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**The Government of Dr. Ayoub Tabet**

**March to July 1943**

**By**

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## Abstract

The purpose of the present work is to examine the role of Dr. Ayoub Tabet's government in the history of Lebanon. It is intended to study the problems that faced him during his term of office from March to July 1943. In order to explain his attitude at the time it was necessary to review his political behaviour since Ottoman times. But as his beliefs were not formulated in a vacuum, a review of the political trends during the period in which he lived was also imperative.

In accomplishing this thesis, Dr. Tabet's papers himself and his writings were taken as a starting point. As an Ottoman subject he became sceptical of genuine reforms in the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War, he worked, through the Syria-Mount-Lebanon League of Liberation to sever all relations between Syria and Turkey. He had another problem facing him, and that was the relationship between the Syrian and the Hijazi or Arab questions. In a way this can be viewed as the beginning of a conflict between Syrian and Arab nationalisms. Dr. Tabet thought that the Syrian case would be enhanced if the support of France was sought. After the First World War, Dr. Tabet's views were further modified when he became a staunch Lebanese nationalist. He believed that pan-Arabism was a corollary to pan-Islamism. Thus in opposing the one it was necessary for him to oppose the other.

With the establishment of Greater Lebanon, Dr. Tabet found out that the Christian majority in Lebanon was very thin. Thus, as early as 1921, he worked to include the emigrants from Lebanon in its population.

As long as the French Mandate was still in operation, Dr. Tabet felt secure against any encroachments on Lebanon's interests on the pan-Arab formula. But in 1943, the French were about to leave the country, and Arab unity was being discussed and supported by the British. Dr. Tabet, in such a situation, attempted to add to the Christian population of Lebanon whatever emigrants he could grant Lebanese nationality. It was this move that precipitated the crisis. To end this crisis, Dr. Tabet's government resigned. The issue, far from being permanently resolved remains to be burning in Lebanese politics.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF DR. TABET

#### Introductory

Any study of the political background of Dr. Ayoub Tabet entails two major undertakings. In the first place, one must thoroughly examine the values and the current ideologies of his time. Secondly, one ought to emphasize the importance of Dr. Tabet's personal qualities, in so far as these reflected his attitude as a public figure. Thus the study of his environment would help in clarifying two basic factors. The first is the explanation of the formulation of his beliefs, and the second is the clarification of his behaviour concerning the diverse situations that confronted him. These facts can in no way be underestimated within the context of the present work, for the larger section of it revolves around this theme.

#### His Personal Qualities

Ayoub Tabet's personal qualities were very unusual for a politician who had reached the highest position in Lebanon. He was born in 1875, having very modest origins. His father was a butcher; but in spite of that he received a good education. He first entered the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut, to study medicine, but he went to the United States of America where he finished his studies. In this respect, he compensated in part for his modest origins and acquired a better social standing. There was yet another handicap in his way. He was a Protestant, and, therefore, he lost the advantages accruing to

the members of the larger communities, due to the confessional system in Lebanon. But even in being a Protestant he had certain undeniable advantages. There was no other person from the minorities who could compete with Dr. Tabet in terms of political backing. Thus the lack of any strong rivalry with him strengthened his position at elections time. In other words he could afford to assume an independent policy, irrespective of the other power groups in the country. He sat in every parliament, in which the minorities had a seat. One of his other qualities is that he was not well off, and hence he lacked a very important asset in Lebanese politics. Dr. Tabet was very dogmatic and had strong as well as extreme views. Besides, he was aggressive and uncompromising; and in a country split politically into two factions, like Lebanon, such a quality would be a marked obstacle for any political success and advancement. He was also conceited about his pride and honesty. This, in itself, would be meaningless if Dr. Tabet did not take it as a point to attack other Lebanese politicians, who, unfortunately, were corrupt and otherwise powerful. This made it quite difficult for him to get along well with such politicians who were numerous.<sup>(1)</sup> Mr. Sami es-Sulh thought of him as "extremely stubborn, (and) irritable to a fearful degree."<sup>(2)</sup> It was these qualities, perhaps, which made ex-President Bishara el-Khouri describe him as a "limited politician."<sup>(3)</sup> Whenever questioned about him, the people who knew him could not help but remark

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- (1) I am indebted for this information to Mr. Amine Nakhlé and Professor Khalid Tabet, who knew Dr. Tabet well and were close friends to him.
  - (2) Sami es-Sulh, Mudhakkarat Sami Bec es-Sulh, (Beirut: Maktabatu-l-Fikri-l-'Arabi, 1960), p. 69. The Memoirs of Sami Bey es-Sulh. (In Arabic.)
  - (3) Bishara el-Khouri, Haqa'iq Lubnaniyah, (Beirut: Manshourat Awraq Lubnaniyah, 1960), Vol.1, p.250. Lebanese Facts. (In Arabic.)

how sensitive he was. They described him also as just and frank and upright.

As a physician he acquired a worthy reputation. But in 1908, he suddenly gave up medicine completely and shifted to journalism and politics.<sup>(4)</sup> He took that step, possibly, because of the revolution against Sultan Abdul Hamid. Or, he might have done that because he was imbued with the idea that it was the national duty of the educated people in the Ottoman Empire to lead and educate the public in order to have the state run on the right track.

#### Dr. Tabet's Early Views

Ayoub Tabet was born about a year before Abdul Hamid's accession to the Ottoman throne. The decision of the new sultan to grant a constitution in 1877, could be partly interpreted as a reflection of the liberalism advocated by most of the few educated people in the empire. However, that liberalism was not confined to the capital only, but was also spread in the vilayet of Beirut which had been enjoying the fruits of western education. Despite the early reverses of the liberal movement in the Ottoman Empire - namely, when Abdul Hamid took advantage of the Russo-Turkish War and suspended the constitution in 1878 - it was not completely obstructed. Although Ayoub was only a child then and could not have been affected by those events, yet it must be mentioned that the period in which he grew was one of internal fermentation and change. Dr. Tabet was Thirty-

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(4) See "Oriente Moderno", Vol. 23, 1943, pp. 235-236.

four years old when Abdul Hamid was finally deposed. During his reign two points could be mentioned about his general policy. These points are mentioned because they might have affected the thinking of Dr. Tabet. The first point is that Abdul Hamid tried every means to kill the liberal movement. Dr. Tabet in this respect was affected because he himself was a liberal. The second is Abdul Hamid's pan-Islamic policy. He was ambitious to become the Caliph of all the Moslems of the world, and to reach that end he had to follow the policy of propagating pan-Islamism, whereby the whole Moslem countries would be united to form one state in which the constitution would be the Kor'an. For this reason he showed for sometime a keen interest in Jamal-ud-Din el-Afghani's movement. This policy could have affected Dr. Tabet, because as a Christian, the best he could hope of the Ottoman Empire was a secular state where his religion would not be a liability.

