

# Small files: Tunisia: Small files: Tunisia - 29

*HS L 179:193*



Dag Hammarskjölds saml.

Tunisia - 1961

30 July

D.H.s memorandum

MEMORANDUM

6 copies  
Wesley

1. Meeting Slim in the course of the debate in the Security Council on Friday the 21st, I said to him that I was most worried by the possibility that the Security Council consideration of Bizerte, the next day, might end up in nothing. I therefore was playing with the idea to intervene at the end of the proceedings to see if I could not ~~say~~<sup>ve</sup> the minimum necessary to forestall a serious aggravation which might easily come if the Council were ~~disrupted~~<sup>about</sup> ~~to fail~~.

2. Saturday morning, just before the Security Council meeting, Slim asked to see me. I met him soon after ten o'clock, when the meeting was scheduled to begin. Slim said to me that he had very bad news from Bizerte. The killings were going on and nobody could say where the development in course might end. In the light of this, he wondered if ~~it might be wise to try to get something done~~<sup>it might be wise to try to get something done</sup> I felt that ~~something could be done~~<sup>in order</sup> immediately to stop a further deterioration.

3. I replied that in line with what I had said the previous day and ~~in~~<sup>the</sup> light of what he told me, I felt rather tempted to appeal for an immediate ceasefire myself, as an intermediary decision. I did so because I shared his worry for a continued loss of lives and ~~of course~~ ~~I~~ felt that by going straight for a very simple formula and clearly making it intermediary, I might, as Secretary-General, shoot ~~the matter~~<sup>a cease-fire</sup> through.

4. My reply led to a short discussion of alternative ways to achieve a quick decision on the cease-fire; none of them seemed preferable to the one I had suggested. I then said that I would go ahead.

5. After the discussion with Slim, which may have taken some ten minutes, I called in Wieschhoff and ran over the question with him. He agreed with my evaluation. I then dictated my statement and when it was typed, I went into the Council which, in fact, had been somewhat delayed because of my absence. Thus, there was not one minute in which I could have consulted the French, if I were to open the debate, as I obviously should.

6. After the vote on the interim resolution, before lunch, I met Slim again in the Council Chamber. He asked me if I could send a UN military unit to consolidate the cease-fire ~~and check any further~~ *we did it.* ~~advanced~~ -- he did not believe in a retreat of the French, ~~When I said~~ *this,* that ~~that~~ was absolutely excluded, he asked me if I could then send observers. I replied that ~~that~~ *this,* would be possible only at the joint request of Tunisia and France; even if France agreed, ~~it~~ *the SF* would be ~~only~~ of dubious constitutionality. I said that the only thing that ~~I~~ *we* ~~would~~ *be done* ~~do~~ "in order to stabilize the cease-fire" would be ~~to go there myself~~ *for me* which obviously would require an invitation from Bourguiba; I did not see that I could do ~~anything~~ *very much in Tunisia*, but the experience was that ~~the~~ *my* mere presence ~~for the~~ *desired* crucial days had ~~strong~~ *a* breakage effect and that ~~meant~~ *reason*, of course, from the Tunisian viewpoint, ~~be~~ enough. I did not consider it possible

and maintain a certain pressure for the carrying out of the steps requested by the resolution

(this especially) the light of the Laos  
for the French to say no in the light of certain precedents

Naturally, the Russians would object, but that was something I did not take into account personally although it might be a point to consider for the Tunisians.

7. At lunch I told Wieschhoff about this exchange of views and I said that I felt that it would be the right thing to do in order to maintain the cease-fire and that he could discuss it with the Tunisians.

8. In the afternoon, Wieschhoff told me that the Tunisians had telephoned President Bourguiba who obviously on the spot had decided to invite me in case no decision was reached on the major issues. If the Security Council thus failed, they would like to extend an invitation at the table. I replied through Wieschhoff that ~~that~~<sup>this</sup> would be far too precipitated and would lend itself to false interpretations. When that was brought to the notice of the Tunisians, they changed their line and said that an invitation would be sent next morning. I sent a message to Slim saying that I could see him at 4 p.m. on Sunday.

