

Kinwun Mingyi's Mission to the Court of Versailles, 1874.*

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The French Foreign office (Quai d'Orsay) records showed that the French Government was curious but not interested when Kinwun Mingyi and his mission passed through France towards the end of May 1872, on their way to the Court of St. James's. Kinwun Mingyi's LONDON Diary showed that he also was curious but not interested in France, which was at that time still licking her wounds inflicted by Prussia two years before. However, in November following, Kinwun Mingyi disappointed with the Court of St. James's, went back to France with the hope of negotiating a treaty of goodwill and commerce. Two such treaties had been signed with England, the second one in 1870, and a similar treaty signed with Italy only a few weeks before. The French Foreign Office was not too enthusiastic and it feared England's anger, as it recognised that Upper Burma was entirely at the mercy of the British. Even after a series of negotiations and discussions with the Burmese, the French government was still ukewarm. Finally on January 24, 1873, the approved draft was signed by Kinwun Mingyi. But the French Foreign Minister, Remusat did not dare to sign, and discussed that draft with the special commission appointed to deal with the matter. Remusat had been giving full information of the negotiations to Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador in Paris, and he now sent him a copy of the report of the special commission:

Richness of country and proximity to Cochin-China justifies us in

accepting the proposal of one of King of Burma's ministers sent as ambassador extra ordinary to study European civilization and conclude treaties with England, Italy and France. Our proposed treaty is very similar to those with England and Italy; it gives freedom and security to French missionaries, merchants and travellers ... French products will receive the same treatment as similar products of other most favoured nations ... These are vague provisions but we cannot make them more specific as we have little or no relations with a country surrounded on three sides by British possessions which shut her up off from the sea. Should the relations established by this treaty justify and the budgetary position allow it, we can make more detailed clauses - the treaty is renewable annually which allows easy revision - as practical experience requires, and appoint a consul. But for the present this bare treaty of goodwill must suffice (India Office, Government of India, Home Correspondence, Vol. 75, 1873).

On February 19, Lord Lyons sent the following despatch:

De Remusat said he would send me a copy of the treaty with Burma, confidentially as it is not yet submitted to the assembly, or made public: its main stipulation was religious toleration; not that it could have any effect

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as he doubted whether there were as many as 10 native converts.

On March 5, 1873 Lord Lyons duly sent the copy of the treaty to London. On March 12, Sir John Kaye, who notwithstanding his earlier prejudices, had learnt to admire Kinwun Mingyi wrote the following Minutes:

The treaty speaks for itself The Burmese had an unquestionable right to conclude treaties with whomsoever they pleased.

Kaye thought the treaty harmless, but the Duke of Argyll took a different view, and with his usual contempt for the Burmese he wrote on the margin:

This is rather a serious matter. If the French choose to import arms under the treaty into Burma, can we prevent it? And can we permit it?

The noble Duke knew very well that he had been refusing to permit the import of arms into Upper Burma even from English manufacturers.

The treaty was duly ratified by the French Assembly and in October 1875 a French embassy left Marseilles for the Court of Mandalay to exchange ratification. It was not a very high powered mission so far as seniority and diplomatic experience were concerned. It was headed by Count de Rochechouart who was a mere first secretary at the French Legation at Peking to which post he was returning to take charge of the mission as charge d'affaires, in place of the chief envoy who was proceeding on leave. He was accompanied by five young men, namely Count Marescalchi who was attached to the French Foreign Office, Monstier and d'Imecourt, who were going as Third Secretaries to the Legation at Peking after completing their assignments on the mission to Burma, and two army captains, Fau and Moreau, who had obtained permission from the Burmese King to travel through the Shan States to Tongkin afterwards. The last two were fated to

die of malaria while crossing the Shan States. According to a letter written by the French Consul-General to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal on November 18, 1873 reporting the arrival of the mission at Calcutta, "these several young gentlemen under-took the voyage as a pleasure trip but without any political character" (Quai d'Orsey Correspondance politique des consuls Angleterre: Calcutta, folio 197 (26 October 1873); (Quai d'Orsey, Memiors and documents, Asie Birmani 2, tome 50, A.Marescalchi "Une mission on Birmani 1873-1874" in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vol.V., 1874). All the five young diplomats were hand-picked by Duke Decazes, the new Foreign Minister, who had been a member of the special commission which reported on the treaty, and all belonged to the aristocracy; Count de Rochechouart was a member of well-known family of administrators and politicians, Count Marescalchi was the nephew of no less a person than the French President Marshall McMahon, Moustier was the nephew of a former Foreign minister, and de d'Imecourt a cousin of the Duke de Broglie. Because of the aristocratic family connections, undue attention was paid to the mission by the Indian and Rangoon press, and English language newspapers in Calcutta and Rangoon published alarmist articles about the anti-British purposes of the mission.