With the overthrow of Abdul Hamid in 1909, it was generally hoped that the revolutionary regime would have a more liberal form of government. Dr. Tabet himself was very enthusiastic to have radical changes take place in the Empire, but he was very sceptical of the possibilities of genuine and fundamental reforms in it. He was afraid lest reactionary movements should emerge in support of the traditionally despotic government due to ignorance and chronic misrule.<sup>(5)</sup> But despite his scepticism, in a booklet that was published in 1909, he urged his readers to accept the fact that human beings had an innate potentiality to change. Dr. Tabet used Darwin's

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(5) Ayoub Tabet, Ibra wa Dhikra, (Beirut: al-Mattha'atu-l-'Ilmiyah li-Youssef Sader, 1909), pp. 1 and 2. A Lesson and a Memory. (In Arabic.)



theory of the struggle for existence to convince his readers that those best fitted for survival were those who accepted change and adapted themselves to it. The change that he had in mind was the revolution and the coming of the Young Turks to power. He had the impression that only these could introduce reform in the Empire, and for that reason he had built high hopes on the revolutionaries and advocated their support. One of the other changes that Dr. Tabet had hoped for was the secularization of the state. He opposed the mixing of religion and state. He also opposed the use of religion as an instrument of policy and the taking of religion as the main consideration for the determination of policy. Regarding this issue of the secularization of the state, Dr. Tabet referred to events in the history of Europe. In particular, he referred to the period of the religious wars in Germany. He maintained that in Europe at the time religion was taken as a main factor in the formulation of policy, and that ultimately led to the religious wars that culminated in the devastation of Germany. However he stressed that evolution in Europe ended in neglecting religion in the policy-making process, giving the example of Christian Powers, like Germany and France in 1870, which fought each other for its interests. Therefore, it would be convenient for the Ottomans to draw a lesson out of Europe's history by avoiding making the same mistakes. In conclusion, Dr. Tabet maintained that the various Powers in Europe built their policies not on religion, but on interest. <sup>(6)</sup>

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(6) Ibid., pp. 33-37

### The Beirut Reform Society

The Beirut Reform Society was founded in 1912, and was composed of eighty-six members of all creeds. While it recognized Ottoman sovereignty, it demanded local autonomy. In other words, it drew a distinction between central affairs and local ones. The Society demanded that greater powers be given to the representative bodies in the vilayet of Beirut. It also required that the conscription of men, from the vilayet itself, for military service during peaceful times be confined to the vilayet of Beirut only. Finally, it demanded that Arabic, like Turkish, be used in the Ottoman Parliament.<sup>(7)</sup> The Young Turks, however, did not approve of the program and suppressed the movement. Their return to repressive means must have shattered any hope that Dr. Tabet might have had. In 1913, he formulated the opinion that Ottoman rule was incorrigible, and thus he, in conjunction with five other collaborators, decided to seek French support to solve their problems. In their capacity as "membres Chrétiens du Comité Exécutif de l'Assemblée Générale élue par les conseils de toutes les communautés de Beyrouth",<sup>(8)</sup> they sent a secret memorandum to the French Consul General with the preceding goal in mind. They wrote:<sup>(8)</sup>

"... et vu l'avenir sombre que nous appréhendons, nous vous permettons, Monsieur le Consul Général, de solliciter l'appui de la France pour la réalisation d'un des trois vœux que nous

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(7) George Antonius, The Arab Awakening, (Britain: Khayat's, 1955), pp. 112-114.

(8) The French text is in Dr. Tabet's private papers. An Arabic translation of this memorandum is found in A. Jamal Pasha, Mudhakkarat Jamal Pasha, (al-Qahira: translated into Arabic by Ahmad Shukri, 1923), pp. 405-410. The Memoirs of Jamal Pasha. The memorandum was also signed by Michel Tueini, Youssef Hani, Pierre Trad, Rizkallah Arkash and Khalil Zeiniyeh.

vous exposons ci-après, suivant leur degré d'importance aux yeux des populations chrétiennes:

"(1) Protectorat français sur la Syrie.

"(2) Autonomie complète du Vilayet de Bayrouth, sous la protection et le contrôle effectif de la France.

"(3) Rattachement au Liban du Vilayet de Bayrouth, places tous deux sous le contrôle effectif de la France."

This memorandum was found among the papers of the French Consulate General at Beirut, by the Turkish authorities when they broke into the Consulate, in 1916. This memorandum was taken by the Turks as evidence of treason against its signatories, who were subsequently tried at Aley and condemned to death. The sentence was passed in absentia against them with the exception of Youssef Hani, who was hanged with other martyrs on May 6, 1916.

#### The First Arab Conference

At this stage, it must be noted that the Beirut Reform Society was in close contact with other dissident movements in the Arabic-speaking vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. One such movement is the Decentralization Party in Egypt. When those movements were confronted with Ottoman repression, they shifted the centre of their activities to safer quarters. They chose Paris for the holding of the First Arab Conference in 1913. About this time Dr. Tabet was leaving for the United States of America. He passed through Paris and decided to attend the Conference as one of the delegates of the Beirut Reform Society. He did not play an important role in the

Conference, for he did not take part in the speech-making, and he hardly participated in the debates. This, however, does not preclude the fact that he was enthusiastic about the cooperation of Christians and Moslems in the Conference.<sup>(9)</sup> Dr. Tabet's passivity was explained by one of the attendants, Abdul Hamid ez-Zahrawi, who wrote to one of his friends, "... Then, after a while, the delegates of Beirut became impatient and returned to their country via Istanbul. I, alone, ... remained to represent the idea. There also remained Khalil Zeiniyeh and Ayoub Tabet, but they drank not a drop from the fountain of (pan-Arabism); not even of (pan-Syrianism). Their concern was Beirut only."<sup>(10)</sup>

#### War-time Developments

When World War I broke out, Dr. Tabet was in the United States. His political thinking during this period was greatly affected by the events taking place in his country. In the first place, he himself was condemned to death in absentia. The execution of his friend Youssef Hani was quite distressing. Secondly, the inhabitants of the autonomous Sanjaq of Lebanon and of the Vilayet of Beirut were being starved methodically by Turkish measures. Thirdly, many of the nationalists were arrested and later condemned or exiled. He, therefore, set upon himself the task of working for the saving of his country from the ruthless Turks. Thus, he, in conjunction

