and relied too much on the French diplomats' reports, they tended to use the clichés about Metternich's conservatism and legitimism when clear explanations were missing from the French documents. Although Metternich's attitudes were indeed based on these principles, their excessive application obscures the fact that the prince's remarkable analytical skills in international affairs were burdened to a surprisingly small degree by the partiality stemming from his conservatism. The purpose of this article, however, is not only to explain Metternich's attitude to the situation of the Syrian Christians and his activities on behalf of securing a safe future for them, but also to refute the widespread assertion that the main goal of Metternich's Syrian policy was to deprive France of its protection of the Syrian Catholics to the benefit of Austria.⁴

The beginning of Austrian diplomatic activities on behalf of the Christians in Syria was not in February 1840 as Mordechai Eliav asserts;⁵ there is no allusion to the Syrian Christians in Metternich's letters or discussions with foreign diplomats until the last day of July 1840.

M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (New York, 1966), 95–107; Vernon John Puryear, *International Economics and Diplomacy in the Near East, 1834–1853* (Stanford, 1969), 146–76; Frederick Stanley Rodkey, *The Turko-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France and Russia 1832–1841* (Urbana, IL, 1924), 80–238; Muhammed H. Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question (1831–1841): The Expansionist Policy of Mehmed Ali Paşa in Syria and Asia Minor and the Reaction of the Sublime Porte* (Istanbul, 1998), 133–88. For information on the Austrian policy during the crisis, see my paper “Austria and the Near East: Metternich's Foreign Policy During the Second Mehmed Ali Crisis 1839–41,” *Archiv orientální: Quarterly Journal of Asian and African Studies* 74, no. 1 (2006), 1–36.

²Metternich used the term “the Syrian question” for the first time at the end of 1839. Caesar E. Farah, “The Quadruple Alliance and Proposed Ottoman Reforms in Syria, 1839–1841,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2, no. 1 (1981), 101.

³However, it does not lessen the quality of this fundamental and voluminous monograph. Owing to the extent of the covered period and topics, its author could not analyze all aspects of the Syrian question in detail. As to Austrian activities in 1840–1841, Farah is usually accurate in his reasoning. Caesar E. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1840–1861* (London, 2000).

⁴This opinion can be found among others in Khalil Fattal, Joseph Abou Nohra, *L'Autriche et le Liban. Esquisse historique et promenade à travers les petites histoires d'une vieille amitié* (Paris, 1996), 24; Samir Khalaf, “Communal Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Lebanon,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 2, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, 1982), 117; Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London, 1965), 42.

⁵According to Eliav, the topic should be contained in Metternich's alleged instructions to Stürmer and Meysenburg (not Meysenbuch as stated by Eliav), dated 6 February 1840. However, no instructions with such content were found. Mordechai Eliav, “Das österreichische Konsulat in Jerusalem und die jüdische Bevölkerung,” in *Prag—Czernowitz—Jerusalem. Der österreichische Staat und die Juden vom Zeitalter des Absolutismus bis zum Ende der Monarchie*, ed. Anna M. Drabek, Eliav Mordechai, and Gerald Stourzh (Eisendstadt, 1984), 35.

Consequently, my narrative opens with the summer of 1840 and terminates in June of the following year when the Sublime Porte agreed to Metternich's proposals on behalf of the Christians. Owing to the lack of published documents, this contribution to the history of the Eastern question is based primarily on correspondence housed in the archives in Vienna, London, Paris, Berlin, and Munich.⁶

Metternich's aspiration to help the Syrian Christians was not of course caused simply by his sympathies, but it should be recognized that these did help motivate his first steps during the crisis. Mohammed Ali and his eldest son Ibrahim Pasha were renowned for their tolerance, and the situation of the Christians in the provinces under their rule had improved considerably. Nevertheless, the construction of a large army and fleet gave rise to high taxes, forced conscriptions, and forced labor that provoked numerous rebellions in the Syrian dominion.⁷ These rebellions had one thing in common: Ibrahim Pasha suppressed all of them. The revolt in Mount Lebanon that lasted from May to July 1840 was no different; but it was distinguished by the fact that the Druze, who had been a motivating force of the previous insurrections against Egyptian rule, did not participate in large numbers. Instead, the Catholic Maronites had assumed the lead.⁸ The displeased Egyptian governor made hostile statements about the latter. His hostility was surprising because, with respect to the great powers, his words regarding the Christians had always been positive and conciliatory. Moreover, he accompanied his declarations of rigorous measures against the rebels with such a massive engagement of force in Lebanon that rumors spread among the Europeans in Alexandria that Mohammed Ali planned a war of extermination against the Maronites.⁹

Having heard this, the Austrian consul general in Egypt, Anton von Laurin, visited the governor on 23 June 1840, hoping to moderate his intentions against the insurgents. However, Mohammed Ali refused to temper his resolve because, as he resolutely stated, the

⁶The sources used in the preparation of this paper but unquoted follow in alphabetical order: André Bruneau, *Traditions et politique de la France au Levant* (Paris, 1932), 141; Roderic H. Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson (London, 1993), 61–81; Robert-Tarek Fischer, "Habsburg und das Heilige Land. Grundzüge der österreichischen Palästinalpolitik, 1840–1918," in *Das Erwachen Palästinas im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Yaron Perry and Erik Petry (Stuttgart, 2001), 61–69; Robert-Tarek Fischer, *Österreich im Nahen Osten* (Vienna, 2006), 122; Haim Goren and Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Catholic Austria and Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century: The Beginnings," in *Austrian Presence in the Holy Land in the 19th and early 20th Century*, ed. Marian Wrba (Tel Aviv, 1996), 7–24; Philip K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History: From the Earliest Times to the Present* (London, 1957), 428–32; Moshe Ma'oz, "Communal Conflicts in Ottoman Syria during the Reform Era: The Role of Political And Economical Factors," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 2, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, 1982), 91–105; Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840–1861: The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society* (Oxford, 1968), 210–17; Pierre Rondot, *Les Chrétiens d'Orient* (Paris, 1955), 94–103.

⁷Basic information on the Egyptian administration in Syria and the situation of the Christians in this region can be found in Gudrun Krämer, *Geschichte Palästinas. Von der osmanischen Eroberung bis zur Gründung des Staates Israel* (Munich, 2003), 85; Iliya F. Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society Lebanon, 1711–1845* (Princeton, NJ, 1968), 244–45.

⁸The insurrection was caused by Mohammed Ali's attempt to deprive the Maronites of weapons given to them some time before for the fight against the Druze. The Egyptian governor later denied this accusation and declared that his order was misunderstood by Ibrahim Pasha who, however, really requested their delivery from the Christians. Catafago to Laurin, Sidon, 2 June 1840, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (hereafter: HHStA), Staatenabteilungen (hereafter: StA), Türkei VI, 74; Laurin to Stürmer, Alexandria, 9 June 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 74; Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (London, 1987), 43–44.

⁹Laurin to Stürmer, Alexandria, 26 June 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 74; Laurin to Metternich, Alexandria, 26 June 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

time for negotiation was over and it was time to take action. He declared that the Maronites were surrounded both by Egyptian forces and the Druze and would not escape their fate. Furthermore, the Druze would take advantage of victory to establish their own dominance in Lebanon. Alarmed by these threats of severity against the Maronites, and given the long-lasting enmity between the Maronites and the Druze, Laurin feared that the former would be massacred and no one would be able to distinguish the innocent from the guilty.¹⁰ This prognosis was supported by the existing state of affairs in Lebanon. As Laurin reported to Metternich:

in the country the Bedouins and Albanians [from the Egyptian army] operate and commit various outrages from cutting the fruit trees, ruining the plant and silk plantations to brutal seizures of men able to carry arms. Vast plains and valleys of Pekka and Esdraelon have been without hands that could cultivate them for a long time, there are no people or animals any more as all of them were hunted, shot and slaughtered. The Maronites' peaceful settlements are menaced in the same way.¹¹

Although Laurin did not presume Mohammed Ali himself planned the destruction of this Catholic group for fear of Europe's response, his reports nevertheless produced exactly the same rumors in Vienna as those already circulating in Alexandria. The Egyptian governor was said to want to annihilate all Christians, most of them Maronites, and the prompt intervention of the great powers was considered to be entirely necessary to avoid their annihilation.¹²

It is not clear whether Metternich actually believed this rumor, but he was surely aware of the serious situation of the Maronites.¹³ Moreover, his interest in their future was increased by Ottoman Foreign Minister Mustapha Reshid Pasha's question addressed to the chancellor concerning the attitude the Porte ought to assume towards the Maronites.¹⁴ At the end of July, Metternich advised the sultan to promise clemency to the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon, who would rise up against the Egyptian oppression, and to guarantee their ancient privileges and relieve them of tax obligations for several years.¹⁵ In Metternich's opinion, nothing could forestall the acceptance of this recommendation made only with a view to "attach a nation interesting for its faith and fidelity to its legitimate sovereign and at the same moment to give to these people guarantees of their further peaceful existence."¹⁶

This was the first step in Metternich's effort to achieve a better future for the Maronites and for all Christians in Syria. A month later he took a second step when he instructed the Austrian representative in Constantinople, Internuncio Baron Bartolomäus Stürmer, to send an emissary to Lebanon to ascertain what demands the spiritual leader of the Catholic nation, Patriarch Yûsuf Hubaysh, might require from the Porte. Simultaneously, the emissary was to assure

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹The extract of Laurin's reports written on 18 and 19 June 1840, attached to Metternich to Neumann, Vienna, 11 July 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230.

¹²Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 19 July 1840, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, München (hereafter: BHStA), Ministerium des Äußern (hereafter: MA), Vienna 2409.

¹³Metternich to Neumann, Vienna, 11 July 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230. According to Laurin's report from the autumn of the same year, there were 170,000 Maronites in Syria, most of them in Mount Lebanon. Laurin's Memoir with the Census of the Christian Population in Syria, attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

¹⁴Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 16 July 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 74.

¹⁵Metternich to Neumann, Königswart, 31 July 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230.

¹⁶Metternich to Stürmer, Königswart, 28 August 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

the patriarch that in the case of the Maronites' loyalty to the Ottoman monarch, the Austrian emperor would work to gain the sultan's assurance for their privileges, autonomy, and property—in short their future life in peace.¹⁷ By "loyalty," Metternich meant the military assistance required from the Christian inhabitants for the planned invasion of Syria by the British, Austrian, and Ottoman forces. The Maronite mountain tribespeople in Lebanon, together with the Albanians, were considered to be the best warriors in the Ottoman Empire, and an alliance with them would be very advantageous. To win them to his side, Metternich did not hesitate to employ the groundless rumor about their imminent extermination: "The Maronites are a very peaceful mountain people if they are not tormented, but they are fully resolved to rise against oppression. Moh.[ammed] Ali has decided to exterminate these people; it is necessary to let them know, and they will be [informed]."¹⁸ The Porte assented to the mission both because of its pro-Ottoman character and because of the previous discussions on the topic Stürmer had held with Mustapha Reshid Pasha.