On arrival at Calcutta via Ceylon the mission was invited to visit the Governor-General who was at Agra, and his invitation was accepted with alacrity as Rochechouart wanted to clear the air. The Government of India reported to the Secretary of State in London:-

De Rochechouart stayed at Agra, relations with Viceroy mere courtesy social relations but finally requested formal interview with the Viceroy at which he explained objects of his mission to Mandalay were pure commercial; he offered to show Viceroy his treaty with Burma but Viceroy had already received copy from London.

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Rochechouart sent the following report to Quai d'Orsay on December 4, 1873:

Ridiculous articles in Rangoon and Calcutta press. Lord Northbrook charm and friendliness itself, he understood perfectly were only taking an opportunity of actually taking out a ratified treaty-and such a harmless treaty-to see a little known country and it was nonsense to suspect us of anti-English intentions (Birmani 2, tome 50, folio 276).

On December 20, the mission reached Rangoon. Eden took them straight to Government House; Eden could do no less, as the mission had stayed at the Government House at Agra. Ashley Eden, the Chief Commissioner of Lower Burma had always been suspicious of Kinwun Mingyi's mission to Europe. Rochechouart explained the purpose of his mission and he "thought Eden relieved to hear from me exactly what my objects at Mandalay were" (folio 285), but Marescalchi in his article asserted that Eden was still "perhaps a little unquiet as to the real aims of our mission".

The mission took with them valuable presents for the King, which included Gobelins tapestries, Sevres vases, luxuriously manufactured firearms for ceremonial use, perfumes, and in the contemptuous words of Marescalchi's article, "mechanical toys and play things, each more ingenious than the other." The mission, on arrival at Mandalay was accorded full honours, and on 1st January 1874 was granted audience by the King. In his report dated January 2, 1874 Rochechouart wrote:-

Audience with King yesterday. Our presents laid out before procession started to Palace excited great admiration; young Mengyaw (i. e. Minhla Minkyaw, official interpreter attached to the mission) saying "The King should be very pleased. The English can no longer bring danger."

Crowd watching procession astonished and respectful, also in most populous quarters hilarious, doubtless from the gaiety natural to a people who are friendly and pleasant and are qualified themselves to be called the "The Frenchmen of the East." (Folio 306)

He also added that the King appeared to be very tired, probably because of the persistent rumours of attempt on his life; to safeguard himself, he had never gone out of the palace since a recent unsuccessful rebellion; he appeared to be in full control of his emotions, but in spite of the mask of grandeur, he was nervous.

The full honour and pagentry accorded to the mission gladdened the heart of Kinwun Mingyi as the French treaty would now show that his long journey to Europe and back had not been in vain. But his enemies were watching also, determined to wreck the treaty if at all possible. Rochechouart, whose heart also had been gladdened, now began to have his doubts, for Minhla Minkyaw, who was in constant attendance on the embassy, kept enquiring whether France would supply the King with arms. He had thought he would be able to continue his journey to Peking after a few days at Mandalay, but the King seemed to be taking too long a time to ratify the simple commercial treaty. The honorary Italian Consul Adriano, and the Italian community were both jealous and suspicious of the French embassy. Adriano had come to Burma from Italy, where he was earning his living as a village blacksmith, to be with his brother, a Roman Catholic Bishop. He was introduced into the Palace circles by the Bishop, and soon learnt to be fluent in both Burmese and English. He was responsible for inviting the captain of a small Italian squadron to visit Mandalay, which resulted in negotiating finally leading to the signing of the commercial treaty with Italy. The British authorities in Rangoon and London did not mind because Italy at that time was England's protegee, and because the Italian Foreign