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- (9) See in this connection his letter to Abdul Ghani al-<sup>\*</sup>Arayssy in, al-Lujnatu-l-<sup>\*</sup>Ulya li-Hizbi-l-Lamarkaziyah bi-Misr, al-Mu<sup>\*</sup>tamaru-l-<sup>\*</sup>Arabiyu-l-Awwal, (al-Qahira: Mattba<sup>\*</sup>atu-l-Bosfor, 1913), pp.192-193. The First Arab Conference. (In Arabic.)
- (10) Ahmad Qadri, Mudhakkirati <sup>\*</sup>ani-th-Thawrati-l-<sup>\*</sup>Arabiyati-l-Kubra, (Dimashq: Mattabi<sup>\*</sup> Ibn Zaydoun, 1956), p.22. My Memoirs on the Great Arab Revolution. (In Arabic.)

with other Lebanese and Syrian emigrants residing in New York, founded the very dynamic society known as the Syria-Mount-Lebanon League of Liberation, in 1917. Dr. Tabet was elected as its president. The League included many notables of the Lebanese and Syrian Colony in New York. Among them were the editors of four periodicals, widely distributed among the emigrants in the United States. These periodicals were as-Sha'ab, as-Saih, al-Fatat and al-Funoun. Several men of letters and poets joined it like Amine er-Rihani, who was elected vice-president for some time; Jibran Khalil Jibran and Mikhail Na'imy were secretaries charged with the English and Arabic correspondence respectively. The two young poets Eliya Abou Madi and Nassib Arida were members. The latter was the editor of al-Funoun.

#### The Syria-Mount-Lebanon League of Liberation

The League undertook to fulfil three major aims. The first was for the complete liberation of Syria from the incorrigible rule of Turkey, and the unconditional severance of all relations with it. The second was for the establishment in Syria of "federated autonomies - Mount Lebanon with its ancient boundaries, Damascus, Aleppo etc.-" under the protection and guidance of France. (11) The third aim of the League was the separation

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(11) It must be mentioned that the League did not define what they meant by Syria. They, however, laid great emphasis on Mount Lebanon, the Vilayet of Beirut, the then Vilayet of Syria - with its centre at Damascus - and the Vilayet of Aleppo. Again, they did not define what they meant by the term "Mount Lebanon with its ancient boundaries". They might have meant by it, the Lebanon during the Emirate. But even then, there were no fixed frontiers. Nor were these recognized by the Ottoman Government or by the European Powers. The Emirate varied in size continually, depending on the strength of the Emir vis-a-vis the central government. During the reign of Fakhr ed-Din II, it reached its farthest limits. It included Antioch in the North, Palmyra in the East and sections of northern Jordan and Palestine in the South. At other times it was confined to the Shouf district. But the coastal towns of Beirut and Sidon as well as the Biqa' were parts of the Shihabi Emirate at one time or other. In any case they meant a greater Lebanon than the Mutassarriyyah without giving it any definite boundaries.

of the Hijazi Question from that of Syria, instead of uniting them under the formula of pan-Arabism, Arabic-speaking or otherwise. (12)

Underlying the general principles expressed in the programme of the League, were several factors that deserve close attention. Foremost among these was the fact that there was no clear concept of nationalism, in the Near Eastern countries, and much less of a secular one. It was only natural, therefore, that the members of one congregation or other should feel loyal only to the group to which they belonged. This was a very important aspect in the social and political life of the Near Eastern countries. Besides, there were legal differences between the various communities for two reasons. In the first place, the system of foreign capitulations enhanced the position of one sect or another, depending on the interest and influence of the protecting or privileged European Power. Secondly, the "Millet" and "Shari'a" courts prescribed, in matters of personal status, different laws for the Ottoman subjects. It would be needless to say that there was practically no intermarriage between the sects. In other words, confessional prejudices were a factor that cannot be overlooked. The position of the Christians in this respect was not very pleasant. It was an inferior one, that they would not wish its continuance. In Dr. Tabet's case, it was still more alarming, because he was conscious that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic Empire before anything else. (13)

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(12) These aims appeared at the top of the papers used by the League for its official correspondence.

(13) Tabet, 'Ibra wa Dhikra, passim. A contemporary historian of the Ottoman Empire, agrees with Dr. Tabet in that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic Empire before anything else; see Zeine N. Zeine, Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism, (Beirut: Khayat's, 1958), passim.

However, regarding the question of religion and nationalism, Dr. Tabet explained his position in a letter to the editor of the New York "Evening Sun". He wrote, "... it should be remembered that the masses in the Near East do not base their nationalism on racial ties, but, in a much greater degree, on sectarianism and differences of religious beliefs. This is particularly the case with the Moslem masses..."<sup>(14)</sup>

The First Aim of the League: the Complete Break with Turkey

The reasons for the complete break with Turkey can be summed up under one comprehensive heading: the incorrigibility of Turkish rule. Such incorrigibility was measured, in part, by the cruelties inflicted on the Ottoman subjects of this part of the world, but notably on the Christians among them. Add to this a general scepticism of the possibilities of genuine reforms in the Ottoman Empire. The lack of cohesive factors, such as nationalism, in the Empire was yet another cause for the desire to break with Turkey. This problem was aggravated further by the clash between Turkish nationalism as manifested by the Turanian movement, and the nationalism advocated by Dr. Tabet and the League. The former aimed at the Turkification of all the Ottoman subjects, and the latter aimed at the realization of their national aspirations; for, although these were not clear or well defined, yet they were different from the Turanian desires of the Young Turks.

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(14) Tabet's papers; letter dated January, 22, 1918.