9. Before the meeting ended and the negative result was a fact, I did not give the matter any further thought. When, after the late end of the meeting, I took it up, driving out to Brewster, I noted that I obviously had to bring the French somehow into the picture, ~~that I obviously~~<sup>It was clear</sup> could not do that until ~~the~~<sup>what</sup> I knew that the Tunisians went through with their plan and until I saw ~~was~~<sup>form</sup> they gave to the invitation, ~~that this would mean~~<sup>obviously</sup> that I could not take the matter up ~~in any way~~ with the French before my return to the city, ~~which did not matter as~~<sup>this is</sup> information through Wieschhoff, the Tunisians did not expect me to leave

~~I did not worry me as, but this did not seem to~~

until Monday night, thus providing me with ample time for a discussion with the French, ~~that~~ <sup>also</sup> it was clear that I could not decline the invitation at a French demand, that if the French were serious in their wish for a cease-fire, they should welcome the trip because of its obvious value in this respect, and that, finally, as a matter of course, I should tell the French that an invitation received from them would have got and would get the same treatment as the Tunisian invitation.

10. In the course of my discussion with Slim, he urged very strongly

In summary 11

add after "French delegations" "between 4.30 and 4.45"

Mr. P. Millet having been informed about the unsuccessful contact with Bernard had no hesitation in accepting appointment with me at 7.00.

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10. In the course of my discussion with Slim, he urged very strongly that I leave the same night. I stated that that was impossible, (among other reasons, because) I ~~simply~~ had to see the French and discuss the matter with them. Especially, I had to make it clear to the French that I would be quite happy to stop over in Paris on my way back from Tunis. We compromised, after a study of travel possibilities, on departure on Monday morning.

11. Immediately after seeing Slim, at 4 p.m. on Sunday, we tried to get in touch with the French delegation <sup>between 4.30 and 4.45.</sup> Both Berard and Millet were out on Long Island. Berard would not come back where he lived <sup>there</sup> before six o'clock and would have a long drive into town ~~in the circumstances,~~ we asked Millet to come and he turned up around 7 p.m.

Insert

12. While waiting for Millet, I dictated a reply to Bourguiba (the text later ~~was~~ sent). When Millet came, I showed him both the invitation brought by Slim when he called, and my suggested reply. At Millet's request he got copies of both these documents. I also pointed out to Millet the coup de frein which my visit was likely to give to the developments and said that I, of course, would stop over in Paris <sup>after my visit to Tunisia,</sup> if they so wished, although this <sup>statement</sup> naturally should not be interpreted as a request for an invitation. I told him about the intended time of departure.

13. Later it emerged that the morning plane was stopping over in Paris, and ~~that~~ <sup>as</sup> this was impossible in view of the circumstances, we explored other possibilities and arrived at the conclusion that <sup>a Swissair</sup> the flight leaving the same evening was the only possible one, short of a postponement until Monday evening, contrary to the very urgent wishes of President Bourguiba. Millet was informed about the ~~expected~~ change of plans.

<sup>Leaving for</sup>  
14. ~~Going to~~ Tunisia, I had no intention to go beyond the very general purpose which was the background of the development, keeping, however, my mind open for any kind of ~~spotlight~~ <sup>on the spot</sup> intervention, which might prove useful in order to facilitate <sup>direct</sup> contacts <sup>between the parties.</sup> This latter point went back to my discussion with Millet, who expressed his worry <sup>had</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>over</sup> the lack of contact between the two parties and his <sup>hope</sup> ~~hope~~ that I might be helpful on this point, which, in his view, was entirely within the framework of my rights, as it was a quasi-procedural question referring to the implementation of a resolution already adopted.

15. In the evening <sup>one</sup> talk in Tunis, Monday the 24th, the question of contacts was touched up, but without strong emphasis from Bourguiba, although with most <sup>a</sup> determined rejection of the <sup>terms of the</sup> message they had received through the Governor of Bizerte from the Commanding Admiral at the Base. According to the Tunisian interpretation, this message definitely rejected any meeting with the Governor in the "Gouvernorat" and further seemed to aim at discussions regarding "co-existence" in the city, <sup>French</sup> thus with <sup>a</sup> the tacit assumption of the continued presence of troops in the city, Both aspects of the Admiral's proposals were such that, from a Tunisian viewpoint, there seemed to be an absolute deadlock with the consequence that no retreat of troops on the French side could be foreseen. Bourguiba ~~had~~ asked me if I did ~~not~~ believe that I could ask representatives of both the Tunisians and the French to come <sup>to</sup> and see me in Tunis, thereby bringing them together. <sup>of course, I</sup> Afterwards he rejected this proposal as unrealistic and too far-reaching.