Metternich's order was successfully carried out.¹⁹ On 16 September, Stürmer sent a dragoman-adjutant, Anton Steindl von Plessenet, whose mother was a Maronite,²⁰ to Lebanon to learn "the Maronites' wishes and to assure them that the Porte is prepared to grant them privileges, immunities, autonomy and everything that will be able to assure their peace and happiness."²¹ He was instructed to ask the patriarch for a written exposé containing the privileges and prerogatives that the inhabitants of Lebanon desired to obtain from the Porte.²² On 26 September, Steindl arrived at the Bay of Djounie, 18 kilometers north of Beirut and soon visited Yûsuf Hubaysh, who by chance lived only two hours away from the anchorage. The Austrian agent informed Yûsuf about the emperor's wish to support the menaced Catholic nation and asked him what his people desired from the government in Constantinople. The patriarch required the confirmation of ancient privileges, among them the demand not to be subordinate to any other patriarch and the right to found churches, convents, and schools without restraint or need to ask the sultan for a firman. Moreover, the patriarch raised a new claim that the prince of Lebanon be chosen only from among the Maronite leaders and not from the Greeks, Armeniens, Druze, or other nations. Furthermore, the reform Edict of the Rose Garden (Hatt-i Sharif of Gülhane) of 3 November 1839 was to be activated and taxes were to be abolished or reduced for several years to compensate for alleged suffering in previous years.²³ All of these requests were made only verbally because Yûsuf asked Steindl for time to prepare a written document. This document was not delivered until the end of October. Yussuf's claims were accepted in Constantinople²⁴ and also supported in Vienna. Metternich considered most of them to be

¹⁷Ibid; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Königswart, 7 September 1840, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (hereafter: GStA PK), Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807 Gesandtschaft Wien II, Nr. 201 Bd. 3.

¹⁸Metternich to Neumann, Königswart, 25 August 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230; see also, Metternich to Erberg, Königswart, 26 August 1840, HHStA, Staatskanzlei (hereafter: StK), Preussen 176.

¹⁹Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

²⁰Adam Wandruszka, "Anton Steindl Ritter von Plessenet. Ein österreichischer Diplomat in der Levante," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 25 (1972), 452.

²¹Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 17 September 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76.

²²Steindl to Wood, Djounie, 3 October 1840, in *The Early Correspondence of Richard Wood 1831–1841*, ed. Allen B. Cunningham (London, 1966), 172.

²³Steindl to Stürmer, Djounie, 7 October 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

²⁴Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 31 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 and 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 November 1840,

just and reasonable, partly because the patriarch wanted only the confirmation of existing rights.²⁵

With regard to the second goal of the mission, obtaining the Maronites' support for the fight against the Egyptian forces, Steindl was also successful. Immediately after his visit, Yûsuf called on the Catholic inhabitants to take up arms, and he threatened anyone who would not obey with excommunication.²⁶ The Maronites joined forces with the allies in their war against the Egyptians and helped the sultan to regain Syria.²⁷ The main reasons for the successful outcome, however, were attributable to the aversion the mountain tribespeople felt to Ibrahim Pasha's rule and particularly to the activities of the British agent, Richard Wood, with whom Steindl was acquainted and had good relations. Consequently, it was not difficult for both men to act together for the desired result.²⁸

There was another important outcome of Steindl's mission. During the meeting, Yûsuf complained that France as a great power had assumed the right of exclusive protectorate over Catholics not only in Lebanon, but also in the whole of Syria; yet France had done nothing for the Maronites recently except to provoke them, in the patriarch's words, "not to return force with force, not to take arms, but to suffer peacefully."²⁹ Because Austria had sent ships to protect the Maronites and as a Catholic country desired their prosperity, Yûsuf suggested that after three centuries of French protection of the Lebanese Catholics, Austria should now assume the role of protector. He conveyed this desire also to Laurin, who had accompanied Steindl but had negotiated with the patriarch separately.³⁰ Neither Austrian agent was instructed to discuss Austrian protectorship, however, and so they answered evasively, sending the proposal to their superiors.³¹

The British supported the patriarch's offer because they longed for an end to French influence in Syria and to be thus rid of their greatest rival. Austrian influence in this area was for them much more acceptable than the French. Therefore, Wood eagerly advised Stürmer to accept the proposal by which the Habsburg Empire would "gain an immense influence in Syria, an object not unworthy of the serious consideration of a great nation."³² Her Majesty's ambassador in Constantinople, John Lord Ponsonby, also expressed the opinion of other British when he declared: "We are *intimately and firmly* united with Austria. It will be a good thing to establish Austrian influence over the Christians instead of that of the French."³³

HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Wood to Ponsonby, Beirut, 29 October 1840, in Cunningham, *The Early Correspondence*, 179; Harik, *Politics and Change*, 254–55.

²⁵Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64; Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 3 November and 18 December 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

²⁶Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 37.

²⁷Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

²⁸Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 17 September 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 31 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Ponsonby to Wood, 16 September 1840, in Cunningham, *The Early Correspondence*, 163; A share in the achievement was dedicated to Steindl also by Wood who stated that Steindl showed "the greatest zeal and anxiety to carry through the instructions of H. Exc. M. le Baron de Stürmer." Wood to Ponsonby, Djounie, 11 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76.

²⁹Steindl to Stürmer, Djounie, 7 October 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Wood to Ponsonby, Djounie, 11 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76.

³³Ponsonby to Wood, 1 October 1840, in Cunningham, *The Early Correspondence*, 171.

In Constantinople, Stürmer's attitude was reserved. In his opinion, Austria possessed the right to intervene at the Porte in favor of the Catholics,³⁴ but not the Maronites. The sultan would have to officially agree to Austrian protection, which would inevitably arouse the hostility of the French government. The internuncio maintained that Austria was currently the Maronites' intercessor in Constantinople and had actually become their protector instead of France, who had sacrificed them for Mohammed Ali's sake. In other words, Austria was their patron de fait and it was not necessary to hold this position de jure. Moreover, once the Viennese cabinet had fulfilled the patriarch's wishes concerning his nation in the Ottoman capital, one could expect that the Maronites' situation would improve considerably and no foreign power would need to be involved.³⁵

Like Laurin and Steindl, Stürmer also had no instructions enabling him to deal with Yûsuf's offer, and he had to transmit Yûsuf's question to Vienna. He refused to respond to the patriarch and only assured him that Austria would always support his requests at the Divan.³⁶ Metternich completely approved of this decision and wrote in the margin of Stürmer's report: "This is the correct form."³⁷ The Austrian chancellor believed that exclusive influence over the Syrian Catholics could only lead to a serious rivalry with France and the other great powers, which would endanger stability in the already restless region. Protectorship would not only contradict Metternich's respect for the inviolability of the monarch's sovereignty, but also the hope to remove areas of friction within the Ottoman Empire that had evoked several crises in the East for twenty long years.³⁸ Metternich repudiated the idea of an exclusive protectorate.

Nevertheless, in the chancellor's opinion, the problem was more complicated and had to be treated at two different levels. First, there was a question of foreign interference on the political affairs of the Syrian Christians, as well as Christians elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. In this case, not only did Metternich not demand this right for the Habsburg Empire, but he was also persuaded that no country was entitled to interfere in the civil affairs of the Ottoman citizens because "the sovereign of the country is the only competent and natural defender of the civil and politic rights of his subjects, and foreign courts would violate these rights of the sovereign by competing for the protection of his subjects' rights against his will."³⁹ Second, was the question of protecting the Ottoman Christians' freedom to practice their religion, which, according to the prince, "in no way injures the rights of the sovereign."⁴⁰ To accomplish this end, Metternich did not require an exclusive protectorate over the Maronites; rather, he wanted to share it with other Catholic countries because, as he

³⁴Among others in Article 13 of the peace of Karlowitz signed on 26 January 1699, Article 11 of the peace of Passarowitz signed on 21 July 1718, Article 9 of the peace of Belgrade signed on 18 September 1739, and Article 12 of the peace of Svishtov signed on 4 August 1791. A. Schopoff, *Les réformes et la protection des Chrétiens en Turquie 1673–1904* (Paris, 1904), 3–4; Barbara Haider-Wilson, "Das Kultusprotektorat der Habsburgermonarchie im Osmanischen Reich. Zu seinen Rechtsgrundlagen und seiner Instrumentalisierung im 19. Jahrhundert (unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Jerusalems)," in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie. Akten des internationalen Kongresses zum 150-jährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung Wien, 22.–25. September 2004*, ed. Marlene Kurz and Martin Scheutz and Karl Vöclka and Thomas Winkelbauer (Vienna, 2005), 129.

³⁵Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76.

³⁶Ibid; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

³⁷Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76.

³⁸Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 3 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78; Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

³⁹Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

⁴⁰Ibid.

declared, this privilege belonged to all Catholic crowns and could not be usurped by only one of them: "We do not deny this right to France; exercising it ourselves, we do not treat it as an exclusive privilege."⁴¹

This consideration meant that one of Metternich's principal goals in his Syrian policy was not to deprive the French of their protection of the Catholic faith, but to share it with them. His aim was clearly pronounced in his instructions to Stürmer on 3 November 1840:

It is not the intention of the Imperial Court to take the protection of the Catholics in Syria away from France to appropriate it for us. What we demand is that the Porte recognises the positive interest that Austria takes in the Maronites, its co-religionists, and that it kindly accepts the prayers and the reclamations of this nation demanding through the intermediary of the representatives of the H. I. and R. M. [His Imperial and Royal Majesty] the opportunity to transmit them to the foot of His Highness' throne; that the Porte declares that in the actual circumstance of the Maronites showing undeniable proof of their attachment and loyalty and having made extraordinary efforts to rid themselves of the yoke of the Egyptian domination, they have acquired the right to claim His Highness' particular benevolence, and considering this, His Highness is determined to bestow upon them favours such as the reward for their devotion, and that he consents to Austria, as a Catholic court and as a country, who has aided and assisted in their efforts, being the organ by which they will be able to send their wishes to the cognizance of the Sublime Porte; that moreover the Porte is ready to consider Austria to be the guarantor of the concessions that will be made to the Maronites and thus engaged in their accomplishment.⁴²

The verity of this statement is supported by the above-mentioned fact that neither Steindl nor Laurin was given instructions in case Yûsuf should ask to replace the French protectorship with an Austrian one.⁴³ However, not even Metternich had to assume a formal attitude toward this demand because when the patriarch handed over the written list of his nation's wishes at the end of October 1840, to Steindl's surprise, he no longer required Austrian protection. Yûsuf explained the shift in his opinion by the uncertainty over Austrian willingness to satisfy this request.⁴⁴

Metternich's moderate ambitions in no way signified that he was well-disposed to France and its activities in the Near East. On the contrary, his policy in Syria, as well as the entire Levant in the 1830s, was significantly anti-French. Metternich opposed French diplomacy before the July revolution, as well as afterwards, not only in serious affairs such as the French occupation of Algeria in 1830 or the French support of Mohammed Ali, but also in matters of minor significance such as the French plan to send Ottoman students to France, the editing of French newspapers in Constantinople, or the foundation of a military academy in the Ottoman capital led by the French military instructors.⁴⁵ In 1840, Metternich had already defended the Jews maltreated in Damascus against the anti-Semitic attitude of the Parisian cabinet; and also in the Syrian question, Metternich's conduct was influenced by his strong

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 3 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

⁴³Stürmer's instructions for Steindl were only verbal and therefore no written document exists. Nevertheless, it is evident from Steindl's and Laurin's statements to Yûsuf that they really were not prepared to solve the matter of Austrian protection. More on the absence of written instructions, see also Steindl to Wood, Djounie, 3 October 1840, in Cunningham, *The Early Correspondence*, 172.