The Second Aim: French Protection and Guidance for Syrian Federated Autonomies

It appears that Dr. Tabet did not have any tangible plan regarding the unification of the Ottoman provinces in geographic Syria. But he had a special arrangement for Lebanon. In a cable to his friend Alfred Sursock, Dr. Tabet said, "... Demand French mandate all Syria, separate government Greater Lebanon."<sup>(15)</sup> But in more explicit terms, after his return to Lebanon in 1920, when Faysal was still occupying Damascus, Dr. Tabet wrote Mr. William Phillips, the Assistant Secretary of State:

"We beg therefore to appeal to the President that the Syrian situation be considered in its true light, to the end that Sherif Feisal and his Hedjazian contingent should withdraw from all Syrian territory, that ... Greater Lebanon be made a separate independent state and that the mandatory obligation be made uniform for all Syria, so that the component states be uniformly organized for a national union in the future on republican basis."<sup>(16)</sup>

The League in general and Dr. Tabet in particular, asked for French mandate, for several reasons. One point of view was expressed by Dr. Tabet in a letter to President Wilson as follows:

"On July 30th, 1917, our League had the honor to submit to Your Excellency a petition soliciting your sympathy in behalf of Syria, the oppressed land of our birth, which for

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(15) Tabet's papers; cable dated August 30, no year mentioned; probably 1919, because he had not returned to Lebanon, (1920), and not in 1918.

(16) Tabet's papers; letter dated April 7, 1920.



more than five centuries has been subjected to the cruelties of the incorrigible rule of Turkey."

then, after asking if France could be entrusted to bestow on the Syrians her protection and guidance, the letter went on to justify the request:

"France, for one reason has shared with the American people the educational and cultural work in our country, to the extent that the French language is relatively more spoken in Syria than in any other of the Mediterranean countries. For another thing, traditions extending as far back as the time of the Crusades connect France's name with the Syrian people, the Christian element in particular. In fact some of our older people have been eye-witnesses of the work of deliverance by the French Military expedition which in 1860, came to Syria and put an end to Christian massacres which had threatened the Christian element with utter extermination."<sup>(17)</sup>

Beside these views, some of the League's members asked for French mandate, because they believed that the French were going to have it in any case.<sup>(18)</sup>

A British Mandate was undesirable to the League and to Dr. Tabet for several reasons. In part, the British did not have all the luring conditions that their French counterpart had. But the main reason for the lack of desire was noted in a letter from Dr. Tabet to Henry Cabot Lodge,

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(17) Tabet's papers; letter dated May 7, 1918.

(18) I am indebted for this information to Mr. Abdul Massih Haddad, one of the original founders of the League and the editor of as-Sa'ih.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. It stated:

"In view of the fact that your honorable committee has granted hearings to the representatives of various small nations on the desires of their respective nationals, may we not beg the honor of being given a chance to lay before you the case of Syria, which is threatened by the Hejaz ambitions to establish a Moslem pan-Arab empire under the mandate of Great Britain.

"The Christians in the Near East suffered much too long under Moslem-Turkish rule through the age-long Disraeli policy, and the Christians of Syria - who are the original inhabitants of the country - beg your sympathy to prevent their falling through the same policy, under a different form, under Moslem-Arab rule, which is more unprogressive and inefficient than Turkish rule itself."<sup>(19)</sup>

In asking for a mandate, Dr. Tabet was not interested just in bringing the French over to this part of the world. Underneath the concept of the mandate there lay his modesty and his realism and his fears. This could be noted as early as 1916, when he wrote to a friend about the desired situation after the war:

"... The effective and ruling power over the different zones should be in the hands of the Protecting Power-to-be.

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(19) Tabet's papers; letter dated August 27, 1919.

In other words, there should be an occupation pure and simple, with only municipal rights given to the inhabitants; greater rights to be given gradually, depending on the progress which we make in administrative qualification. This, instead of being a reactionary policy on my part, as it may seem to the swollen heads, is really what the country needs and all what it can digest for many years to come. And after all it is better to be given little than more than to be given much then to lose all; more freedom given to us now may lead to our abusing it, the abusing of it to anarchy and anarchy to the withdrawal by the rulers-to-be of the freedom unwisely given and unwisely used? ...

"... In short our people need teachers and masters; we may produce many in the future, but at present we have none. Let us once for all admit this pitiless fact, for unless we do we shall not learn, and, unless we learn we shall remain in need of teachers and of 'masters'." (20)

Dr. Tabet's position was clarified further in a letter to Mr. Phillips:

"May we not beg to express our fears that the Syrian situation may have been presented to the President as a

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(20) Tabet's papers; letter dated August 26, 1916.

question of French Imperialistic designs as against Syrian national aspirations for independence. In effect, the case of our very unfortunate country is a question between a Moslem-Arab theocratic monarchy, under ambitious members of the Hedjaz dynasty, and a long cherished Syrian aspiration for eventual republican independence. Unless we are guided and protected by a democratic mandatory during our evolution towards that end, Syria's case is hopeless."<sup>(21)</sup>

this hopelessness was not referred to any particular cause in the same letter, but judging from his allusion to the "Moslem-Arab theocratic monarchy", and from a comment in the following cable, the reason for this hopelessness could be better understood. He, on one occasion cabled President Wilson:

"... You will not permit, we feel assured, that technical advantage of military occupation should rob our little country of its economical sustenance by its division into a barren sea-coast zone, arbitrarily shut off of its arteries of life to satisfy the idealistic dream of the building of a future pan-Arab empire - a pan-Islamic empire in fact. Confined thus to the coast, the long-suffering Christian element, reduced to one half its number by Turkish reprisals during the war, will be in real danger of eventual absorption in a Moslem-Arab empire."<sup>(22)</sup>

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(21) Tabet's papers; letter dated April 7, 1920.

(22) Tabet's papers; cable dated December 18, 1918.

In brief, Dr. Tabet's concept of a French mandate was to help his people, who were not yet prepared to rule themselves, become independent; secondly, once the French become mandatory they would protect his country against any encroachments by its neighbours, and thus they would prevent its being absorbed in an "empire" that was overwhelmingly Moslem.

The Third Aim: The Separation of the Syrian from the Hijazi Question

Dr. Tabet opposed the treatment of the two questions as one because he feared the eventuality leading to unity with the Arabic speaking countries of Asia - the main aim of Faysal and his father. In a unity of this sort, he believed that "Moslem-Arab rule (would be) more unprogressive and inefficient than Turkish rule itself."<sup>(23)</sup> However, his position was made definite as early as 1916, when he wrote a friend:

"But while I feel confident as to our future liberation from Turkish rule, I am not as confident that the Christian element in Syria will receive just consideration. In other words, I am afraid that the Arab revolt may be given undue importance, leading to the Moslem element being regarded as 'the all in all', and the Christians as merely a 'negligible quantity'. Even before this development the Governments of Western Europe had so looked on the matter... To be sure it should not be very much surprising that the Powers ruling over millions of Moslems, should have so regarded the matter in the past, that is, when Turkey was still the ruler of

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(23) See above p. 14.