With this intention - which I could observe neither deny nor confirm -

(to me to explain)

Whatever the formal reason, the undercurrent which seemed <sup>refusal to accept</sup>

16. <sup>for his part</sup> ~~The reason~~ why Bourguiba ~~entirely~~ rejected the French rejection of <sup>seemed to be recent</sup> the ~~Gouvernorat~~ "Gouvernorat" as a meeting place was that <sup>a</sup> development had, de facto, put in question the Tunisian sovereignty in the city, which now ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> as an occupied city ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> was ~~completely~~ controlled by the French troops. In these circumstances, an acceptance by the Tunisians to meet at some other place would, by implication, <sup>in their eyes</sup> tend to confirm their ~~loss of sovereignty~~ <sup>loss</sup> over the city. "Loss" of the city to the French (at the same time Bourguiba made much of the point that the French did not control "all of the city").

17. In the talk, Monday evening, Bourguiba mentioned a possibility that I might go to Bizerte, but did not make any proposal; in fact, <sup>we</sup> he gave the impression that he was hesitant on this point, probably because at the possibility that the French <sup>might</sup> play it in such a way as, in fact, to gain <sup>further</sup> prestige in the city; ~~As a result I had to be~~  
~~lean myself~~

18. On the basis of <sup>this</sup> ~~the Monday afternoon~~ talk, <sup>with Bourguiba and Hadjghann</sup> Spinelli and I went into a thorough discussion of various tactical possibilities to get in touch with the French, in order to get <sup>around</sup> ~~over~~ the ~~rather artificial~~ obstacles which so far had made a contact impossible. We did not reach any <sup>conclusions</sup> result in the evening. During the night I continued my thinking and <sup>with the French</sup> concluded that <sup>our</sup> ~~my~~ only way, with the difficulties of communications <sup>which we</sup> ~~encountered~~ in Tunis, would be for me to go straight to Couve de Murville with a message, both through the French ~~Consul~~ <sup>sh</sup> General and through the Delegation in New York. The message <sup>limit</sup> would, ~~of course,~~ ~~lead~~ itself to an invitation to provide me with information which I could use in order to help the parties <sup>over</sup> ~~towards~~ ~~the~~ a direct contact. It thus assumed <sup>no</sup> ~~no~~ role at all for me in substance, or in the contact itself, but followed the line of thinking <sup>which</sup> ~~to~~ which, already, Millet had given an expression.

19. I told the French Consul, when I saw him in order to give him the letter, that I would have to count on being back in New York Friday morning, but that I could leave on Thursday in such time as to get possibilities for a reasonable stop-over in Paris, if they so wished. I also told him that

I considered paying a visit to Bizerte on Wednesday, but ~~and~~<sup>that</sup> I would take into consideration what the French might say ~~on the subject~~ before I made up my mind. The Consul later informed me that my letter and the comments to which I have just referred were received in Paris at 15.30 Tuesday evening. In addition to the possibility for the French to communicate with me through the Consul General -- as they later did, Wednesday night -- I thus opened again the possibility of a stop-over in Paris mentioned already on Sunday. I added a third possibility by saying that if I went to Bizerte I would ~~ask~~<sup>like to ask</sup> the Admiral ~~to~~<sup>if he would</sup> come and see me, but fully understood that whether he could accept such an invitation or not would depend on ~~his instructions from~~<sup>the attitude of</sup> Paris.

20. The rest of the relevant points of the story is fully documented in the Security Council papers.

21. It might finally be added that when Ambassador Bérard saw me, Friday the 28th, he complained that he had not been able to get me on the telephone Sunday morning at 10 or 10.15, and that Paris felt that ~~before my departure~~<sup>before my departure</sup> that day I had given them a cavalier treatment. I replied that on the ~~contrary~~<sup>all through tried to be</sup> I had ~~been~~ meticulously correct. He then said that that was ~~possible~~ possible, but that it was not the way "Paris felt about it".