⁴⁴Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 31 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

⁴⁵More information on Metternich's fight against these French projects can be found in my paper "Metternich and the French in Constantinople 1830–1840," in *Egypt and Austria IV. Crossroads*, ed. Johanna Holaubek and Hana Navrátilová and Wolf B. Oerter (Prag, 2007), 147–157.

aversion to France. The Austrian chancellor discounted France's exclusive role as a protector of the Christians jealously guarded by the French governments regardless of the regime. Metternich particularly criticized the fact that for the French this protectorate was only an instrument to gain support for their political and economic goals,⁴⁶ and he was not completely mistaken.⁴⁷ He clearly stated his opinion in the instructions to Esterházy on 7 March 1841:

One of the particular defects of the French is that they mix national policy with everything. The French Kings, who embraced the support of religion in the Levant without any sacrifice, had obtained the right to protect the Christians as it was sanctioned by the treaties. If France limited the exploitation of these rights only to religious protection, nobody could complain, but it is not the case. The French governments, regardless of their origin or beliefs, constantly intermingle their political interests and views with religious protection and the history of past years is rich with new evidence of this fact, which has a double disadvantage: first, to discredit the foreign protection of the Christian population in Syria; second, to invoke the distrust of the Porte to all Christian courts leading to their reprobation.⁴⁸

Consequently, Metternich's rejection of the idea to replace the French protectorate must be understood as a demonstration of his respect for international law, his desire for general tranquility, and his realistic assessment of Austria's limitations. Moreover, though French influence in Syria was paralyzed in 1840, Metternich, as a rational statesman, did not believe in its entire elimination. Nevertheless, even mere participation in the protection of the Syrian Catholics or in the Austrian-French cooperation would deliver a blow to France because it would break the by then so eagerly watched "French privilege".

The prince pursued this goal from the very beginning. Already in the initiation of Steindl's mission there appears a clear aspiration to weaken French influence over Syrian affairs and to discard the mask of "the French charlatanism that shrouded the Levant with religious colours as well as all other hues."⁴⁹ At the end of August 1840, Metternich instructed the internuncio to draw the sultan's attention to the minimal value of friendship with a France that sought only its own profit and rivalry with other great powers. Metternich instructed Steindl to inform all Catholics in Lebanon about the particular interest of the Austrian court in their situation and raise their doubts about the utility of the sole protection of France.⁵⁰

Austrian activities in Syria naturally did not escape the attention of the French operating in the East. The French consul general in Egypt, Adrien-Louis Cochelet, accused the Austrian agents of trying to persuade local Christians that only the Habsburg Empire could serve as a natural protector of the faith. He wrote to Paris on 18 October 1840:

The aim of the cabinet in Vienna is without any doubt to replace the influence of France, of which it is so jealous and which it would like to destroy. To pursue these aims it has superbly disciplined agents, who use all the means at their disposal to convince uneducated inhabitants [of Syria] that France is an atheistic land where all bonds with Christianity have been broken.⁵¹

⁴⁶Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 21 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

⁴⁷Joseph Abou Nohra, "L'Autriche et la question du Liban (1840–1865)," in *Habsburgisch-osmanische Beziehungen. Relations Habsbourg-ottomanes*, ed. Andreas Tietze (Vienna, 1985), 296.

⁴⁸Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

⁴⁹Metternich to Neumann, Königswart, 25 August 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230.

⁵⁰Metternich to Stürmer, Königswart, 28 August 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

⁵¹Guichen, *La crise d'Orient*, 391.

In the capital on the Seine, reports like this caused considerable concern, in particular when in the autumn of 1840 not only the protectorate over the Catholic inhabitants, but also the very future of France's ally, Mohammed Ali, was in jeopardy. Consequently, whereas Austria and Great Britain urged the Maronites to rebel against Egyptian rule, the French premier, Adolphe Thiers, sent the superior of the Lazarists, Father Etienne, to Lebanon in September to use his influence over the Maronite clergy to prevent a war between the mountain tribespeople and the Egyptian forces. He arrived in Sidon on 24 September, shortly before the allies launched an attack against the city. Owing to the insecure situation in the interior, where the roads were controlled by brigands, Etienne did not consider it appropriate to take risks en route to the Maronites, whose discontent was so great that their fight against the Egyptian forces was imminent. He preferred to end his mission and leave for Alexandria.⁵² Attempts by other French agents led by the consuls in Damascus and Beirut, Benoît Ulysse-Laurent-François Count Ratti-Menton and M. Demeloize, to persuade the patriarch and other Maronite clerics to forbid the people to take the sultan's banner also entirely failed in the autumn of 1840. Threats to withdraw French protection of the Catholic Church proved to be useless.⁵³ British and Austrian influence apparently predominated in Syria.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, one cannot resist the impression that the withdrawal of Yûsuf's offer to place the Maronites under Austrian protection was a consequence of the French efforts.

As for Cochelet's mention of the Austrian schemes in Syria, they undoubtedly existed. However, it seems that the French consul general and his colleagues somewhat exaggerated their importance. The Austrian correspondence offers very few examples of anti-French activity, although the Austrian consular network was relatively large. Besides Steindl's mission that attained everything the Austrian cabinet had originally wished,⁵⁵ there was only the intervention of the commander of the Austrian squadron operating on the Syrian coast, Rear-Admiral Baron Francesco Bandiera, on behalf of Melkite Bishop Agapios, who had been seized by mountain tribespeople and taken to the camp of allied British, Austrian, and Ottoman forces.

Agapios faced the accusation that several months previously, he had cleverly extradited several emirs and sheikhs into the hands of Mohammed Ali's ally, Emir Beshir II, causing their exile to Sennar. Further, he was said to be extremely devoted to Ibrahim Pasha and to have forbidden the people in his parish, under threat of excommunication, to join the uprising against Egyptian rule. The commander of the Ottoman forces in Syria (seraskier), Mehmed Izzet Pasha, was ordered to take Agapios and two other captured Melkite priests on board the Turkish warship. As soon as Bandiera learned this, he immediately asked Izzet to surrender the three men and to allow their internment on an Austrian vessel while they awaited trial. The seraskier immediately satisfied this request, and this undoubtedly contributed to Austrian prestige in Syria. Although Agapios was regarded as Ibrahim Pasha's

⁵²Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 7 and 18 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; The report of an innominate Frenchman settled in Alexandria, Alexandria, 5 October 1840, attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Ohms to Metternich, Rome, 24 October 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 63; Joseph Hajjar, *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient (1815–1848)* (Paris, 1970), 519.

⁵³Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Bockelberg to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 31 October 1840, GStA PK, HA III, Ministerium des Auswärtigen I (hereafter: MdA I), 7359; François Charles-Roux, *Thiers et Méhémet-Ali. La grande crise orientale et européenne de 1840–1841* (Paris, 1951), 160.

⁵⁴Alfred Schlicht, "The Role of Foreign Powers in the History of Lebanon and Syria from 1799 to 1861," in *Journal of Asian History* 14, no. 2 (1980), 110.

⁵⁵Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

spy and was unpopular among the majority of the Christians, at the same time he was a member of the Catholic clergy and considered by the devout members of this religion to be untouchable. The actions of the Austrian rear-commander contributed to the belief, already widespread among the Lebanese, that in this campaign, the Habsburg Empire sought specifically to protect the Catholic Church and faith.⁵⁶

In reference to Austrian activities, the sending of several thousand muskets and twelve doctors to Syria must be briefly discussed. Both measures are usually explained as assistance for the Christians, which was true at least for the muskets.⁵⁷ The British government had already asked Austria to grant muskets to the mountain tribespeople at the end of July 1840. However, Metternich did not satisfy this demand until a month later; and the weapons left Trieste only at the beginning of November.⁵⁸ As to the twelve Austrian physicians, they arrived in Syria on 27 February 1841. They were to be employed in the Ottoman military hospitals in Jaffa, Acre, Damascus, and Sidon. Because of the problematic conduct of the Ottomans, who showed little interest in their services, however, most of them departed Syria on 18 June 1841. It is not possible to say whether they were instructed to treat only wounded soldiers or also civilians and thereby to increase Austrian influence in the country. Though the latter possibility cannot be entirely refuted, no relevant evidence for this assertion has been found.⁵⁹

When the allies captured the strategic stronghold of Acre on 4 November, the fate of Egyptian hegemony was sealed. Ibrahim Pasha concentrated on saving the rest of his army and getting to Egypt with as much of his force as possible. Once the main phase of the war in Syria had ended, the question of the future of the Syrian Christians started to gain strength; and in several weeks it became one of the most important parts of the diplomatic agenda of the European cabinets. The situation at the Austrian chancellery at Ballhausplatz was not different. In the fall of 1840, Metternich contemplated the future of all Syrian Christians regardless of their faith. His interest, originally intended as support for the Maronites and somewhat later for all Catholics, transformed into a concern to ensure conditions that would enable security for all Christians in Syria and thus contribute to the consolidation of a renewed Ottoman administration in the reconquered region.

This approach was to give birth to the cooperation of all European powers facilitating the acceptance of their useful proposals at the sultan's court and at the same time prevent suspicions and rivalry between the same powers that could hamper the achievement of desired results. Metternich was particularly afraid of the Russian tsar, Nicholas I, who was a defender of the Orthodox Christians in the Near East and might be disturbed if Metternich

⁵⁶Steindl's unpublished diary, Part II, 3 October 1840, attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; Bockelberg to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 31 October 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7359.

⁵⁷The opinion that the doctors were offered with regard to the Christians is maintained by Joseph Abou Nohra in *L'Autriche et la question du Liban*, 315, and Hajjar in *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 522.