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Office reported meticulously to the British Foreign Office every detail of the negotiations with the Burmese, and the English Resident, Strover was given a copy of the treaty, soon after it was signed (India Office, Home Correspondence, 1871, Vol. 69, Foreign Office to India Office, December 22, 1871; Letters from India, Vol. 17, 1875 at page 99 where there is a resume of the Foreign Office Correspondence and discussions with the Italian Government). Andreino was to become in about 1878, the centre of an English spy ring at Mandalay, and also the Agent of three powerful and influential English firms (India Office, Secret and Political Files "E" and "F" of Foreign Department, Government of India for 1884 and 1885; Quai Birmani 3, tome 51; F, Tennyson Jesse, *The Story of Burma*, Macmillan, London 1945). He spread rumours about the French getting a concession to work the Ruby Mines in return for arms and ammunition supplied to the King. The Residential Diary (of Strover, the British Resident at that time) took note of these rumours, and they were later included in his reports to Government of India. The following are typical entries:-

22 January 1874. Ministers said to be talking...about French troops being stationed here and establishment of French settlement, also a road to Kianghung.

23 January 1884, I asked Count Rochechoart about the guard of French troops being stationed here. He knew nothing about it.

5th. February. Mr. Camaratta visited me late in the evening and I had a long conversation with him about the arms question. He informed me the French wish to station 500 men here. It also appeared that Kunwin Mingyi agreed to allow all the mines in Upper Burma to be worked by the French subjects and timber as well, but the King objects to have his mines dug up. There is also talk about a French settlement, a road to Kenghung and other things. It

seems very doubtful now whether Count Rochechoart will attempt to go through China from Bhamo.

Mr Camaratta was an Italian engineer working for the King under Andreino's patronage and he was obviously repeating what Andreino told him. It was a piece of very clever propaganda. The Ruby Mines were as much a part of royal regalia as the crown, and Mindon could not part with the mines, unless he gave up the throne, and so a smear was put on Kinwun Mingyi's reputation by suggestions that he signed away the Ruby Mines. At the same time, by mentioning timber, Camaratta was trying to make the English Resident feel anxious about the concession to work the royal forests long ago given to a British firm. Rochechoart never planned to go overland to Peking from Burma; the journey at that time was well nigh impossible and in any case extremely hazardous, and the Count was in a hurry to rejoin his Legation. By saying that the Count was not going to Peking from Bhamo after all, Mr. Camaratta insinuated that the French diplomat had intended to explore the possibility of an overland trade route from Burma to China, which the English had always considered to be their route to riches. At the same time, Andreino and his fellow Italians kept telling the King that Italy could supply all the machines and all the arms he needed. Some of the Burmese officials were also too enthusiastic about France and the possibility of French help. For example, the official interpreter Maha Minkyaw Yaza, the Hpangyet Wundauk, the deputy minister for glassworks, had been educated in France; he obtained the diploma in civil engineering from the Central School of Paris, a technical college of high academic prestige. He was a member of Kinwun Mingyi's mission to the Court of St. James' and was therefore one of the authors of the treaty. According to Major McMahon, "he was a pleasant young man, speaking fluent and precise French, polished and winning manners, for some time judge of the Mixed Court, held a French diploma in civil engineering, considerable

ability and scholarly attainments" (Major-General A. Ruxton McMahon, *Far Cathay and Further India*, Hurst and Blackett, London, 1893, page 137). According to Marescalchi's article also found he was a pleasant young man:-

"At Minhla we were met by the Hpanyet Wundauck, a majestic figure under a gold umbrellas; he had been several years in France and accompanied the recent embassy to Paris: for him we had the Legion of Honour - a young man, benefited, not (as too often) spoiled by Europe, a good lad who acted as our interpreter, and intermediary at Mandalay, good and intelligent".

Perhaps his enthusiasm which seemed to have infected Kinwun Mingyi also, resulted in a general belief among some Burmese officials that France was ready to supply Burma with arms. The King himself might have shared this belief, but he was wise enough to see that the British would never permit the import of French arms through their territory. He was always vexed by the fact although the commercial treaty with British of 1870 stipulated that the British would always permit the import of arms through their territory, such permission had been repeatedly refused. And he so needed arms, not to fight the British, but to maintain law and order in the kingdom. Thus he remonstrated to Strover, "I have not yet ratified the French Convention. The French will give me cannon, arms etc. but I would prefer to get them from you." (Residential Diary, February 5, 1874). Kinwun Mingyi's enemies also seemed to have told the King that the French treaty, not being a treaty of alliance, would not benefit the kingdom. The King now began to stall, telling the French envoy that Kinwun Mingyi had no authority to have signed the treaty. Rochechouart reported in despair;

Why did he build us a house, engage a French cook, show us himself every conceivable courtesy through-

out our stay, continually expressing his preference for France, and yet declare the embassy he sent to France had gone there of his own accord, without his authorization? And refuse to ratify the treaty? He cannot admit anything, even the slightest detail, can be done without his having done it himself; he wants a finger in every pie. (Folio 321).