30 July 1961.

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MEMORANDUM

1. Meeting Slim in the course of the debate in the Security Council on Friday the 21st, I said to him that I was most worried by the possibility that the Security Council consideration of Bizerte, the next day, might end up in nothing. I therefore was playing with the idea to intervene at the end of the proceedings to see if I could not save the minimum necessary to forestall a serious aggravation which might easily come about if the Council were to fail.
2. Saturday morning, just before the Security Council meeting, Slim asked to see me. I met him soon after ten o'clock, when the meeting was scheduled to begin. Slim said to me that he had very bad news from Bizerte. The killings were going on and nobody could say where the development in course might end. In the light of this, he wondered if I felt that it might be wise to try to get something done immediately in order to stop a further deterioration.
3. I replied that in line with what I had said the previous day and in the light of what he told me, I felt rather tempted to appeal for an immediate ceasefire myself, as an intermediary decision. I did so because I shared his worry for a continued loss of lives and felt that by going straight for a very simple formula and clearly making it intermediary, I might, as Secretary-General, shoot a cease-fire through.
4. My reply led to a short discussion of alternative ways to achieve a quick decision on the cease-fire; none of them seemed preferable to the one I had suggested. I then said that I would go ahead.
5. After the discussion with Slim, which may have taken some ten minutes, I called in Wieschhoff and ran over the question with him. He agreed with my evaluation. I then dictated my statement and when it was typed, I went into the Council which, in fact, had been somewhat delayed because of my absence. Thus, there was not one minute in which I could have consulted the French, if I were to open the debate, as I obviously should.

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6. After the vote on the interim resolution, before lunch, I met Slim again in the Council Chamber. He asked me if I could send a UN military unit to consolidate the cease-fire -- he did not believe in a retreat of the French, nor did I. When I said that this was absolutely excluded, he asked me if I could then send observers. I replied that this would be possible only at the joint request of Tunisia and France; even if France agreed, the step would be of dubious constitutionality. I said that the only thing that might be done "in order to stabilize the cease-fire" and maintain a certain pressure for the supporting military step requested by the resolution would be for me to go there myself which obviously would require an invitation from Bourguiba; I did not see that I could do very much in Tunisia, but the experience was that my mere presence during crucial days had a breakage effect and that might, of course, from the Tunisian viewpoint, be reason enough. I did not consider it possible for the French to say no (this especially in the light of the Laos precedent). Naturally, the Russians would object, but that was something I did not take into account personally although it might be a point to consider for the Tunisians.

7. At lunch I told Wieschhoff about this exchange of views and I said that I felt that it would be the right thing to do in order to maintain the cease-fire and that he could discuss it with the Tunisians.

8. In the afternoon, Wieschhoff told me that the Tunisians had telephoned President Bourguiba who obviously on the spot had decided to invite me in case no decision was reached on the major issues. If the Security Council thus failed, they would like to extend an invitation at the table. I replied through Wieschhoff that this would be far too precipitated and would lend itself to false interpretations. When that was brought to the notice of the Tunisians, they changed their line and said that an invitation would be sent next morning. I sent a message to Slim saying that I could see him at 4 p.m. on Sunday.

9. Before the meeting ended and the negative result was a fact, I did not give the matter any further thought. When, after the late end of the meeting, I took it up, driving out to Brewster, I noted that I obviously had to bring the French somehow into the picture. It was clear that I could not do that until I knew that the Tunisians went through with their plan and until I saw what form they gave to the invitation. That I obviously could not take the matter up with the French before my return to the city did not worry me as, according to information through Wieschhoff, the Tunisians did not expect me to leave until Monday night, thus providing me with ample time for a discussion with the French. It was also clear that I could not decline the invitation at a French demand, that if the French were serious in their wish for a cease-fire, they should welcome the trip because of its obvious value in this respect, and that, finally, as a matter of course, I should tell the French that an invitation received from them would have got and would get the same treatment as the Tunisian invitation.

10. In the course of my discussion with Slim, he urged very strongly that I leave the same night. I stated that that was impossible, because, among other reasons, I had to see the French and discuss the matter with them. Especially, I had to make it clear to the French that I would be quite happy to stop over in Paris on my way back from Tunis. We compromised, after a study of travel possibilities, on departure on Monday morning.