⁵⁸Metternich to Neumann, Königswart, 31 July 1840, HHStA, StA, England 230; Beauvale to Palmerston, Königswart, 27 August, and Vienna, 28 October 1840, The National Archives: Public Record Office, London (hereafter: PRO), Foreign Office (hereafter: FO) 120/189; Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 30 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

⁵⁹Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 14 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VIII, 15; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 7 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VIII, 16; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 18 November 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7283; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 13 November 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7359; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 10 December 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7360. In this place, I would like to express my thanks to Austrian historian Marcel Chahrour for information contributed and his help relating to the Austrian doctors' presence in Syria in 1841.

referred only to the members of the Catholic Church. The prince explained this caution in his instructions to the Austrian ambassador in Rome, Rudolf Count Lützow, later on 14 February 1841:

The general denomination “Christians” is the term prudence makes me employ when I intend to say “Catholics,” and you know very well in the state of affairs [in the Levant] that the Mussulmans are less hostile to the latter than to the Greek and Armenian schismatic. As concerns the legislation, it would be dangerous to say “Catholics” because Russia would claim for its co-religionists more privileges than would be demanded for the Latin Church.⁶⁰

Metternich assumed that the great powers had a right to advise the sultan in Syrian affairs because, with the exception of France, they had helped him to recover this province.⁶¹ The Austrian chancellor himself conveyed as much to the Porte on 18 December 1840 in his instructions to Stürmer concerning the future of the Syrian Christians. In his opinion, a considerable number of firmans, hatt-i sharifs, and other regulations on behalf of the Ottoman Christians and churches already guaranteed their freedoms and untroubled existence. Unfortunately, however, most of these decrees were not being properly executed. Therefore, it was not necessary to create new laws or to rebuild the administrative system of the Syrian pashalics, but rather to help the Porte to enforce existing regulations. At the moment when the Porte regained Syria, in places where the Christians formed a considerable proportion of the inhabitants, the most reasonable policy compatible with the sultan’s interests was to apply the stipulations of the hatt-i sharif of Gülhane in Syria and to establish an administration capable of granting the security of civil and religious rights to people of all creeds.⁶²

The Ottoman monarch’s conduct in the case of the Christians was to be based on eight fundamental principles: (1) there should be freedom of religious conviction; (2) each confession could solve its own religious matters; (3) a register of Christians should exist in each district; (4) all existing churches in Syria, including Palestine, had to be confirmed; (5) the Christian Holy Places should enjoy the sultan’s special protection; (6) the Ottoman monarch should protect pilgrims traveling to Palestine to visit the Holy Places; (7) every pilgrim was obliged to pay a special fee to the Ottoman treasury in exchange for a permit enabling him or her to visit the Holy Places; afterwards no other charges could be levied on the pilgrim; and (8) non-Muslim foreigners would continue to be under their consuls’ jurisdiction, whereas local Christians would be under Ottoman jurisdiction, except in matters related to their faith. The sultan should assure impartial judgments in both criminal and civil cases involving Ottoman citizens regardless of their religion.⁶³ As Metternich wrote at the beginning of February 1841, “the intolerance of Muslims is not the cause of Christian suffering in the Orient. It is found primarily in the disorder of the administrative apparatus of the Empire, the logical consequence of which is the tyranny of local authorities and in part the rivalries existing among followers of various Christian sects.”⁶⁴

Conservative values naturally influenced these principles, in particular the respect for the state sovereignty that the monarch represented. Though other countries could advise the

⁶⁰Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 14 February 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67.

⁶¹Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 3 February 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

⁶²Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 18 December 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

⁶³Ibid; Stürmer to Testa, Constantinople, [?] January 1841, attached to Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 1 February 1841, PRO, FO 78/430.

⁶⁴Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 3 February 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

monarch, they had no inherent right to meddle in his affairs. For this reason, Metternich made a distinction between the foreigners living within the Ottoman Empire and professing the Christian faith, who could be protected by their native countries on the basis of relevant agreements, and the sultan's Christian subjects whose civil and political rights could not be protected by other countries because such protection would be an infraction of the sultan's sovereignty. When it came to religious affairs, however, the powers should be entitled to express their opinions, and this right had to be shared by all of them and not constitute a privilege of one of them. Every church in the East could choose the great power to which it would address grievances concerning problems of faith. With this measure Metternich hoped to forestall French or Russian dominance in the religious affairs of the region.⁶⁵

Metternich's other suggestions also sought to weaken the French position. He proposed that while all European powers, including France, should discuss the fate of all Ottoman Christians in the following months, the Maronites' future ought to be resolved only by the signatories of the London convention because this "nation" had requested help only from the other four powers, and from Austria in particular. Both matters should be discussed in Constantinople and not in London, which had served as a centre of negotiations on the Eastern question since December 1839. The significance of this proposal lay in Metternich's ambition to control the course of events through his considerable personal influence at the sultan's court and its proximity to Vienna. Moreover, this would weaken the position of the British foreign secretary, Henry John Temple Lord Palmerston. Protracted discussion in London had also frustrated the chancellor who believed his goals could be achieved more quickly in Constantinople, while preserving the appearance of the sultan's sovereignty. At the moment when the accord was achieved, the sultan could then issue a firman in favor of the Syrian Christians.⁶⁶

Metternich's Near Eastern policy sought to encourage peaceful development within the Ottoman Empire. If he could accomplish this end, then the "sick man on the Bosphorus" would no longer attract the other powers' attention and would not cause serious crises with their unfortunate repercussions for the rest of the Continent, as had happened in the autumn of 1840, for example, in connection with the Rhine Crisis.⁶⁷ At the same time, Metternich did not hesitate to oppose projects that lacked his pragmatism. One of these was a French plan elaborated by the new foreign minister, François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, who transmitted his own proposal regarding the Syrian Christians to the Austrian chancellor for his examination in January of 1841. Guizot proposed that Jerusalem be declared a free city like the Cracow republic, exempt from Ottoman control and placed under the protection of the great powers. It was unclear how just Guizot thought this goal could be achieved because he outlined no practical steps in his correspondence.⁶⁸

Vienna regarded this proposal as dangerous because it attacked the Ottoman sovereignty over Jerusalem and its environs, and the proposal was impracticable for two reasons. First, Jerusalem was a holy city not only for Christians, but for Muslims as well. The sultan could never surrender his sovereignty over this territory, especially since he was not only the secular ruler, but also the head of Islam as a caliph. Second, if Jerusalem were left to the

⁶⁵Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 18 December 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

⁶⁶Ibid; Sainte-Aulaire to Guizot, Vienna, 27 January 1841, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris (hereafter: AAE), Correspondance Politique (hereafter: CP), Autriche 429.

⁶⁷More information on Metternich's effort to maintain peace in Europe during the Rhine Crisis can be found in my paper "Metternich and the Rhine Crisis," in *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations* (2006), 65–92.

⁶⁸Apponyi to Metternich, Paris, 5 and 7 January 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 320; Mayir Vereté, "A Plan for the Internationalization of Jerusalem, 1840–1841," in *From Palmerston to Balfour. Collected Essays of Mayir Vereté*, ed. Norman Rose (London, 1992), 142–49.

Christians to govern themselves, the Catholics would be undoubtedly oppressed by the Orthodox Christians, who were numerically and materially superior and whose relations with the Catholic community were hostile.⁶⁹ The Austrian chancellor considered the Orthodox believers in the Levant to be far less tolerant than the Ottomans, who were at least uninterested in the particular religious affairs of the Christians. Under the given conditions, Ottoman rule was far more advantageous for the Catholic Church.⁷⁰

The establishment of a free city would also create a new center of tension and rivalry for the great powers, which was exactly what Metternich opposed. Guizot's comparison of free Jerusalem with the situation of Cracow could in no way appease the chancellor. Austria had experienced only problems with Cracow and in Metternich's words, "the courts upon which weigh the burden of protecting this unhappy creation have enough trouble from the existence of Cracow to ever consent to the creation of a second one."⁷¹ Metternich clearly and vigorously objected to the French minister about the proposal, despite the fact that Guizot tempted him with the possibility that France might return to the diplomatic concert from which it had excluded itself with its refusal to cooperate with other great powers against Mohammed Ali.⁷² The Austrian chancellor also asked the French minister "not to be distracted by proposals that under the appearance of humanitarian or religious interests deviate from a practical direction, which is probably the only one that can assure what should be accomplished."⁷³ According to the report of the Austrian ambassador in Paris, Anton Count Apponyi, dated 16 February, Guizot seemed to accept Metternich's arguments.⁷⁴ It is questionable to what extent the French minister was actually influenced by them, but he did renounce this project. The key reason for the French retreat must be seen in the fact that Guizot did not have the support of any other power and therefore no hope for the enforcement of his idea at the sultan's court where French influence was minimal given its pro-Egyptian policy.⁷⁵

Metternich also repudiated a plan prepared by some Prussians with the consent of King Frederick William IV, a man of "politico-clerical Weltanschauung,"⁷⁶ who like Guizot, had decided to take advantage of the situation in favor of the Christian inhabitants in Syria against the alleged "fanaticism of the Mussulmans."⁷⁷ The Prussian plan was sent to Vienna on 24 February 1841 and was composed of six topics leading to the placement of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth under the protectorate of the five powers. The religious

⁶⁹The annual fighting between the Catholics and orthodox Christians in the church of the Holy Sepulcher during Easter was only the most visible tip of the iceberg. Francis Egerton, *Journal of a Tour in the Holy Land, in May and June, 1840* (London, 1841), 19; Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1923* (Cambridge, UK, 1983), 305. According to Laurin's report, there were more orthodox Christians than all members of the churches recognizing the pope's primacy in Syria: 290,000 against 284,700. In Jerusalem and its environs, the majority of the former was overwhelming. Laurin's Memoir with the Census of the Christian Population in Syria, attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 18 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

⁷⁰Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322.

⁷¹Metternich to Guizot, Vienna, 8 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Rom 67; see also Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

⁷²Apponyi to Metternich, Paris, 5 January 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 320.

⁷³Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 26 January 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322.

⁷⁴Apponyi to Metternich, Paris, 16 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 320.

⁷⁵Vereté, *A Plan for the Internationalization of Jerusalem*, 152–53.

⁷⁶Abdel-Raouf Sinno, *Deutsche Interessen in Syrien und Palästina 1841–1898* (Berlin, 1982), 19.