In another report, however, the French envoy obviously felt some sympathy for the King:

It is King himself who is keenest on attracting Europeans and though always deceived he always tries again. (Folio 316).

To end the stalemate the ministers tried to persuade the French envoy to recast the clauses of the treaty so as to satisfy the King. He reported these developments in despair:-

Publicity of all proceedings, lack of secrecy due to servants overhearing what is said, under pretext of serving their masters; and all orders are written on big black cardboards like slates - and the messengers can read them (Folio 317).

Burmese ministers asked me to discuss the treaty which Kinwun Mingyi had prepared at Paris, arguing interminably, unable to realize I had no power to alter a comma or even to discuss. (Folio 323).

But Rochechouart although very firm in refusing to discuss anything either about the treaty or the possibility of supplying arms, was humane enough to realise the King's pathetic position:-

To understand all this we must go back to the internal politics of Mandalay. There is in existence an association consisting of Sutherland, representing important mercantile interests, and Andreino, a former blacksmith now Consul for Italy and enjoying some influence with the King...

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Behind these two are a certain number of adventurers and cutthroats, all aiming at exploiting Burma... At the moment of our arrival, they were trying to get a contract and gone so far as to make him (the King) believe it was the only way of resisting conquest by the English, as, from the moment the representative of Italy entered the affair, the Government Victor Emmanuel would, if necessary, intervene for the defence of Burma.

King torn between fear of affronting the English and pleasure at satisfying his mercantile tastes, might have signed (the contract), when our arrival upset all these plans. It was realizing the dream of all his life to have a French embassy at his capital; and why rely on Italy when he could have France? Andreino and company soon felt the cold, guessed the cause and set to work, showing how contrary it will be to his (the King's) dignity to ratify a treaty, he himself had never even discussed; he was being imposed upon... Also ministers joined in, ministers hostile to a treaty that they had not negotiated and the ratification of which would lead to Kinwun Mingyi's influence eclipsing theirs. The final plot was to bank on my issuing an ultimatum (to withdraw from the discussions) if the king refuse signature, and when I withdraw, the King partly in pique, and partly in fear, would accept the services of Andreino and Co. (Folio 326).

Andreino's plans finally failed, because the King thought out a compromise. He told the French mission that he would sign the ratification on condition that Rochechouart would agree to sign the second treaty with six new clauses and the French Government would ratify it. Rochechouart agreed and the king signed the ratification of the treaty but inserting in his own handwriting the proviso that the ratification was subject to the second treaty being ratified by the French Government. The new treaty

actually contained eight new clauses, but the last two clauses were formal ones, the stipulation from year to year. As the King, Kinwun Mingyi and the French envoy spoke of six new clauses, and Andreino insisted on information from his spies that there were eight clauses, rumours of a secret arms agreement spread through Mandalay and then through Rangoon, finally reaching London.

Of the six clauses, the first required Frenchmen in Burma and Burmese in France to possess passports. The second clause was the usual "most favoured nation" clause. The fourth clause subjected consuls, if merchants, to local rules and regulations. The sixth clause stipulated that tariffs would be discussed and agreed to in a subsequent convention. According to Rochechouart only one of all the clauses was important namely the third clause relating to mixed courts. The clause, after explaining that the mixed court under the Anglo-Burmese commercial treaty of 1872 had been found unsatisfactory by both English and Burmese merchants, stipulated that disputes between French and Burmese nationals would be tried by Burmese courts provided the French consul was present at the hearing. Wrote Rochechouart:-

My Lord Duke, you may dislike at first sight this clause, but our Consul's presence will surfire to guarantee the Burmese judges impartiality. This is the system for some years already in the Levant where, if the local authority's judgement seems unjust, the Consul merely withdraws and that is sufficient to invalidate the proceedings (Folio 329).

