

programme for the Tunisian autonomy which was put forward by the leader of the Néo-Destour, Habib Bourguiba. The Chenik cabinet was broadened to include members of the Néo-Destour and other nationalists and the negotiation of reforms commenced. Some progress was made and initial reforms were proclaimed in February 1951. However, further negotiations ended in deadlock because the Tunisians were unwilling to accept the principle of co-sovereignty, under which the French and Tunisian residents of the protectorate would have had equal political, administrative and economic status. The failure of the negotiations caused a breakdown of Franco-Tunisian collaboration. Serious rioting early in 1952, marked the beginning of a period of unrest which continued for more than two years.

### Discussion in the United Nations

After the dismissal of the cabinet of Mohammed Chenik in March 1952, and the arrest of many Tunisian nationalists, a number of Asian and African states asked the Security Council of the United Nations to intervene. The Security Council voted against putting the question on its agenda and the African and Asian states then requested a special session of the General Assembly in June 1952. This move was not successful but the African and Asian states did succeed in having the Tunisian question inscribed on the agenda of the regular session of the General Assembly in 1952. Canada supported the resolution which was adopted and which expressed the hope that the parties would continue negotiations on an urgent basis with a view to bringing about self-government in Tunisia, and appealed to them to refrain from any act likely to aggravate the situation. The General Assembly began its eighth session in 1953 towards the end of another year in which physical force rather than political negotiation had dominated the Tunisian scene. The Assembly agreed without debate to include the question of its agenda but did not adopt a resolution.

### Franco-Tunisian Negotiations 1954-55

Earnest efforts were made by the French Government in the winter of 1953-54 to bring about a greater degree of Tunisian participation in the affairs of the country. In March, 1954, the Bey of Tunis signed six decrees establishing the basic institutions of the new regime and appointed Salah M'Zali as Prime Minister. Neither the Néo-Destour nor any of the French settlers in the protectorate were satisfied with the reforms and their opposition, together with acts of terrorism by Tunisian fellaghas brought about the resignation of the M'Zali government in June 1954.

Such was the situation when M. Mendes-France became Prime Minister of France. In July 1954, he paid an unexpected visit to the Bey of Tunis and announced that France was prepared to recognize the internal autonomy of Tunisia, reserving only the control of defence and foreign affairs. M. Mendes-France suggested the formation of a Tunisian Government which could enter into negotiations with France. A new Tunisian cabinet was formed of independents and members of the Néo-Destour with Tahar ben Ammar as Prime Minister, and French Assembly approved in broad outline the proposals which the Government intended to make. In order to create an appropriate climate for negotiation the legal status of the Neo-Destour was restored and the state of siege in large areas of the protectorate was lifted. M. Bourguiba, the leader of the Néo-Destour, described these French policies as courageous and bold.