⁷⁷Werther to Maltzan, Berlin, 24 February 1841, GStA PK, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, Gesandtschaft Wien II, Nr. 204 Bd. 2.

communities in those towns would be entrusted to three residents who would supervise the affairs of Christians, Europeans, and the sultan's subjects. Austria and France would nominate the resident for the Catholics; Russia, the resident for the Orthodox Christians; and Great Britain and Prussia together, the third resident for the Protestants. Each of these powers would provide its own resident with 60 soldiers for his security. Some chosen places would be fortified. The property of the Holy Places would become the common property of the great powers.⁷⁸

Metternich did not express his objections openly to this plan because he did not want to harm cordial Austro-Prussian relations. Instead, he decided to employ Palmerston for this purpose. During a discussion with the British ambassador in Vienna, Lord Beauvale, on 2 March 1841 and by voluminous instructions sent to London five days later, Metternich tried to convince the British foreign secretary of the ineptitude of the Prussian proposal for the solution of the Syrian Christians' future. He himself was not prepared to answer Frederick William IV until after Palmerston and the tsar had replied.⁷⁹

Metternich's reasoning against this real plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem was similar to the objections he had addressed to the French government. Vienna regarded the Prussian idea as impracticable as the French one. The institution of three residents would lead to the factual autonomy of the city and its surroundings, weakening Ottoman supremacy over Jerusalem. As he had in February, Metternich expressed apprehension at the proposed removal of the Ottoman government because of the mutual resentment between the Christian creeds and the importance of Jerusalem for the Muslims:

The distributive justice of the Turkish government knows how to deal with the difficulties and sometimes even the suffering that the oppression of the local authorities imposes upon the Christians of all three confessions. The Muslim law is not intolerant. It is indifferent to the non-believers, it in no way cares about the internal regulations of the confessions, it does not meddle in the affairs of the foreign cults, and if in the course of time man had to deplore more than the deviation of this rule, it is not at all in the spirit of Islamism where the cause must be sought, but [it must be sought] on the one hand in the rivalry and excitations of the adherents of the various Christian confessions, and on the other hand in the abuse of power by the governors and their subordinates.⁸⁰

The destruction of the Ottoman presence in Jerusalem would arouse the animosity of the Muslims as would the presence of European forces that the various Christian confessions could use as instruments for solving mutual disputes.⁸¹ In short, as Metternich told Beauvale, the realization of the Prussian plan would "throw that country into inextricable confusion."⁸²

According to the Austrian statesman, there was one important difference between the French and Prussian projects that resulted from the different confessional interests of their authors. What he disliked in the latter was an excessive promotion of Protestant interests, not

⁷⁸The Prussian King's Memoir for Metternich, undated, attached to Werther to Maltzan, Berlin, 24 February 1841, GStA PK, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, Gesandtschaft Wien II, Nr. 204 Bd. 2.

⁷⁹Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 17 March 1841, GStA PK, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807 Gesandtschaft Wien II, Nr. 204 Bd. 2.

⁸⁰Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

⁸¹Ibid; Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 30 March 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

⁸²Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 2 March 1841, PRO, FO 120/197.

because of his own Catholic faith, but owing to the fact that the number of Protestants living in Palestine was small, and their church owned almost no estates there, a reallocation of the property of other churches in the region would require donating their property to the Protestants by other confessions who were not willing to share it.⁸³ In his instructions to Esterházy dated 7 May 1841, Metternich expressed his opinion:

Two ideas evidently predominate in the Prussian plan; first, is to obtain a representation in the Holy Places for the Church designated as Evangelical; second, is to let this Church participate in the property possessed in these regions by the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Armenian churches. If the first of these pretensions is devoid of sane moral application, the second one encounters practical considerations that make its admission impossible. This conception is cloudy; it aims to create a state of affairs for which all required elements are missing; it has neither a well-founded point of departure nor a possible point of arrival.⁸⁴

Metternich hoped that Palmerston would also view the Prussian plan as “stillborn.”⁸⁵ The British foreign secretary completely shared the Austrian chancellor’s attitude towards the sultan’s sovereignty and the solution of the Syrian Christians’ future and agreed with Metternich’s arguments. The British response to the Prussian project was therefore negative; and because no support came from Petersburg as well, the plan was taken off the table.⁸⁶

In part, the two above-mentioned projects reflect the fact that this period saw abundant discussion of various plans that might improve the Christians’ situation in Syria and particularly in Palestine. At the end of 1840 and the beginning of 1841, several newspapers and pamphlets in Europe produced many such plans. Their authors were individuals, as well as various associations, whose increased concerns for the future of Syria resulted from the fact that this region had changed its virtual owner with the aid of the great powers. Various fantastic projects like the foundation of a Jewish kingdom or a Christian republic in Palestine, or making from this part of the world a destination for the surplus of people from some European states were in Metternich’s view as impractical and harmful as the plans of the French foreign minister and Prussian king because they were motivated by passion and they ignored the real situation prevailing in the Levant.⁸⁷ A notable example was the idea of a former physician in Napoleon’s army, Barrachin, who wanted to emancipate the Christians living in the Ottoman Empire and liberate the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. His article was printed with a picture of a liberal Frenchman leading a Muslim, Greek, Armenian, and Jew under the flag of a unified religion.⁸⁸

⁸³Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236; Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 30 March 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

⁸⁴Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Palmerston to Beauvale, London, 11 March 1841, in *Notes on the Diplomatic History of the Jewish Question. With Texts of Protocols, Treaty Stipulations and Other Public Acts and Official Documents*, ed. Lucien Wolf (London, 1919), 117; Sinno, *Deutsche Interessen in Syrien*, 20; Hajjar, *L’Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 360.

⁸⁷Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 14 February and 12 July 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67; Metternich to Guizot, Vienna, 8 February 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67; Apponyi to Metternich, Paris, 16 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 320; Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322; Alexander Schölch, “Jerusalem in the 19th Century (1831–1917 AD),” in *Jerusalem in History*, ed. K. J. Asali (Buckhurst Hill, UK, 1989), 230; Gérard Degeorg, *Damaskus von den Ottomanen bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna, 2006), 130.

⁸⁸Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 30 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Canitz to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 29 November 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7365.

Metternich naturally opposed Barrachin's appeal for two familiar reasons. First, the emancipation of the Ottoman Christians would inevitably lead to the weakening of the fragile structure of the empire and the predominance of the Orthodox believers:

The committees in France are being established for the support of the Christians' interests in the Holy Places; some of them are preaching a new crusade, others would like to achieve the liberation of the Christian population in different ways ... In our manner of thinking, there can be in no way a question of the emancipation of the Christian tribes in Syria from the Sultan's sovereignty because we are firmly decided to remain loyal to the principle of the preservation of the Ottoman Empire and we are absolutely convinced that the most unfortunate consequence for the Latin Church would arise from the mass political emancipation of the Christians in the regions where the schismatic Churches possess material force for their own benefit.⁸⁹

Second, in the words of the Prussian envoy in Constantinople, Hans Karl Baron von Königsmarck, the projects propounded in the French press often concealed specific political interests under "the venerable mask of religion and philanthropy."⁹⁰ This hypocrisy was particularly dangerous, as Metternich stated in July 1841:

There are men occupying themselves with [the projects] purely for religious reasons; for others, the religious mantle serves to veil political aims ... If they want to apply religious ideas to material interests, they expose themselves to serious delusions. The politicians rallying around the religious banner will certainly find themselves in opposition to the conservative views of the Ottoman Empire that I provide to the cabinets without reservation.⁹¹

The prince did not confine himself only to the critique of the others' projects, but also prepared his own plan for the solution of the Syrian question. He discussed it briefly with the French ambassador in Vienna, Louis Count Sainte-Aulaire, at the end of January 1841, and circulated it at the beginning of the following month.⁹² In its elaboration, he was particularly motivated by his often proclaimed opinion that the hitherto maltreatment of the Christians did not result from the sultan's and his dignitaries' intolerance, but from the violation of rights accorded to the Christian inhabitants and from the local pashas' arbitrary behavior. As he wrote to Stürmer on 7 February 1841, "it is not necessary to do anything radically new; what must be done is to maintain the privileges and regulate again what had already existed and had lapsed in the course of the centuries."⁹³

On this account, he advocated the appointment of an extraordinary Ottoman emissary in Jerusalem who would occupy himself with the situation of the Christians, the local residents as well as Europeans, with individuals as well as with the churches in the city and in Bethlehem, and protect them from the abuses of Syrian notables. Such an emissary would answer only to the sultan and be completely independent of the local pashas. The

⁸⁹ Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322.

⁹⁰ Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 30 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284.

⁹¹ Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322.

⁹² Also, in this case, Elliav was incorrect with his dating when he claims that Metternich presented his project in the instructions to London on 5 October 1840. Elliav, *Das österreichische Konsulat in Jerusalem*, 36. No mention was found in them. Metternich to Neumann, Vienna, 5 October 1840, HHStA, StA, England 231. Wolf made the same mistake when he dated the "Memorandum Delivered by the Austrian Government to the Prussian Government" back to October 1840. In Wolf, *Notes on the Diplomatic History*, 111–13. No such document from October was found in any of visited archives.

⁹³ Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 7 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

confessions would be entitled to send their deputies to him to deal with their problems and simultaneously to appeal to the representatives of the great powers in Constantinople in purely religious affairs. This measure would assure the security of the Christians without affecting the sultan's reign over Jerusalem. According to Metternich, it was a simple but satisfactory solution and above all, in contrast to the ambitious and chimerical projects, easily feasible because, among other reasons, it rested on existing legal rules.⁹⁴ In late March 1841, the prince wrote to Stürmer:

My work is based only upon two principles, namely these: first, on the respect for the privileges and guarantees accorded from time immemorial to the Christians as well as their religious establishments in these regions, and second, on the institution of a Muslim functionary delegated by the Sultan himself for protecting the security of the Christians in the Holy Places. I cannot imagine what could prevent the Porte from acceding to this demand, nor what could prevent it from accepting it with willingness. Everything in our idea is consistent with the well known interests of the Ottoman monarch and his wish to increase his authority in the eyes of Europe.⁹⁵

Although the plan was not at variance with the Porte's fundamental attitudes as Metternich presupposed them, and although the Austrian chancellor's influence at the Ottoman court was considerable,⁹⁶ he also sought the support of the other great powers for the expected negotiations in Constantinople. Despite the proclaimed motto that he did "not aspire to create new political contentions but to alleviate them,"⁹⁷ the chancellor was only half successful. The first power he addressed was France; its support would be valuable to him for two reasons. First, Austro-French cooperation would strengthen the Catholics' position in the Levant. He lured Guizot with assurances that both powers ought to defend the Catholic faith together in terms of their "special and intimate concert."⁹⁸ Second, joint action with France would eliminate the danger of mutual rivalry, which was a matter of crucial significance for Metternich.

In February, Metternich tried to persuade Guizot that the Austrian proposal was practical and should be preferred:

In the project as we are presenting it, one achieves the most feasible good; wanting to go further is to find oneself on the way leading to an abyss ... Our system offers a remedy against an ill whose source is completely different from that assigned by people undoubtedly motivated by the best intentions and seeking the cause of that ill where it does not exist. The Christians in Syria cause each other more harm than the Muslims want and cause to them. The presence of a representative of a sovereign authority motivated by the *esprit de corps* of a central government that is perfectly tolerant will be sufficient to

⁹⁴Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 26 January 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322; Metternich to Esterházy, 3 February 1841, StA, England 236; Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 7 February 1841, StA, Türkei VI, 83; Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 14 February 1841, Vienna, HHStA, StK, Rom 67; Sainte-Aulaire to Guizot, Vienna, 27 January 1841, AAE, CP, Autriche 429; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 2 February and 17 March 1841, GStA PK, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807 Gesandtschaft Wien II, Nr. 204 Bd. 2; Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 20 February 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 4010.

⁹⁵Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 26 March 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

⁹⁶Caesar E. Farah, "Austrian Diplomacy and the Mt. Lebanon Crisis in the Age of Metternich," in *Habsburgisch-osmanische Beziehungen. Relations Habsbourg-ottomanes*, ed. Andreas Tietze (Vienna, 1985), 330.

⁹⁷Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 14 February 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67.