Mentioning that the Burmese law did not allow either imprisonment of debtor nor expropriation of the debtor's property, he seemed to suggest that the Burmese law and procedure relating to debts were more just and fair. Then he went on to plead with his Foreign Minister, the Duke:-

My only alternative to flattering the King's vanity with an innocuous

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treaty was to withdraw without ratification, and thus submit to a snub in the eyes of all Asia.

But Marescalchi was of a different opinion and it was Marescalchi who would introduce Kinwun Mingyi's embassy, soon to be sent, to his uncle the President. He insisted that this article "was contrary to the dignity of France, stipulating that our nationals should be judged by Burmese Courts". The remaining clause, number 5, read:-

The French Government having the interests of Burma at heart, engaged to be ready with friendly offices whenever that the Burmese Government may request them in writing.

Rochechouart thought that this stipulation was harmless, but Marescalchi, in his article stated that after discussing it with Eden at Rangoon later, he agreed with Eden that as the stipulation obviously aimed the English, it was objectionable. The real difficulty was in the language; in Burmese, *mahameit* meant not only "great friend" but "also great ally" and therefore a treaty of friendship when written in Burmese, meant a treaty of alliance. "Friendly offices" was in Burmese "*Ko amhu ge tho saung yu ya myi*," as if the matter were her own". As Strover commented:-

If Burma has any difference with England, France will consider the case of Burma as her own *Ko amhu ge saung yu ya myi*.....in fact a treaty of alliance (Residential Diary, 9 viii 1874).

Those rumours spread by Andreino were re-inforced by enthusiastic supporters of Kinwun Mingyi, and to allay those rumours, Rochechouart secretly gave a copy of the new treaty to Strover (India Office Home Correspondence 1874, Vol. 79, Residential Journal; Strover, January 5 to March 14, 1874) But the rumours persisted, and neither Eden nor Strover felt sure that the treaty was harmless.

Rochechort, in his report, expressed his appreciation of the King's hospitality in the following words:-

Throughout our long stay here we had been his guests...house, horses, carriages, elephants, servants, food, everything given us by the Crown. Naturally I paid all who were attached to us. But I still think that the department should, so far as is proportionate to our custom, recompense the politenesses we have received, e.g., have a special railway coach set apart for the (Burmese) mission on arrival at Marseilles, which would not be much of an expense (Folio 383).

Rochechouart did not mention that at their farewell audience each member of the French embassy was presented with a velvet bag containing 1,000 kyats by King Mindon, which gift, however, was returned by the French envoy (Residency Journal, Strover, February 13, 1874). Rochechouart, in mentioning the King's hospitality was pleading for a courteous reception by the French Government of another embassy, which King Mindon insisted on sending to exchange ratification of the second treaty; it was to be again headed by Kinwun Mingyi, notwithstanding Kinwun Mingyi's petition that as he had failed in his previous embassies, another minister be sent in his place (Residential Diary February 13, 1874). Marascalchi as usual, had a different view:-

House was well furnished with the butler and cook, both Frenchmen. But we grew tired of rice, killed a calf secretly one night; guards heard it. There was nearly exchange of diplomatic notes, our crime was considered a scandal and all the flesh was seized. We were allowed chicken and game, and even to shoot at a distance far enough from the city so that King would not hear. We were given horses to ride, horses from the royal stables, but they were wretched and famished because King, knowing Minister of Stables would embezzle

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half the allotment of their maintenance, paid him only the other half where upon the Minister swindled most of that...

He bestowed the gold chains of office upon us, and at our final audience, voluminous bags of rupees, which of course we explained we had to return. Malicious tongues said he was glad to get those six bagfuls back. The (Burmese) embassy would have to pay its own expenses. Why should the French government pay for an embassy it did not want and which come to complicate rather than simplify? It is true that the Burmese paid for us at Mandalay but in an unknown capital hotels are conspicuous by their absence and the King could hardly leave an embassy, on which he had insisted, to lodge under the stars (Marescalchi's article, pp. 69, 70-71, 79).

This same Marescalchi was to accompany an escort Kinwun Mingyi from Rangoon to Singapore Singapore to Naples, Naples to Paris, and then to Marseilles and finally to the Italian frontier. But Kinwun Mingyi never realised that there was a canker in his rose, or, to use a Burmese of phrase, a viper in his pocket.