11. Immediately after seeing Slim, at 4 pm. on Sunday, we tried to get in touch with the French delegation between 4.30 and 4.45. Both Bérard and Millet were out on Long Island. Bérard would not come back where he lived there before six o'clock and would have a long drive into town. Millet, having been informed about the unsuccessful contact with Bérard, had no hesitation in accepting an appointment with me at 7 pm.

12. While waiting for Millet, I dictated a reply to Bourguiba (the text later sent). When Millet came, I showed him both the invitation brought by Slim when he called, and my suggested reply. At Millet's request he got copies of both these documents. I also pointed out to Millet the coup de frein which my visit was likely to give to the developments and said that I, of course, would stop over in Paris after my visit to Tunis, if they so wished, although this statement naturally should not be interpreted as a request for an invitation. I told him about the intended time of departure.

13. Later it emerged that the morning plane was stopping over in Paris, and as this was impossible in view of the circumstances, we explored other possibilities and arrived at the conclusion that a Swissair flight leaving the same evening was the only possible one, short of a postponement until Monday evening, contrary to the very urgent wishes of President Bourguiba. Millet was informed about the change of plans.

14. Leaving for Tunis, I had no intention to go beyond the very general purpose which was the background of the development, keeping, however, my mind open for any kind of on the spot intervention, which might prove useful in order to facilitate direct contacts between the parties. This latter point went back to my discussion with Millet, who had expressed his worry over the lack of contact between the two parties and his hope that I might be helpful on this point, which, in his view, was entirely within the framework of my rights, as it was a quasi-procedural question referring to the implementation of a resolution already adopted.

15. In the evening-talk in Tunis, Monday the 24th, the question of contacts was touched upon, but without strong emphasis from Bourguiba, although with a most determined rejection of the terms of the message they had received through the Governor of Bizerte from the Commanding Admiral at the Base. According to the Tunisian interpretation, this message definitely rejected any meeting with the Governor in the "Gouvernorat" and further seemed to aim at discussions regarding "co-existence" in the city, thus with a tacit assumption of the continued presence of French troops in the city. Both aspects of the Admiral's proposals were with this interpretation - which I could obviously neither deny nor confirm - such that from a Tunisian viewpoint, there seemed to be an absolute deadlock with the consequence that no retreat of troops on the French side could be foreseen. Bourguiba asked me if I did believe that I could ask representatives of both the Tunisians and the French to come to see me in Tunis, thereby bringing them together. Of course, I rejected this proposal as unrealistic and too far-reaching.

16. Whatever the formal reason, the undercurrent which seemed to me to explain why Bourguiba for his part insisted on the "Gouvernorat" as a meeting place was that recent developments had, de facto, put in question the Tunisian sovereignty in the city, which now "as an occupied city" was controlled by the French troops. In these circumstances, an acceptance by the Tunisians to meet at some other place would, by implication, in their eyes tend to confirm their "loss" of the city to the French (and at the same time Bourguiba made much of the point that the French did not control "all of the city").

17. In the talk, Monday evening, Bourguiba mentioned a possibility that I might go to Bizerte, but did not make any proposal; in fact, he gave me the impression that he was hesitant on this point, probably because of the possibility that the French might play it in such a way as, in fact, to gain further prestige in the city.

18. On the basis of this talk with Bourguiba and Ledgham, Spinelli and I went into a thorough discussion of various tactical possibilities to get in touch with the French, in order to get around the obstacles which so far had made a contact impossible. We did not reach any conclusions in the evening. During the night I continued my thinking and concluded that our only way, with the difficulties of communications with the French which we had to face in Tunis, would be for me to go straight to Couve de Murville with a message, both through the French Consul General and through the Delegation in New York. The message should limit itself to an invitation to provide me with information which I could use in order to help the parties over the hump, to a direct contact. It thus assumed no role at all for me in substance, or in the contact itself, but followed the line of thinking to which, already, Millet had given an expression.