⁹⁸Sainte-Aulaire to Guizot, Vienna, 8 February 1841, AAE, CP, 429; see also Sainte-Aulaire to Guizot, Vienna, 23 January 1841, AAE, CP, 429.

execute the welfare that we want to ensure to the Christian population generally and the Catholics in particular.⁹⁹

Discussion between the two countries did not survive the end of February. Although the Austrian chancellor boasted that Guizot had assented to his arguments and declared his willingness to satisfy Metternich's wish for closer cooperation between Austria and France in the Syrian question, his claim was not demonstrated in practice. Anyone in Vienna could hardly suppose that after the Austrian intervention with the Maronites and its refusal of the French project, the Austrian church policy would achieve the Parisian cabinet's support. Guizot could not and did not want to surrender French dominance in this region that had lasted three hundred years and was now seriously threatened by Metternich's diplomacy. Moreover, although himself a protestant, Guizot held both Catholic circles and the nationalist public in France in high regard. The former advocated intervention for religious reasons; the latter, for reasons of national glory. The French king, Louis Philippe, also took a personal interest in the matter and was evidently aggrieved by the Austrian attitude toward the French proposal.¹⁰⁰

Frederick William IV's lack of cooperation can also be most probably ascribed to the disillusionment that failure of the Prussian project caused. Although Metternich had avoided its open refusal, as he had in the French case, nobody in Berlin had any illusions about the attitude of the cabinet in Vienna. Königsmarck's reports from January and the first half of February 1841 show that he assisted Stürmer in the Syrian affair, but this cooperation never happened again. The explanation for this fact is simple: Königsmarck was not instructed to proceed with his Austrian colleague in this affair any more.¹⁰¹

The third influential power that refused to support Austria was the Holy See. Already in the autumn of 1840, Metternich had tried to obtain the pope's recognition for his policy toward the Maronites and Catholics in Syria.¹⁰² To achieve this objective, Metternich had roundly criticized France and its Egyptian protégé. He had accused the government in Paris of offering protection to the Christians only to promote its political goals and claimed that it had no real interest in the fate of the Catholics because otherwise Paris would have had no reason to try to usurp all the rights for their protection. The Habsburg Empire, on the other hand, sincerely wanted to protect the rights of Syrian Catholics and did not claim an exclusive protection after the fashion of France: "As to the claim of protecting the religious interests of the Catholics in Syria, contrary to wanting to deprive France of it, we will always recognize its [right], not as an exclusive privilege but as a general right belonging to all Catholic Powers... We will not create a protectorate, we will intercede for the Sultan's Catholic subjects with the sovereign."¹⁰³ He went even further in his attack against Mohammed Ali:

I cannot believe that in Rome anyone could be deceived by the charlatanism with which they wanted to pass Mohammed Ali off as a benevolent ruler, the hope for civilisation in the Levant, the protector of the Christians. This vulpine man has created only what could serve to his personal interest, his

⁹⁹Metternich to Guizot, Vienna, 8 February 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67.

¹⁰⁰Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 7 March 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236; Apponyi to Metternich, Paris, 16, 19 and 20 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 320.

¹⁰¹Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 5 January, 10 February and 23 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Königsmarck to Stieповich, Büyükdere, 8 February 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; M. Jouplain, *La Question du Liban* (Paris, 1908), 260.

¹⁰²Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 18 December 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78; Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64; Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 21 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

¹⁰³Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 21 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

civilisation embraces only the resources of his power, and his toleration for the Christians exists only in the phrases by which he amuses European travellers. A hard yoke imposed on Syria would soon change it into a region as unfortunate as Egypt, and the repeated insurrections antecedent to the actual crisis must be attributed to the barbarous measures that the pasha tried to introduce in these provinces.¹⁰⁴

In fact, Metternich did not believe his own words about Mohammed Ali's intolerance. It is evident from other documents that he was well aware of Mohammed Ali's contribution to the security of the Europeans, as well as of the local Christians.¹⁰⁵ Right at that moment, however, Metternich had not hesitated to exaggerate to convince the representatives of the Papal State that the Ottoman government would not actually be any less tolerant than the Egyptian regime:

Compared to [Mohammed Ali], the Porte has entered a new course during Sultan Mahmud II's rule, the Mohammedan fanaticism has disappeared and given place to real toleration. Since the new reign [of Sultan Abdülmecid I] even greater progress has been made; the edict of Gülhane has given to the rayahs [non-Muslims] guaranties that they have never had, and it has sanctioned the principles that are the safeguard of the human rights. Returning to the scepter of the Sultan, Syria would have veritable chances to improve its fate.¹⁰⁶

To all appearances, Metternich's effort was doomed to failure also in Rome. Lützow and his subordinate, Austrian Chargé d'Affaires Ohms, were convinced of the prevailing pro-French tendency of most of the Catholic clergy in the Eternal City that was intensified by fear of the war preparations in France and the threat of an eventual French campaign in the Apennines in the autumn of 1840. Cardinal Secretary Lambruschini expressed recognition of the Austrian endeavor to help the Syrian Catholics, but that was all that Metternich obtained from the pope. Reports from the Ottoman Empire also imply that the pro-French party really did dominate in Rome.¹⁰⁷

The absence of support from Rome, Berlin, and Paris proved to be unimportant because of the attitudes of Russia and Great Britain. Despite the fact that Russia longed to strengthen its own interest not only among the Orthodox, but also among the other Syrian Christians,¹⁰⁸ and despite the fact that the Russian vice-Chancellor Karl Robert Count Nesselrode's first reaction to Metternich's activities in the affair was negative, the tsar decided after some hesitation to support the Austrian plan and he wrote expressing his support to the sultan on 1 May 1841.¹⁰⁹ Metternich also won the backing of London, where Palmerston completely shared the chancellor's views on the Syrian question.¹¹⁰ This was not the case for Ponsonby, who both mistrusted Metternich's aims and considered him to be ignorant on this subject. Ponsonby refused to participate in the affair until he received explicit instructions to do so from London.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

¹⁰⁵For all, see Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 7 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

¹⁰⁶Metternich to Ohms, Vienna, 7 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 64.

¹⁰⁷Lützow to Metternich, Rome, 20 June and 18 November 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 63; Ohms to Metternich, Rome, 10 October 1840, HHStA, StK, Rom 63; Lützow to Metternich, Rome, 28 March 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 66; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 16 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹⁰⁸Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, March 2, 1841, PRO, FO 120/197; Guichen, *La crise d'Orient*, 469.

¹⁰⁹Clanricarde to Palmerston, St. Petersburg, February 23, 1841, in Wolf, *Notes on the Diplomatic History*, 113; Guichen, *La crise d'Orient*, 471; Hajjar, *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 364–66.

¹¹⁰Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, 764.

¹¹¹Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 25 February 1841, PRO, FO 78/432.

Ponsonby was wrong about Metternich's alleged ignorance. Thanks both to his extraordinary diligence and to documents obtained by the chancellery legally as well as illegally, the prince was probably the best-informed statesman of his time. According to the testimony of the Bavarian envoy in Vienna, Maximilian Emanuel von Lerchenfeld-Aham, Metternich came to his conclusions after a careful study of relevant documents, including the former decrees of the Ottoman Sultans.¹¹² Nevertheless, Stürmer was left until May without British or Russian support; and, despite his original optimism, Metternich was not able to persuade the Porte of the utility of the Austrian plan presented by the internuncio in Constantinople on 18 February 1841. Mustapha Reshid Pasha expressed his accord with the position of the cabinet in Vienna but expected some obstructions in the Divan.¹¹³ In the second half of March, Reshid declared his apprehension that the Porte had no suitable candidate for the function of an emissary in Jerusalem acceptable to all Christian factions: "We will never find a man whose disinterest and impartiality will be of a nature that could satisfy all parties."¹¹⁴ Though it is impossible to explain the basis for the Ottomans' protraction from the documents, the fact remains that Ponsonby's noncooperation was the crucial reason why the sultan's reserve was not overcome until the end of May. In mid April, Stürmer could only complain that much more could have been done in the matter of the Syrian Christians if the British ambassador had wanted it.¹¹⁵

The internuncio's dismay corresponded to the seriousness of the situation. In the spring of 1841, the situation in Syria deteriorated considerably in consequence of the harsh treatment of the new Ottoman administration. Although the Porte ordered its forces not to maltreat the inhabitants regardless of their creed, the news of the offenses committed by the sultan's soldiers against the Syrians had already been reported in the autumn of 1840.¹¹⁶ Not intolerance but laziness and greed seem to have been their cause. The Ottoman soldiers demanded heavy labor from the mountain tribespeople in Lebanon similar to the work their own officers ordered them to carry out even though they knew that forced labor was explicitly forbidden. The inhabitants suffered financial losses not only because of the services demanded by the Ottomans, but also because of the bribes that Ottoman troops often required from the peasants coming to Beirut. Soldiers stopped the peasants at the gates and refused to let them continue to the market without paying a "relevant tax." Moreover, in the same city the soldiers were billeted only in Christian houses; no Muslim residence was requisitioned for that purpose, and this could not have remained unnoticed.¹¹⁷

The Ottomans' vital mistake proved to be the delivery of this territory into the hands of the commander of the Ottoman forces in Syria, Izzet Mehmed Pasha,¹¹⁸ who was incompetent and cruel to the local inhabitants and who refused to keep the promises made by Wood in the name of the sultan. British commodore Sir Charles Napier called Izzet "the worst man in the world."¹¹⁹ No wonder that Izzet was unpopular with the Europeans and hated by the

¹¹²Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 20 February 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

¹¹³Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 21 and 24 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 79.

¹¹⁴Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 24 March 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80.

¹¹⁵Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 14 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80.

¹¹⁶Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 25 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 23 December 1840, GSTA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7283.

¹¹⁷Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 28 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77.

¹¹⁸Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 10 September 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 75; Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 167.

¹¹⁹Michel Chebli, *Une Histoire du Liban à l'époque des émirs (1635–1841)* (Beirut, 1984), 336.

Syrians; his conduct hardly contributed to the sultan's popularity.¹²⁰ By the end of November 1840, Ponsonby and Stürmer had achieved his recall and the transfer of the command over the Ottoman troops to Selim Pasha, whose behavior was judged much more positively.¹²¹

Regardless of this change, no considerable improvement took place. To the contrary, the situation in Syria continued to deteriorate in the new year. The sultan's soldiers continually maltreated the people, and Syria was "ravaged from all sides."¹²² The main offenders were, in particular, the Albanian troops who were well known in the Near East in this period for their disobedience. They regarded the locals as enemies and treated them accordingly. Some Syrians even felt compelled to take up arms to defend their villages from the Ottoman Albanians. After the intervention of British and Austrian agents, the Albanians were gradually removed from Syria.¹²³

Nevertheless, neither this measure nor the sultan's order to protect the Christians and to punish the offenders nor the issue of a firman establishing in Syria an administrative system conforming to the Hatt-i Sharif of Gülhane led to the desired easing of tensions¹²⁴ for two main reasons. First, the irregular behavior of some Ottoman troops and officials did not change. The most obvious example of such misconduct was the governor of Damascus, Hadji Nejib Pasha, who openly demonstrated his disdain for the Christians. He forbade them to enter the city on horseback or to wear brightly colored clothes. He ordered them to dress in black according to prescriptions that predated the rule of Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, who had abolished these degrading regulations that were now unacceptable to the local Christians.¹²⁵ Second, the Ottoman administration needed money, and that is why the sultan's promise from the previous year concerning the abolition of the tax burden borne by the Syrians of all professions was not kept. After the losses suffered during the war and the outbreak of a plague in the first months of 1841, the violation of this promise was particularly painful.¹²⁶

Not surprisingly, in the spring of 1841, general discontent was widespread throughout Syria. Disillusionment with the Ottoman government was so great that, in the words of the Austrian consul in Damascus, Caspar Merlato, if Ibrahim Pasha "appeared in this state of affairs with a few men on the frontier, he would certainly become the master of the province as rapidly as he was expelled."¹²⁷ Steindl, who was sent again to Syria shortly after his return from the first

¹²⁰Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77, also in PRO, FO 78/398; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 21 November 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7283; Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 1 November 1840, PRO, FO 120/189.