Syria. But with this rule coming to an end there should be no further reason why this should be so, unless the two questions of the future of Arabia proper and of Syria are dealt with as "one", which solution will be one sided as regards the natives, and much too selfish as regards the interests of the Powers concerned vis-a-vis of the Christian element in Syria. The two questions dealt with separately, however, will place the Moslems and Christians in Syria on practically an equal plane. To begin with, the numerical ratio between the two elements - considering the return to their native land of the several hundreds of thousands of Christian emigrants - will dwindle to 4 to 5 from 1 to 3, as it is now. Even this difference, at best unappreciable, will disappear as a factor of superiority when measured by the great difference in education between the two elements, by the greater predominance of the financial and general economical interests of the Christians, and, above all, by their greater adaptability to modern ideas and progressiveness in general ..."

In conclusion Dr. Tabet stated, "The question of the future status of Syria should be treated, first, as absolutely separate from the question of Arabia proper, and, secondly as one which gives no special claim to either Christian or Moslem in so much as political privileges are concerned."<sup>(24)</sup>

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(24) Tabet's papers; letter dated August 26, 1916.

Thus, in order to be consistent with their aims, Dr. Tabet and his associates adopted the policy of repudiating Faysal's claims in Syria. They, on more than one occasion, vehemently protested to the Allies, but namely to the French and Americans, against Faysal's intrusion on Syrian affairs; and often they maintained that there were no national ties between the Syrians and the Arabs. In a cable to President Wilson, who was in Paris at the time, Dr. Tabet pleaded his case:

"We implore Your Excellency that Syria's geographical integrity, as well as her racial entity be both defended against attempted encroachments on the pan-Arab or the Arabic-speaking formula; for the Syrians are not Arabs - the language they now speak was imposed on them by conquest." (25)

In seeking the support of the French, Dr. Tabet wrote a letter to Shukri Ghanim, founder of a society in Paris called "Comité Central Syrien", telling him:

"... We assume this memorable occasion to submit to His Excellency (the French President) Syria's fervent invocation of his personal sympathy and active assistance, no less than the sympathy and active assistance of the Government of the Republic, in behalf of the speedy execution of His Excellency's promise with which we were honoured on a similar occasion at this time last year, "that Syria's rights and interests are as sacred to France as ever."

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(25) Tabet's papers; cable dated December 18, 1918.

"With distressed hearts we beg to submit to His Excellency that the intrusion of Sherif Feisal and his Hejaz contingent on internal Syrian affairs ... tends to greatly jeopardize Syria's "rights and interests", which Syria looks to France, her traditional friend and protector, to defend against all encroachments."<sup>(26)</sup>

Still, in more emphatic terms, Dr. Tabet sent a reproduction of a letter, originally sent to Clemenceau, to Mr. Phillips saying:

"... We, therefore, beg to renew our appeal submitted twice before to the Supreme Council (of the Peace Conference) and also to President Wilson on his arrival in Paris, that an end be put to the intrusion of Sherif Feisal and his agents on Syrian affairs, who have nothing in common with the Syrian people aside from the relationship with the Moslem community in Syria. Contrary to the widespread propaganda alleging a common tie on a racial basis, the Syrians are not Arabs. The Syrians, as any student of history knows, are of an Aramaic ancestry, with a varying admixture of Greek, Graeco-Roman, Arab and Crusader's descent. A larger or smaller proportion even of the Syrian Moslems are former Christians belonging to the above ancestry, who, in order to escape fanatical persecution after the Arab conquest of Syria in the early part of the seventh century, adopted the faith of their Moslem conquerors.

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(26) Tabet's papers; letter dated July 11, 1919.



"May we not submit, therefore, before your august Council that the claim of Sherif Feisal to speak in the name of Syria and the Syrians is a presumption and an intrusion on Syrian affairs. Moreover, his claim that he stands as the representative of the Arab race in the course he is following in the Syrian question falls very short of the real facts, for, as a matter of fact, none of the recognized chiefs even in Arabia itself has up to the present time recognized the King of the Hejaz as his suzerain - and none is likely to recognize him as such. This makes his meddling with Syrian affairs all the more presumptuous, Syria being in all respects superior to the Hejaz and other Arab districts in culture, modernism and progressiveness." (27)

#### The Post-war Settlement

Dr. Tabet returned to Lebanon in 1920. The details of the settlement of the question of this part of the world had not yet been reached, though, in broad outline, the Sykes-Picot agreement defined the interests of the British and French in the Ottoman Empire. But in the meantime the Allies conceded Faysal's establishment of his government at Damascus. Faysal's activities were not confined to central Syria. They were extended to the maritime provinces. His ventures were successful for a very short time, when he attempted to establish a loyal government at Beirut under

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(27) Tabet's papers; letter dated November 19, 1919.

\*Umar ed-Da\*ouq, but because of French and British protests, Faysal gave in and the government was dismissed. Dr. Tabet was frightened by the possibility of Faysal's success in annexing the former vilayet of Beirut. In a letter to Mr. Phillips, Dr. Tabet complained:

"Recent events in Cilicia and the Syrian zone, under the occupation of the Hedjaz contingent, furnish serious evidence of a pan-Turanian and pan-Arab combination on pan-Islamic basis. In my conversation on November 19th and 20th with the officials of the Near East section of your Department I had the occasion to refer to this eventuality, with its future menace to the tranquility of the Orient." (28)

These recent events and the serious evidence were not explained by Dr. Tabet. His allusions were probably to the negotiations between the delegates of the Arab government, at Damascus, and the representatives of Mustafa Kamal Pasha in Turkey. Until the beginning of January 1920, Faysal was still in Europe. His brother Zayd deputized for him during his absence. In this interval, some of Faysal's collaborators considered opening "hostilities against the French and probably make an open alliance with Turkey."<sup>(29)</sup> Accordingly, the government at Damascus sent two emissaries to Turkey to negotiate a treaty with Ataturk. A draft-agreement was reached and included four major points. The first dealt with certain modifications of the northern boundaries of Syria, particularly the Mosul region. The

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(28) Tabet's papers; letter dated April 7, 1920.