Kinwun Mingyi's new mission consisted of himself as chief envoy, the Royal Secretary Minhla Zeyathu, who had accompanied the earlier Kinwun Mingyi's missions as assistant envoy, now as deputy envoy, and Naymyo Minhtin Thurain as assistant envoy and secretary. The last named official as Maung Aung Thu went to France in December 1862 as a state scholar, and in 1865 he obtained admission to the Military Academy of Saint-Cyr, the Sandhurst of France, where he was described as being very popular with his fellow cadets (Quai, Birmani, 2, tome 50, Folio 120). He completed his studies and returned to Burma in May 1872 after visiting England (Kinwun Mingyi *London Diary*, June 5, 1872). Marescalchi

disliked him intensely, and described him as follows:-

He had spent several years in France (one at Sa-nt-Cyre) but his cavalier manner and undue familiarity made us keep him at a distance; unlike the Hpangyet Wundauk, he had absorbed the bad side of our education (Marescalchi article, p. 78).

Maung Aung Thu, Gentleman of the Royal Chamber, interpreter of whom I have already spoken...before leaving we had to report this young man's lack of education to his superiors and without result, as they may not have disliked our having to use as an interpreter one out of sympathy with us. Perhaps the results of his untrustworthiness endure, because but for him we might have achieved something (p. 79).

Marescalchi explained that he found Maung Aung Thu objectionable because the young Burmese official was anti-European, and kept saying that his country did not want any help either from France or England. Another Frenchman Captain Louis Voission who as a young officer had fought in the France-Prussion war, like Marescalchi and Marshall McMahon, was a friend and admirer of Maung Aung Thu. Voission, disillusioned with France, gave up his promising military career, and came to Burma and served in the Burmese cavalry for some years (*London Diary*, June 5, 1872). Voission after King Mindon's death became French Vice-Consul at Rangoon. In his memoirs he mentioned that Maung Aung Thu was a fine product of French education and Parisian society. According to the same Voission Maung Aung Thu was appointed in about 1876, Kathe Myin Wundauk, Deputy Minister for Manipuri cavalry regiments, and that he died in about 1880 (Voission, *La Birmani*, challamel Paris, 1890, p.23). With regard to this Maung Aung Thus I may mention a series of letters relating to him exchanged between the French Ministry of Finance and the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the period 1872 to 1877, which proved that as with all ministries of finance, the French Ministry was, to say the least, tactless. According to the Ministry, Maung Aung Thu owed a small sum of money as unpaid fees to the Military Academy at Saint-Cyre and as the fees were payable by the King of Burma, the Ministry kept asking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whenever a Burmese embassy arrived in Paris, to recover the amount from the ambassador. Always the Foreign Ministry soothed the Finance Ministry by promising to do its best, and as usual in such cases with all foreign ministries it did nothing (Birmani 2, tome 50, Folio 416).

Kinwun Mingyi and his embassy, together with the members of the French embassy, except the two captains, left Mandalay for Rangoon on a royal steamer on March 14, 1874. Both the Burmese and French embassies were received cordially by Ashley Eden. On March 29, after saying goodbye to Rochechouart and his two companions, Kinwun Mingyi's embassy, attended by Marescalchi took the boat for Singapore, where they were received with full honours by its governor, Sir Andrew Clarke. According to Count Marescalchi, both in his report (Folio 384,) and in his articles the Governor seemed to have heard of the treaty and was suspicious of the French embassy which had just visited Mandalay. At a banquet given in honour of Kinwun Mingyi and his entourage Sir Andrew showed Marescalchi a map of and explained English policy to him:-

All the Bay of Bengal must be English, and as Upper Burma is attached to the Bay of Bengal it is English and it is true also of the Malay Peninsula up to Siamese frontier. Eastwards, everything including Siam up to Chinese frontier could be French. But no other European power could have any business here.

The story later appeared in the French newspapers, and Sir Andrew issued a

denial (India Office, Home Correspondence 1875, III). Marescalchi seemed to have been a little too talkative and I may say with due respect to his memory, he was often a little too imaginative in his reports; on the other hand even if Sir Andrew made those statements, he would have to issue a denial, according to official and diplomatic practice.