¹²¹Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 25 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 25 November 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7283; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 30 November 1840, PRO, FO 78/399; Wood Ponsonbymu, Beirut, 10 November 1840, PRO, FO 78/399; Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 55.

¹²²Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 3 February 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

¹²³Wood to Ponsonby, Beirut, 22 February 1841, PRO, FO 78/432; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 22 February and 3 March 1841, PRO, FO 78/432; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 3 March 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Wood to Ponsonby, Beirut, 22 February 1841, in Cunningham, *The Early Correspondance*, 217.

¹²⁴The Order for the Seraskier of the Ottoman Army in Syria, 28 January 1841, attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 24 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 79; Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 17 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 30 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80.

¹²⁵Wood to Rifaat Pasha, Therapia, 23 May 1841, in *Correspondence with Her Majesty's Embassy at Constantinople Respecting the Affairs of Syria*, PRO, FO 881/181; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 23 May 1841, PRO, FO 78/434.

¹²⁶Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 26 May 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Jouplain, *La Question du Liban*, 257–59.

¹²⁷Merlato to Stürmer, Damascus, 6 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; see also the French translation in Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 26 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

mission to observe the internal situation, wrote to Vienna of the serious threat of insurrection against the Ottomans.¹²⁸ Even the most determined opponents of Mohammed Ali and his son were now muttering that Egyptian rule had been better.¹²⁹ When one of the Ottoman officials warned the discontented inhabitants that he would put them under Ibrahim Pasha, they answered with the threat: "More likely we would recall Ibrahim to this country if the government of the Porte does not revise its demands."¹³⁰ Particularly serious was the situation in Lebanon where the Ottomans controlled only the coast. The interior fell increasingly into a state of anarchy caused by worsening relations between the Maronites and Druze. Steindl was convinced that since the ouster of the old prince of Lebanon, Emir Bashir II, and his replacement by his nephew Bashir Qasim III, a weak and, among the people, unpopular governor, a central authority was missing.¹³¹

This "sad news from Syria"¹³² caused considerable apprehension in Vienna. Metternich considered Ibrahim Pasha's regime to have been tyrannical, but at least stable. In his opinion, the Ottoman administration was in no way stable and inclined to be more and more tyrannical. It affected the interests of the Porte, as well as the great powers, who had helped the sultan to regain this region and were thus responsible for its future. The only court benefiting from the worsening situation in Syria was France, which really was not the goal for which the allies had sacrificed their soldiers.¹³³ The chancellor's warning was well founded because the French did not hesitate to take advantage of the Ottomans' difficulties to recover their former influence. They employed priests to agitate among Catholics on behalf of France, declaring that only this great power was entitled to protect the Christian religion, its clergy, and convents.¹³⁴ The French also used another effective weapon: charity. Demeloize distributed 10,000 francs among the Maronites in the spring of 1841 as compensation for the damages suffered in the war. The donations continued during the summer and autumn.¹³⁵ The French government's goal was nothing other than exclusive protection of the Syrian Catholics, which was confirmed by Demeloize's and Ratti-Menton's efforts to prevent the Imperial Consuls from granting help or protection to the Christians and Pontois' specific recommendation to Stürmer that the Austrians not meddle in the Maronites' affairs but relinquish them to the French agents.¹³⁶

¹²⁸Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 13 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 78.

¹²⁹Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 29 March 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 10 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 14 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹³⁰Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 14 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹³¹Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 17 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 30 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; More on the Emir Bashir II's fall, see Laurin's Report, 16 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 November 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 77; Antoine Abraham, *Maronite-Druze Relations in Lebanon 1840-1860: A Prelude to Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1975), 47.

¹³²Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 26 January 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

¹³³Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 15 June 1841, HHStA, StA, England 237; Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 22 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

¹³⁴Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 22 February 1841, PRO, FO 78/432; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 31 March 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 29 March 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 20 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹³⁵Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 29 March and 17 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 30 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Achille Laurent, *Relations historique des affaires de Syrie, depuis 1840 jusqu'en 1842*, tome I (Paris, 1846), 267; Dominique Chevallier, *La société du Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe* (Paris, 1971), 161.

¹³⁶Merlato to Stürmer, Damascus, 6 May 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 26 May and 2 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

The Habsburg Empire was not unresponsive to the French activities and tried to neutralize them by sending financial support to Syria. On 3 July 1841, the Austrian brig Montecuccoli carried to Beirut 80 000 florins (1 million piasters) for the Maronites; part had been donated by the emperor and part had been collected in Viennese churches. Money was given directly to Yûsuf, who was asked to distribute it for the reconstruction of churches and convents damaged during the fight in 1840. For the sake of preserving friendly relations, the Austrians also gave some presents to the Maronite patriarch and clergy and a sword for Selim Pasha decorated with diamonds and with a value at 80 000 piasters.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, it does not seem that Austrian activities in Syria equaled the energy of the French agents. As Caesar Farah pointed out, "Austrian consular officials reacted as good Catholics whenever a situation merited it, but made no real effort to elbow past their French colleagues in this delicate area."¹³⁸ The proof can also be found in Steindl's lament concerning his country's limited involvement: "As to our august court, it enjoys the greatest sympathies of all Catholic nations in Syria. It would suffice to want and we would obtain, particularly in Lebanon, more influence than all other governments."¹³⁹

Though Metternich was deliberating at the same moment about possibly instructing the Austrians to intensify their effort,¹⁴⁰ in the end whatever he did was not sufficient because the emperor's agents still did not know the exact intentions of the cabinet in Vienna and were poorly instructed in the affair of the Syrian Catholics. On 2 June 1841, Stürmer asked the chancellor to be advised of the imperial interests in the Syrian question to be able to "precisely outline to our Consuls the boundaries within which they should proceed."¹⁴¹ However, no specific instruction to this problem ever came from Vienna and though a clear explanation of this passivity is missing, it is clear that Metternich did not want to go too far and start a serious quarrel with France on account of Syrian Christians, which would cause additional problems to the Ottoman administration. Owing to the difficulties in Syria, the need to assure the Christians' safety administratively became increasingly urgent. Metternich began to occupy himself with the future character of the Ottoman rule in this region only at the beginning of December 1840, but he never paid much attention in his correspondence to this topic, at least in comparison with the purely religious problems, though he certainly understood that the welfare of the Syrian inhabitants depended on the efficiency of the state apparatus.¹⁴²

The reason for the limited concern about the latter consisted partly in Metternich's exhaustion with the protracted Near Eastern crisis and partly from his belief that no radical changes had to be made in Syria to attain desired goals. In his opinion, the province ought to return to the situation before the Egyptian invasion and be again divided into four pashalics in which governors able to enforce the Ottoman laws would be appointed. As for Lebanon, Metternich did not adopt any firm attitude toward Yûsuf's request addressed to Constantinople and Vienna that the prince of Lebanon be chosen from among the Maronite leaders because Metternich did not know whether the grounds on which this demand was

¹³⁷ Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 26 May, 9 and 30 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; Wood to Ponsonby, Pera, 8 June 1841, PRO, FO 78/434; The letter for Wood, 5 July 1841, attached to Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 31 July 1841, PRO, FO 78/434; Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, 760; Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 89; Abou Nohra, *L'Autriche et la question du Liban*, 314.

¹³⁸ Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 74.

¹³⁹ Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 10 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80.

¹⁴⁰ Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 14 April 1841, PRO, FO 120/197.

¹⁴¹ Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 2 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹⁴² Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 7 February 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

founded were valid or not. Nevertheless, he found it better that the authority held by a single prince was divided among a greater number of leaders, giving to each of the tribes a chief chosen from itself. Various tribes were thus governed exclusively by their own chiefs paying a very small tribute to the sultan but being responsible for maintaining strict policy within their territories. However, Metternich only submitted this idea “as one which may be worth examination in conjunction with the ministers of the Porte, not as one on which his mind is made up.”¹⁴³

As noted above, Metternich's views of the future administration of Syria, as well as the security of Christians living there, were motivated by the respect for the sultan's sovereignty and simultaneously by the desire to weaken the French influence. For these reasons, Metternich proposed to exclude Acre from the local administration and place it into the hands of a governor installed by the sultan and subordinate only to him. Its garrison was to be composed of soldiers sent from Constantinople.¹⁴⁴ The chancellor also opposed the idea that some cities on the Lebanese coast, such as Beirut and Latakia, should be governed directly by Emir Beshir III because it would considerably strengthen the influence of the Maronites over this area. According to Metternich, there was no certainty that the Austrian prestige among them would prevail forever and if France were to recover its former interest with this Catholic nation, France would strengthen its influence in the seaports and contribute to its political and economic supremacy. Metternich discussed his designs for Acre and the Lebanese seaports with Palmerston, whose opinions were affirmative.¹⁴⁵

The worsening situation in Syria, the French activities, and Ottomans' misconduct against the Christian population in Bulgaria in the spring of 1841 moved Russia and Great Britain to greater activity in the Syrian question and contributed to the greater support on the part of Ponsonby and the Russian chargé d'affaires in Constantinople, Vladimir Titov, for Stürmer's negotiation with the Porte.¹⁴⁶ On 31 May 1841, the internuncio visited the sultan and began a new series of discussions with new Ottoman Foreign Minister Rifaat Pasha on Syrian affairs.¹⁴⁷ No matter how much Pontois opposed their activities,¹⁴⁸ the joint effort of three diplomats led to a quick solution that complied with the Austrian chancellor's wishes. On 20 June 1841, Abdülmecid I issued a firman in favor of the Christians in Syria. The Ottoman ferik (a division general), Tahir Pasha, a former chair of the Military Council, was appointed governor of Jerusalem and Gaza subordinate only to the sultan and given great power to protect the safety of the Christian minorities. The existing rights of non-Muslims were

¹⁴³Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 2 December 1840, PRO, FO 120/189; see also Metternich [Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 26 December 1840,] HHStA, StA, England 231. At this point, it is necessary to mention the proposition that Stürmer discussed with the Porte about the creation of an autonomous Lebanese principality in 1840, a thesis that is based only on Pontois' three reports. If it was so, it had to be only a private matter because there is no corresponding reference in the Austrian or other researched diplomatic correspondence. Fattal and Nohra, *L'Autriche et le Liban*, 32; Nohra, *L'Autriche et la question du Liban*, 303.