(29) Zeine N. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, (Beirut: Khayat's, 1960), p. 129.

second was for the organization of a united front against the Western Powers. Thirdly, the Turkish and Arab armies were to have a unified command. Lastly, in case their ventures against the West were successful, Turks and Arabs were to live together under similar arrangements to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, prior to the First World War.<sup>(30)</sup> Soon after these negotiations, a few notables from the various regions of geographic Syria met at Damascus on March 7, 1920, and formed the "Syrian Conference". Among the various resolutions taken at the Syrian Conference, was the proclamation of Faysal as "King of Syria".<sup>(31)</sup> It was these events that took place just before Dr. Tabet sent the mentioned letter. His fears were aroused by the fact that nothing was yet added to the Sanjaq of Lebanon.

It was around the end of July, 1920, that Faysal was forced to leave Damascus by the French, and consequently his designs on Syria were checked, in so far as Dr. Tabet was concerned. This was one of the first aims that he fulfilled. The second aim was the establishment of a separate state in Lebanon. This again was achieved on September 1, 1920, when General Gouraud ceremoniously declared the state of "Grand Liban", within its present frontiers. The coastal towns of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre and the fertile plains of the Biqa' and 'Akkar were attached to it. A third aim was also attained, namely the French taking-over of the mandate for

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(30) Ibid., pp. 147-148.

(31) The text of the resolutions is in al-Kitabu-l-Urduni-l-Abyad: al-Watha'iqu-l-Qawmiyah fil-Wahdati-s-Souriyati-t-Tabi'iyah, (Amman: al-Matba'atu-l-Wattaniyah, n.d.), pp. 6-9. The Jordanian White Book. (In Arabic.)

Syria and Lebanon. It will be noticed that the settlement reached after the war, along these lines was in accordance with the aims of Dr. Tabet. But whether such a settlement was due to his efforts is questionable. In the first place the partition of the Ottoman Empire and the French control of this part of the world had been for a long time an objective of French foreign policy. The last manifestation of this objective lay in the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement. The French were only glad to find people, in Syria and Lebanon, who were willing to help them in their task. It must be added in this connection that Dr. Tabet's concept of the mandate was literally to guide his countrymen towards self-government, and secondly to protect his country against any encroachments by any ambitious Moslem-Arab in the area. The French, however, conceived of the mandate differently. They preached a concept similar to that of Dr. Tabet, but they had the intention of ruling the country as one of the French colonies. The overwhelming majority of the French officials who were appointed in the mandated territories of Syria and Lebanon were ones who had served in colonial offices.

#### Dr. Tabet in Lebanese Politics

After his return to Lebanon, Dr. Tabet considered withdrawing from politics and founding a news paper and a publishing house with his wealthy friend Alfred Surssock. But the untimely death of the latter disrupted that project. In any case, he was soon to be involved in Lebanese politics. It was no easy task for him to adapt himself to the new conditions arising after the declaration of Greater Lebanon. The attachment of new territories to Mount Lebanon had greatly tipped off the balance of power in it. At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of Mount Lebanon was

estimated at about 400,000 people, not including the emigrants of the sanjaq. The 400,000 inhabitants were divided among the communities as follows: <sup>(32)</sup>

Sunnis	Shi*ites	Druzes	Maronites	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholics	Total
13,500	16,500	50,000	230,000	54,000	35,000	399,000

In 1925, the census of the population gave the following returns: <sup>(33)</sup>

	Residents and temporary absentees	Emigrants	Total
Sunnis	122,678	1657	124,335
Shi*ites	101,737	1337	103,074
Druzes	38,940	2468	41,408
Maronites	178,257	<del>19415</del>	197,672
Greek Orthodox	69,539	10259	79,798
Greek Catholics	40,414	3567	43,981
Protestants	3,986	378	4,364
Armenians	32,859	-	32,859
Others	9,379	159	9,538
Total	597,789	39240	637,029

From a comparison between the two tables, it will be noted that, while the

(32) I have depended for this information on the lectures of Dr. Najib Sadaqa on "Public Administration in Lebanon".

(33) Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1926), pp.154-155.

Maronites in the autonomous sanjaq of Mount Lebanon formed the overwhelming majority, after the establishment of Greater Lebanon, they had become a plurality. Even, their total number had dwindled down by about 52,000 despite the additions that came with the attachment of the new territories. The decrease was mainly because of the starving of thousands during the War. There is another factor that deserves close attention. The increase of the total number of Moslems with the eventual bridging of the proportional gap between the Christians and the Moslems. In the earlier period there were four Christians to one Moslem (i.e., Sunni, Shi'ite and Druze). In the latter period there were approximately 13 Christians, including the Armenians, to every 10 Moslems. The third factor that ought to be mentioned in this connection is that political activity and the centre of gravity of political forces had shifted from the villages of Mount Lebanon to the coastal towns, but mainly Beirut and Tripoli. The influence of the street and the mob is a by-product of this shift. Finally, in so far as Dr. Tabet was concerned, his optimism that a separate state in Lebanon, with a Christian majority, would give the Christians an uncontested position was not fully justified.

In 1922, Dr. Tabet was elected as a member of the "Representative Council". At that time, the main task of the French authorities and cooperating Lebanese politicians was to reach a formula for the administering of the country and the promulgation of a constitution for it. To that effect, Dr. Tabet submitted to the Council three reports. These do not deal with his political views as such, except for the fact that he still retained his

views regarding the necessity of having French councillors to train and prepare the Lebanese for the administration of their country. In 1925, he, among other Lebanese politicians was asked by Sarrail, the French High Commissioner, to make suggestions for a Lebanese constitution. The draft-constitution that he drew up was on non-sectarian bases. There was to be a bicameral system. The "National Assembly" was to be composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. The former was to consist of a simple majority of elected members, and the others were to be appointed by the High Commissioner, provided that after a period of 24 years, all the Senators would be elected. The Chamber of Deputies was to be elected by the people. Both Senators and Deputies were to take an oath declaring their fidelity to the state of Lebanon. The French High Commissioner was to have the power of returning a bill to the National Assembly. Should the latter insist on its adoption, it would have the overriding power. At the same time the High Commissioner could dissolve both chambers of the National Assembly. In the same draft-constitution Dr. Tabet envisaged the establishment of Lebanese "offices" abroad. In such offices, Lebanese citizens were to be appointed as delegates. The opening of such offices was to take place in those countries where the total number of Lebanese residents exceeded 30,000 people, as well as in the capital of the Mandatory. In the foreign countries where those offices were to be opened, the Lebanese delegates should keep in touch with the French diplomatic missions in the country concerned. (34)

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(34) The three reports and the draft-constitution are in a booklet by, Dr. Eyyoub Tabet, L'Etat du Liban et le Mandat, (Beyrouth: n.p., 1926).