On 17 April, the Burmese envoys and Marescalchi left Singapore on *S.S. Sind*, a British boat going to Marseilles and London. On May 13, the boat approached Naples, when it was caught in a sudden storm. All the envoys were sea-sick, and Marescalchi also proved to be no sailor. The ship entered Naples harbour for shelter and at Marescalchi's suggestion, Kinwun Mingyi decided to land and take the train to Rome. After spending a few days in Rome, where the Burmese envoys were royally entertained by the Italian government while Marescalchi went on a jaunt, the Burmese envoys and the French Count travelled from Rome to Paris arriving there on 19 May. The next morning Kinwun Mingyi read in the papers that the French Government had fallen, resulting in a constitutional crisis. For days Kinwun Mingyi and his companions were left by themselves except for the daily attendance of a French Foreign office official, and an occasional visit from Marescalchi. Only on 31 May were Kinwun Mingyi and his party given an interview by the Foreign Minister. On 2 June Kinwun Mingyi received news that his fellow envoys to the Court of St. James's and the Court of Versailles in 1872 had been demoted, indicating that the previous embassies were considered as total failure by the King. The demotion of Hpangyet Wundauk was specially ominous, because he was pro French in his sympathies. On June 10, Marshall McMahon gave an audience to the Burmese envoys and he was all charm and courtesy. On June 11, the President gave a banquet in honour of the Burmese embassy, and it was followed by many other receptions given by various high officials. On June 20 the Foreign official attached to the embassy

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regretfully informed Kinwun Mingyi that although the Foreign Office had carefully considered the second treaty and found therein nothing objectionable, the ratification would take at least six months. He therefore suggested after Kinwun Mingyi had received from the President one letter for the King and another for himself the embassy should return to Burma. On 2 July the President gave a farewell audience which was followed by a glittering reception given by the President's Lady in honour of Kinwun Mingyi. On July 9, the Burmese envoys took the train to the industrial regions of southern France, and inspected factories at Lyons and shipyards at Marseilles. They continued their journey from Marseilles and at the Italian frontier, they were bidden farewell by Marescalchi. Escorted by Italian officials they spent some time in Italy. They were given an audience by the King and spent a happy time at Venice. On August 10 they left Brindizi by boat and arriving at Alexandria on 13 August, they took the train to Cairo where they stayed as guests of the Viceroy of Egypt, from Egypt they took a boat to Bombay from where they travelled by train to Calcutta, arriving there on September 4. At Calcutta Kinwun Mingyi learnt from the French Consul that captains Fau and Moreau had died of malaria while travelling across the Shan States. Kinwun Mingyi and his companions were granted an interview by the Governor-General, followed by a dinner in their honour. The Governor-General was cordial and friendly. The Burmese envoys left Calcutta on the 13 August, and on arrival at Rangoon on August 17, they were respectfully received by high English officials in Eden's absence. They stayed at the Government house for some days, and then proceeded up the river on one of the King's steamers. On arrival at Thayetmyo near the Burmese frontier on October 1, they were warmly received by Eden who held a banquet in their honour. The embassy arrived back at Mandalay on October 8 (Kinwun Mingyi's *Paris Diary*).

Kinwun Mingyi's *Paris Diary* did not contain any reason for the debacle of his embassy, and obviously he did not know what happened behind the scenes at Paris. On the 19th May, Marescalchi escorted the Burmese envoys to their Paris hotel, and slipped away, explaining that as he was suffering from a bad cold, he would not be able to introduce the envoys to the Foreign Office for some days (*Paris Diary*.) In actual fact, he must have gone to his office to write his report on the arrival of the embassy which he submitted to the Foreign Minister the next day. The following extracts testify to his utter lack of sympathy for the Burmese:-

All we can do is to be polite to Kinwun Mingyi's embassy and let them buy all they can in France-it will help our manufacturers, who need it—also assure them of our sympathy, but explain we cannot establish a representative at Mandalay, or view without displeasure the presence of Frenchmen of merit at the head of establishments at Mandalay which are purely hostile to England, but we will train a dozen young Burmans in France so that at the end of a few years the King can create any establishments he pleases.

The noise made over our mission to Mandalay seems to have increased the difficulty of getting minor adjustments, now pending, between our settlements in India and Government of India (Folio 384).