¹⁴⁴Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 2 December 1840, PRO, FO 120/189; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 26 December 1840, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7360; Metternich to Esterházy, Vienna, 3 February 1841, HHStA, StA, England 236; Sainte-Aulaire to Guizot, Vienna, 13 January 1841, AAE, CP, Autriche 429.

¹⁴⁵Beauvale to Palmerston, Vienna, 3 January and 4 April 1841, PRO, FO 120/197; Maltzan to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 2 February 1841 GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 6034.

¹⁴⁶Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 6 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; Bockelberg to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 15 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7364; Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 22 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83.

¹⁴⁷Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 2 and 23 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 8 June 1841, PRO, FO 78/434.

¹⁴⁸Hajjar, *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 367.

confirmed and new privileges were granted in several letters addressed to Tahir Pasha and other Syrian notables. Moreover, the sultan made good on promises made in the previous year to the benefit of the Syrian population, such as the reduction of taxes or granting money to the local chiefs assisting in the fight against the Egyptians.¹⁴⁹

Austrian diplomacy hence achieved a success in which Stürmer had “not even dared to hope.”¹⁵⁰ Metternich was completely satisfied with the result of his effort to secure a better future for the Syrian Christians.¹⁵¹ In July 1841, he evaluated the benefit of the European intervention in his instructions to Lützow: “We are convinced that the results of our action in the Divan are the only attainable and the only really practical and sufficient ones for the fulfillment of all the till now neglected desires of the [Christian] religion, or for at least securing a tolerable existence for the Christians in Syria, which is definitely much better than their existing one.”¹⁵²

This statement was only half true. From a short-term view, Austrian diplomacy had undoubtedly been successful. The chancellor had achieved all of his goals relating to the future of the Syrian Christians, and he had been the driving engine of the negotiations that had achieved triumph in June 1841.¹⁵³ As to the administrative system, here the Porte also accepted many of Metternich’s views because they best served the sultan’s own objectives in Syria;¹⁵⁴ the future of Acre and the Lebanese coast was settled according to Metternich’s advice.¹⁵⁵ Above all, in cooperation with Great Britain, Metternich diminished French dominance over the Syrian Christians. Although Austria’s influence over Syria did not approach British influence in the summer of 1841, the Habsburg Empire was largely popular among the Catholic population.¹⁵⁶

From a long-term view, however, Metternich’s victory was considerably less spectacular. The arrangements undertaken by the Porte in June under pressure from three of the great powers did not lead to any significant improvement of the internal situation in Syria because the problems of this province were too complicated and the discontent of its inhabitants too widespread to be removed by the Porte’s several firmans.¹⁵⁷ The animosity between the Maronites and the Druze escalated, and civil war broke out in Lebanon in the autumn of 1841.¹⁵⁸ The privileges recognized or newly bestowed on the Christians, such as their factual

¹⁴⁹Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 16, 23 and 30 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81; Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 23 and 30 June 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Bockelberg to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 30 June and 3 July 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 6034; Ponsonby to Palmerston, Therapia, 21 June 1841, PRO, FO 78/434; The Firman Addressed to Feriq Mehmed Tahir Pasha, 20 June 1841, PRO, FO 78/434; The Grand Vizier’s Letter to the Pashas of Damascus, Aleppo, Sidon and Feriqs of Tripoli in Syria and Jerusalem, PRO, FO 78/434.

¹⁵⁰Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 30 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81.

¹⁵¹Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 29 June 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 83; Bockelberg to Frederick William IV, Vienna, 7 July 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 6034.

¹⁵²Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67.

¹⁵³Farah, *The Quadruple Alliance*, 102; Hajjar, *L’Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 365.

¹⁵⁴Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 52.

¹⁵⁵Ibid, 71; At the beginning of March 1841, Selim Pasha was constituted as an independent governor of Acre. Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 3 March 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80. Only the number of pashalics was reduced from four to three, but nothing indicates that this fact would be regretted by Metternich. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 81.

¹⁵⁶Steindl to Stürmer, Beirut, 10 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 58.

¹⁵⁷Farah, *The Quadruple Alliance*, 126; see also Werner Jahrmann, *Frankreich und die orientalische Frage 1875/78* (Berlin, 1936), 13.

¹⁵⁸Königsmarck to Frederick William IV, Büyükdere, 7 July 1841, GStA PK, HA III, MdA I, 7284; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 11 August, 10 and 24 November 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 82.

equalization with the Muslim majority in terms of the hatt-i sharif of Gülhane, contributed to an increased animosity on the part of local Muslims who saw in this an act of blasphemy.¹⁵⁹ Even the changes in the system of taxation affecting all inhabitants were generally regarded as concessions to the Christians.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, mutual relations in Syria deteriorated, thanks in part to the intervention of European countries in aid of the Christian churches. This was Metternich's biggest failure. His proposals for religious and administrative affairs had sought to reconcile the internal actors in Syria and to remove any causes for great-power interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, he had hoped to consolidate the sultan's power. Thanks to the persistence of conflict in Syria, however, the situation produced a different outcome, and Lebanon became a center of tension that continued to attract the attention of the other European powers.¹⁶¹

Moreover, the chancellor's apprehension that France would take advantage of the unsettled situation in Syria finally proved to be the case, and the government in Paris actually restored its temporarily lost influence, particularly among the Maronites. France still jealously guarded its privileged position and was not willing to share it with anybody;¹⁶² Metternich's offer of July 1841 for Austrian-French cooperation remained unanswered.¹⁶³ Although Metternich had only sought to weaken the French protectorate and not to destroy it, and although the Habsburg monarchy enjoyed greater respect in this region after 1841,¹⁶⁴ the French comeback and its disinclination to cooperate must also be regarded as a defeat for Metternich.

Should Metternich also be blamed for social upheaval in Syria and Lebanon after 1841? In fact, he could be blamed simply because he belonged among those who failed to find a long-term solution to the Syrian question. On closer investigation, however, Metternich's views and actions in the complicated affair did not lack correctness and goodwill, and they rested on a realistic assessment of the situation. To answer the question, some other queries must be raised.

Was Metternich entirely ignorant as Ponsonby claimed regarding the Syrian question? He seemed not to be and definitely nobody else offered a better solution at that time. Metternich has been criticized by historians for his reluctance to allow changes in the political and social status quo. In terms of Europe, this criticism is well-founded. Given the complexities of confessional issues in the East, however, his circumspection is understandable. His actions resulted not merely from his conservatism, but also from a realistic appraisal of the situation. French and Prussian plans for Jerusalem, for example, would have had devastating impact on the relations among various religions in this city, as well as in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. The annexation of Holy Places by European

¹⁵⁹Thankmar Freiherr von Münchhausen, *Mameluken, Paschas und Fellachen. Berichte aus dem Reich Mohammed Alis 1801-1849* (Stuttgart, Vienna, 1982), 372.

¹⁶⁰Lerchenfeld to Ludwig I von Bayern, Vienna, 20 June 1841, BHStA, MA, Wien 2410.

¹⁶¹Schlicht, *The Role of Foreign Powers in the History of Lebanon and Syria*, 111.

¹⁶²Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 14 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 81, and also PRO, FO 78/434; Alfred Schlicht, *Frankreich und die syrischen Christen 1799-1861. Minoritäten und europäischer Imperialismus im Vorderen Orient* (Berlin, 1981), 39; Hajjar, *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient*, 515; Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 60.

¹⁶³Metternich to Apponyi, Vienna, 28 July 1841, HHStA, StA, Frankreich 322. Metternich's animosity to the French endeavor for the exclusive protectorate was so great that he even recommended the pope to send only Italian clericals to Palestine and Lebanon because, in his opinion, the French sought to propagate the political influence of their nation. Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 12 July 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67; Lützow to Metternich, Rome, 31 July 1841, Vienna, HHStA, StK, Rom 65.

¹⁶⁴Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism*, 77.

countries would have offended Muslims, weakened the sultan's power, and caused a new problem for European diplomacy because no one could presume that the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant powers would have been able to achieve harmony. The well-known French-Russian dispute before the Crimean War is clear proof of this.

Was Metternich too optimistic when he wagered on the improvement of the Ottoman administration in Syria? In this case, he had no other choice. If the great powers finally declared that they wanted to preserve the sultan's sovereignty over Syria, there was no other prospect for the Syrian Christians than to live within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. The only way to improve their living conditions was to convince the Porte to maintain a functioning administrative apparatus. Past experience had already proved that the Ottomans were capable of assuring Christians an undisturbed and prosperous life: Ten years earlier, with Austrian and French assistance, the life of Catholic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had been considerably improved by several decrees issued by the Porte.¹⁶⁵ Metternich also assured this for the Maronites, at least in religious matters. It was not his fault that the Ottomans failed entirely in their takeover of Syria and that the Maronites could not come to an agreement with the Druze over the distribution of political power in Mount Lebanon.

Did Metternich's involvement in the Syrian question in 1840 and 1841 contribute to an increased interest of the other European powers in the religious and political affairs of this region in the following decades? The answer is positive, but such an outcome would certainly also have occurred without any Austrian measures taken on behalf of the Maronites (and later all Christians) in the same years. Since the autumn of 1840, a Russian-French rivalry over religious affairs was already in progress; and the British also intervened in the internal situation of Syria during the same year.¹⁶⁶ What must be assessed positively in Metternich's case is the fact that the aim of his policy was to create conditions that would make the interference of European powers into the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire unnecessary. Although he tried to weaken the French influence over the Maronites at the beginning, particularly because he wanted to use them in the fight against the French protégé Mohammed Ali, Metternich never seriously thought of preventing France from protecting the Catholics and did not allow himself to carry the banner of religion, either before June 1841 nor in the second half of that year when, in the name of Catholicism, the pope tried to drag him into a conflict with Prussia and Russia.¹⁶⁷ In short, Metternich did not want to transform the Eastern Mediterranean into a battlefield of religious-political interests; in many ways, he demonstrated greater realism and restraint than one could have expected.

¹⁶⁵ Ottenfels to Metternich, Constantinople, 31 December 1830, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 51; Ottenfels to Metternich, Constantinople, 26 January, 10 February, 11 and 26 March 1831, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 52.

¹⁶⁶ Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 21 October 1840, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 76; Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 30 April 1841, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80.

¹⁶⁷ Lützow to Metternich, Rome, 17 July and 13 November 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 65; Metternich to Lützow, Königswart, 29 July and Vienna, 30 November 1841, HHStA, StK, Rom 67. Metternich's involvement in the Syrian question from July 1840 to June 1841 resulted from pragmatic, as well as humanitarian, reasons. The influence of his own religious faith, however, appears to have been minimal in this case. It is naturally difficult to assess to what degree the chancellor's religious persuasion motivated him, because he never mentioned it specifically in his instructions, in his personal correspondence, or in his discussions with foreign diplomats.

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