The problem of the emigrants was of extreme importance to Dr. Tabet. He himself could be considered to have been one of them. During his stay in the United States, he worked with them through the Syria-Mount-Lebanon League of Liberation. These emigrants were Ottoman subjects. But with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the question of their nationality emerged. The importance of that question has become destined to affect Lebanese politics tremendously. It is very significant for the present study, for over the question of granting Lebanese nationality to some of the emigrants that Doctor Tabet's government in 1943, fell. As early as 1921, Dr. Tabet wrote the French Ambassador in Washington saying:

"... I believe that it may interest you to know something about matters of a specific nature. Indeed, I am anxious to bring such matters to your attention because of their particular interest to the Lebanese in North America, in whom Your Excellency takes a special interest. The more important of these are the following:

"I- The registration of the Lebanese residing in foreign countries, so that their names be entered in the coming census.

"This is a very important point, because names so registered, although not having the right to vote, will add to the right of representation of their respective communities domiciled in Greater Lebanon. The importance of this matter lies in the fact that the great majority of Lebanese in the two Americas are Christians, and because of this fact the registration of their names...Will help to safeguard our Christian



majority in Lebanon. This majority is at present - because of the death during the war of more than one third of the Christian population-very thin indeed."<sup>(35)</sup>

It is true that the Christian majority was thin, yet there was another factor that could have aggravated the situation for Dr. Tabet. The Moslems, but notably the Sunnis, were hostile to the French mandate from its very inception. They were hostile to the idea of being considered Lebanese. In 1922, when General Gouraud wanted to have a census of the population, the Moslems refused to cooperate with the authorities concerned unless the item on the identity card indicating Lebanese nationality was removed.<sup>(36)</sup> This hostility was further sharpened by the desire of some of the leading notables of the Moslem communities to be separated from the state of Greater Lebanon and to join Syria. Cables were sent to that effect to the various highly placed officials in the French government.<sup>(37)</sup>

When the situation became more stable in Lebanon, the French promulgated the Lebanese Constitution on May 23, 1926. On the next day the French High Commissioner appointed sixteen Senators, including Dr. Tabet to represent the minorities. It took him two more years to become a minister for the first time. In 1928, Bishara el-Khoury formed a cabinet and charged

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(35) Tabet's papers; letter addressed to M. Jusserand, the French Ambassador, dated June 6, 1921.

(36) Bayanu-l-Lujnati-l-Tahtiriyah lil-Mu'tamari-d-Da'im lil-Hay'aati-l-Islamiyah wal-Arabiyah fi Lubnan, (Beirut, March 6, 1953), p. 4. The statement of the Preparatory Committee of the Permanent Congress of the Islamic and Arab Committees in Lebanon. (In Arabic.)

(37) The text of cables is in Memorandum de Protestation Présenté par les Habitants des Territoires Annexés Illégalement au Sandjak Autonome du Mont Liban, (n.d.).

Dr. Tabet with the ministries of Internal Affairs and of Public Health. In his capacity as Minister of the Interior, Dr. Tabet must have greatly offended some of the deputies when, on several occasions, he dissolved village municipalities and dismissed several "mukhtars". The reasons that he gave for such actions were that both the municipalities and the mukhtars were the representatives of the central authority, and, as such, they did not have the right of signing petitions that were against the government's policy. Again, he took the initiative in stopping some periodicals, such as *ed-Dabbour*, *La Syrie*, *adh-Dhikra*, etc., for one of two main reasons. The first was that the periodical concerned had insulted the "public authority", and the second was that it had become involved in politics or that it tackled a political problem without having a legitimate right to do so.<sup>(38)</sup> In his approach to such problems, Dr. Tabet adopted a very strict and legalistic course. The Prime Minister of the day described the position of the government as follows, "The Government lived between ebb and flow because of the disagreement between the Minister of the Interior and the majority of the deputies, whether these were politically his foes or friends, ...which made cooperation with him extremely tiring."<sup>(39)</sup>

Dr. Tabet did not sit in the parliament of 1929-1932. The seat for the Minorities was abolished. In the meantime, he was granted the

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(38) al-Jaridatu-r-Rasmiyatu-l-Lubnaniyah, 1928, *passim*. The Lebanese Official Gazette. (In Arabic)

(39) Bishara el-Khoury, op. cit., p.156.

concession of draining water to the city of Sidon. The crisis over the presidential elections in 1932 resulted in the suspension of the Lebanese constitution. It remained in abeyance for two years. After its return Dr. Tabet was elected as deputy for Beirut. In the interval between 1929 and 1934, Dr. Tabet was practically not active politically. But after the election of Mr. Emile Eddé to the presidency, in 1936, Dr. Tabet was appointed as "Secretary of State" - a position equivalent to that of Prime Minister. In the manoeuvres for the presidential elections, Dr. Tabet was mentioned to the French High Commissioner as a possible candidate by Bishara el-Khourî. The High Commissioner, however rejected the proposal.<sup>(40)</sup> The French opposed Dr. Tabet's elections for several reasons. In the first place, the election of Dr. Tabet would enhance the position of Bishara el-Khourî, because it was he who took the initiative in order to obstruct the election of his bitter enemy and the strongest of all his rivals - Mr. Eddé. Mr. Khourî was not satisfactory to the French because he was very hostile to the suspension of the constitution in 1932, and even in 1936, the constitution had been only partly restored - and this was enough to make Bishara complain and demand its return. Secondly, Dr. Tabet was a Protestant, and the Maronite Patriarch was anxious to have one from his community as President. Thirdly, Dr. Tabet was not subservient to the French. When interviewed, a gentleman who does not wish to be quoted, said that the French were "afraid" of Dr. Tabet. The reason that he gave was that Dr. Tabet did not tolerate any French interference in the affairs that fell within

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(40) Ibid., pp. 195-196.

the jurisdiction of the Lebanese government. When he was in power, Dr. Tabet would apply the law as rigorously on French citizens as on Lebanese nationals. Unless he believed in something, he was not likely to do it for the sake of the French. His concept of French advisors was to give advice and only when asked. The gentleman added that the "High Commissariat" instructed French officials to be more discreet in dealing with the Lebanese government when Dr. Tabet was in power.