Marescalchi recommendation was fully accepted. Kinwun Mingyi was given all the honours due to an ambassador of a fully sovereign state, but all that he could take back to Mandalay for his pains was the following letter of greeting full of fine phrases but without any substance:-

From Marshall McMahon, President of France to His Majesty, Illustrious and Glorious Emperor of Burma. Great and noble friend! Thanks for your gracious hospitality

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to de Rochechouart. We cannot take leave of your Ambassador without a mark of our esteem and doing justice to his qualities, including wisdom and dignity which had won universal regard. We realise these qualities have caused Your Majesty to place confidence in so distinguished a Counsellor.

Kinwun Mingyi also received from the Foreign Minister the following consolation prize:-

Marshall McMahan's letter to Emperor testifies to the proofs you have given that your sovereign did well to trust you, and the consideration of everyone here feels you worthy.

As the latter treaty modifies the former to which the National Assembly had given its sanction, it will have to be considered with care. The Deputies have so many urgent questions to decide at present session that they cannot see to it now. We will let you know later as soon as possible.

I cannot take leave of Your Excellency without thanking you for the mark of distinction with which I had been honoured on your recommendation, and I ask you to offer at the foot of the Throne the homage of my gratitude (Folio 385-387).

According to Lord Lyons, the English ambassador at Paris behind the mask of fine speeches and grand receptions, there was surprise and annoyance on the part of the French Government at the action of the King of Burma in attempting to change a treaty ratified by the French National Assembly. Lord Lyons wrote:- "The President will take care in future never to ratify any treaty with Burma until it had been ratified by the King. (Home Correspondence 1874, Vol. 80. Report dated September 11, 1874). Earlier Duke Decazes had told Lord Lyons:

I am more desirous of getting rid of the (Burmese) embassy as it seems to be very scantily provided with funds and I do not want to pay a hotel bill for it..... I will be particularly careful to avoid anything that will create inconvenience for England (as above, Report dated June, 11, 1874).

Lord Lyons also reported:-

Duke Decezes used temporising language to the Burmese ambassadors, because he did not want to imperil the personal safety of the two French captains travelling in Burma (Captains Fau and Moreau; as above, Report dated September 11, 1874).

It must be admitted that France at that time was going through a political crisis which was shaking the Third Republic to its very foundations, and after the humiliating defeat of 1870 at the hands of the Prussians, French pride was very sensitive. There was no doubt the refusal of the Government to ratify the treaty satisfied French pride and even the Vicar Apostolic of Mandalay, Bishop Bourdon sent the following congratulatory telegram to Quai de'Orsay:-

I am glad France did not ratify the second treaty negotiated at Mandalay. France has been humiliated, but she has not sunk so low as to stoop for petty treaties with oriental kinglets (Folio 390).

But a scapegoat had to be found, and de Rochechouart, for his humanity and sympathy was "reprimanded for presuming to alter a treaty already ratified by the state", and he was saved from recall and public disgrace only because of his previous services (Lord Lyons, as above, Report dated 11, September 1874).

Just as Sir John Kaye made a last-moment attempt to save from failure the embassy to the Court of St. James's in 1873, Major Burne, who had taken Kaye's

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place as political secretary to the Secretary of State for India made a valiant effort to save Kinwun Mingyi from yet another failure. Thus he wrote the following note on a report received about the Burmese negotiations with Italy and France.

King of Burma is arrogant yet harmless. He demanded 10,000 Enfields, gunboats, Armstrong cannons yet Colonel McMahon has vervally assured us it is only an extravagance to test General Fytche's promise, and that a couple of Armstrong arms and a few sniders without machinery would satisfy the King's mind, and be carried up to Mandalay on a white elephant with songs of triumph-our friendly relations being thus entirely restored.

We should not extract promises from Foreign Powers which are as valueless as the paper on which they are written. We had given the

Afghan Ameer, Sniders-may we not give a few to Burma provided our own troops in British Burma possess them?

Kinwun Mingyi a most gentlemanlike and good man, attached to our interests should be invited to London next week if Lord Lyons could arrange it (Letters from India, Vol. 17, 1875, p. 569).

As no one in authority took note of Major Burne's suggestion the matter lapsed, and Lord Lyons in his report dated September 11, 1874, stated with immense satisfaction that both the two Franco-Burmese treaties were "dead and buried without hope of resurrection". But Lord Lyons was wrong, for ten years later, in 1884 the first treaty was to be resurrected, which would enable the British to cry "wolf", and give it as an alleged reason to seize the kingdom of Burma.