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SECRET

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13. Later it emerged that the morning plane was stopping over in Paris, and as this was impossible in view of the circumstances, we explored other possibilities and arrived at the conclusion that a Swissair flight leaving the same evening was the only possible one, short of a postponement until Monday evening, contrary to the very urgent wishes of President Bourguiba. Millet was informed about the change of plans.

14. Leaving for Tunis, I had no intention to go beyond the very general purpose which was the background of the development, keeping, however, my mind open for any kind of on the spot intervention, which might prove useful in order to facilitate direct contacts between the parties. This latter point went back to my discussion with Millet, who had expressed his worry over the lack of contact between the two parties and his hope that I might be helpful on this point, which, in his view, was entirely within the framework of my rights, as it was a quasi-procedural question referring to the implementation of a resolution already adopted.

15. In the evening-talk in Tunis, Monday the 24th, the question of contacts was touched upon, but without strong emphasis from Bourguiba, although with a most determined rejection of the terms of the message they had received through the Governor of Bizerte from the Commanding Admiral at the Base. According to the Tunisian interpretation, this message definitely rejected any meeting with the Governor in the "Gouvernorat" and further seemed to aim at discussions regarding "co-existence" in the city, thus with a tacit assumption of the continued presence of French troops in the city. Both aspects of the Admiral's proposals were with this interpretation - which I could obviously neither deny nor confirm - such that from a Tunisian viewpoint, there seemed to be an absolute deadlock with the consequence that no retreat of troops on the French side could be foreseen. Bourguiba asked me if I did believe that I could ask representatives of both the Tunisians and the French to come to see me in Tunis, thereby bringing them together. Of course, I rejected this proposal as unrealistic and too far-reaching.

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16. Whatever the formal reason, the undercurrent which seemed to me to explain why Bourguiba for his part insisted on the "Gouvernorat" as a meeting place was that recent developments had, de facto, put in question the Tunisian sovereignty in the city, which now "as an occupied city" was controlled by the French troops. In these circumstances, an acceptance by the Tunisians to meet at some other place would, by implication, in their eyes tend to confirm their "loss" of the city to the French (at the same time Bourguiba made much of the point that the French did not control "all of the city").

17. In the talk, Monday evening, Bourguiba mentioned a possibility that I might go to Bizerte, but did not make any proposal; in fact, he gave me the impression that he was hesitant on this point, probably because of the possibility that the French might play it in such a way as, in fact, to gain further prestige in the city.

18. On the basis of this talk with Bourguiba and Ledgham, Spinelli and I went into a thorough discussion of various tactical possibilities to get in touch with the French, in order to get around the obstacles which so far had made a contact impossible. We did not reach any conclusions in the evening. During the night I continued my thinking and concluded that our only way, with the difficulties of communications with the French which we had to face in Tunis, would be for me to go straight to Couve de Murville with a message, both through the French Consul General and through the Delegation in New York. The message should limit itself to an invitation to provide me with information which I could use in order to help the parties over the hump, to a direct contact. It thus assumed no role at all for me in substance, or in the contact itself, but followed the line of thinking to which, already, Millet had given an expression.

19. I told the French Consul, when I saw him in order to give him the letter, that I would have to count on being back in New York Friday morning, but that I could leave on Thursday in such time as to get possibilities for a reasonable stop-over in Paris, if they so wished. I also told him that I considered paying a visit to Bizerte on Wednesday, but that I would take

into consideration what the French might say before I made up my mind. The Consul later informed me that my letter and the comments to which I have just referred were received in Paris at 15.30 Tuesday evening. In addition to the possibility for the French to communicate with me through the Consul General -- as they later did, Wednesday night -- I thus opened again the possibility of a stop-over in Paris mentioned already on Sunday. I added a third possibility by saying that if I went to Bizerte I would like to ask the Admiral if he would come and see me, but fully understood that whether he could accept such an invitation or not would depend on the attitude of Paris.

20. The rest of the relevant points of the story is fully documented in the Security Council papers.

21. It might finally be added that when Ambassador Bérard saw me, Friday the 28th, he complained that he had not been able to get me on the telephone Sunday morning at 10 or 10.15, and that Paris felt that before my departure I had given them a cavalier treatment. I replied that on the contrary I had all through tried to be meticulously correct. He then said that that was possible, but that it was not the way "Paris felt about it".