

# Small files: Tunisia: Small files: Tunisia - 11

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29 March

"U.K. Good Offices Mission"

- text delivered at Palais de Nation,  
Geneva.

SECRET



*Received in meeting  
at P de N, Geneva, March 29, 11 am.  
Suggested March 30, 6 pm, Claudon =  
March 31, 5 pm, FO in Claudon. AN*

When the U.S. and U.K. Governments accepted the invitation of the Governments of France and Tunisia to exercise their good offices in order to resolve the differences which had arisen between France and Tunisia, and we were appointed by our governments to undertake this task, you were good enough to say that if we should reach a point in our negotiations at which we wished to invoke your personal authority with the parties, you would consider an invitation from us with this object.

As you will know, we have now been in contact with the French and Tunisian Governments for six weeks. During this time we have made substantial progress, but we have now reached a situation from which it is not easy to see how we are to make further progress within the framework of the good offices. We have secured the agreement of President Bourguiba to a plan which includes the withdrawal of French forces from all their positions outside Bizerta, neutral inspection of the major airfields to ensure that these are not used after the departure of the French for the support of the rebellion in Algeria, individual reconsideration by the Tunisian Government of the cases of the French Nationals expelled from their homes, the restoration of consular protection for all French Nationals in Tunisia, and direct France-Tunisian negotiations for a provisional regime in Bizerta.

We/



We have further obtained the assent of the French Government to this plan subject to the clarification of a few relatively minor points, but subject also to the important qualification that it must be accompanied by some system for dealing with incidents on the Tunisian-Algerian frontier.

The French Government argue that such a system is necessary for two reasons. First because the Tunisian and French complaints to the Security Council both related to frontier incidents, and that a settlement which made no reference to this aspect of the problem would be incomplete. Secondly, that unless a neutral organisation exists to which complaints concerning incidents on the frontier can be taken, such complaints will inevitably cause interruptions in the Franco-Tunisian negotiations envisaged in our plan and bring about a fresh deterioration of Franco-Tunisian relations.

On the other hand President Bourguiba argues that any acceptance by him of proposals for the control of the frontier would be interpreted by nationalist opinion in Tunisia and in other Arab countries as collaboration with the French and would undermine his position, the maintenance of which he regards as being in the general interest.

In the face of this attitude we doubt whether there would be any advantage in our returning to Tunisia to discuss the frontier problem further with President

Bourguiba./