However, this was not enough to cause a break between the French and Dr. Tabet. The French could still depend on his cooperation; and he could still expect the French to support the country as well as guide and protect it. In 1936, when he was "Secretary of State", the ill-fated treaty between Lebanon and France was negotiated, and ratified by the Lebanese parliament. Dr. Tabet took part in these negotiations. In the correspondence that followed the negotiations, the President, on behalf of the Lebanese government raised the question of the emigrants. The President asked whether the French government would agree to the appointment of Lebanese attachés at the French diplomatic and consular missions, wherever Lebanese interests necessitated such an action. President Eddé also requested the French government to give its support and protection regarding the interests of the emigrants. The French answered the President, pledging their agreement to his requests.<sup>(41)</sup> Dr. Tabet's comments on the treaty showed his enthusiasm not only regarding the newly won independence of the

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(41) Majlisu-n-Nuwwabi-l-Lubnani, Mahadiru-l-Jalawat, 1936, pp. II and 24-25. The Minutes of the Lebanese Parliament, 1936. (In Arabic.)

country, but, also, regarding the French undertaking to protect that independence and maintain the territorial integrity of Lebanon.<sup>(42)</sup> However, it was in such circumstances, when the future status of Lebanon was being discussed, that a Moslem Conference took place. Some of the Moslem leaders met in the house of Salim Ali Salam at the beginning of March and demanded the attachment of the coastal towns and the districts, annexed to Mount Lebanon, to Syria. These demands were opposed by a moderate Moslem, Mr. Kazim es-Sulh, because of their extremist Moslem Character.<sup>(43)</sup> The Mufti of the Republic, Muhammad Tawfiq Khalid, expressed the opinion of the Moslems in a memorandum to the French High Commissioner to the effect that they wished to have, first, complete independence; secondly, national sovereignty; and thirdly, unity with Syria through a plebiscite.<sup>(44)</sup>

The Franco-Lebanese treaty was not ratified by the French Parliament. Its terms, therefore, were not applied. At the beginning of 1937, Dr. Tabet resigned. He still sat in parliament until its dissolution on September 21, 1939, by the French High Commissioner, Gabriel Puaux. Dr. Tabet had become by that time an elderly man, 64 years old, and until his appointment as "Head of the State Head of the Government" in March 1943, he lived in semi-retirement.

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(42) Ibid., pp. 17-18.

(43) See the pamphlet that was published by Hizbu-n-Nida\*, being the reproduction of a statement that he leased to the press. It is entitled: Mushkilatu-l-Infisal wal-Ittisal fi Lubnan. The Problem of Separation and Communication in Lebanon. (In Arabic.)

(44) See the booklet entitled Ba\*adu-l-Khutabi wal-Mudhakkarat li-Sahibi-s-Samahah el-Mufti-l-Akbar, ash-Shaykh Muhammad Tawfiq Khalid, (Beirut: Matbba\*atu-l-Kashshaf, n.d.), p. 4.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE POWER PATTERN IN LEBANON ON THE EVE OF DR. TABET'S APPOINTMENT

#### Introductory

During the late thirties, Lebanese politics was characterized by the struggle between Emile Eddé and his al-Kutlah-l-Wattaniyah on the one hand, and Bishara el-Khourî and his al-Kutlah-d-Dustouriyah on the other. In such a situation the French authorities played the one against the other with a special interest in favour of Mr. Eddé. However, both politicians cooperated with the French during the mandate. But Mr. Khourî was different from his opponent in that he was less dogmatic and acquired the reputation of being less subservient to French policies than Mr. Eddé. According to the last French High Commissioner, both "M. Emile Eddé et M. Bechara Khourî étaient en effet ... de fervents amis de la France..."<sup>(1)</sup> Whilst that was a main characteristic in Lebanese politics, the power pattern was not confined to the two conflicting parties. In broad outline, the following groups can be included in that pattern. In the first place, there were the French who in the last analysis were all-powerful. They could suspend the constitution and appoint the government, when it was in suspension. Secondly, there were the two blocs mentioned above. Both of them were led by Christians, namely Maronites. They were based mainly on two coalitions of chieftains

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(1) Gabriel Puaux, Deux Années au Levant, (Paris: Hachette, 1952), p. 57.

but lacked the efficient leadership, the coordination of the activities of the members and the strong attachment to the ideology, if any, of the party. They included politicians who had vested interests in the country. These interests were of different kinds. They varied from one person to another. One came from a leading family and wanted to maintain his social status. Another was a lawyer, and unless he cooperated with one party or another, it would be extremely difficult for him to be successful in his career. Others took advantage of their position and influence to make money. Those politicians would appeal to the public usually to solicit the support of the masses and rarely for their welfare. There were a few ideological parties, namely the Phalanges and the Syrian Nationalists, better known as the PPS; but in any case they were still weak. However, the two blocs were supported by both Christian and Moslem and Druze deputies. Thirdly, there were the negativists. They were mainly Moslem leaders, who, despite their support by a large group, were hostile to the idea of the mandate and resented their becoming Lebanese citizens. They refused to cooperate with the mandatory and to run for parliamentary elections or accept any government post until 1943. It would be sufficient to mention Mr. Riyad es-Sulh and Mr. Abdul Hamid Karamé. Fourthly, there were several politicians who were non-partisan and thus acted as independents. Among this category, Dr. Tabet could be placed. Fifthly, there were the religious dignitaries, chiefly the Maronite Patriarch and the Mufti of the Republic. They enjoyed the respect of most politicians and were, generally, listened to by the masses of their congregations. The Patriarch stood for a separate Lebanese state, and to that end he was willing to cooperate with the French. In so far as

the latter respected his position and maintained his influence, they could count on his support. If, on the other hand, they neglected these he would oppose them. On one occasion this happened, and he was hailed by Syrian nationalists as the "Patriarch of Arabism"<sup>(2)</sup>, mainly because he sympathized with their cause against the French. The Mufti stood for joining Syria, thus representing from an ideological view point the bulk of the Moslems.

This power pattern did not undergo any fundamental change with the fall of France in 1940. The Vichy Régime continued ruling the country as if nothing had occurred. But with the Anglo-Free French invasion of Lebanon and Syria, this pattern was altered considerably. Whilst before June 8, 1941 - the date of the invasion - there were the French and a multiplicity of national power groups to reckon with, with a conspicuous French supremacy, after the invasion another party entered the stage of Lebanese politics and played an important role in the shaping of the history of Lebanon in recent times. After the occupation of the country by British and Free French forces, they began to compete with one another for the ascendant position. The significance of this rivalry cannot be overemphasized in any study of Lebanese politics during this period, for with the introduction of the Anglo-Free French competition new possibilities were created for the various power groups to conduct political manoeuvres, in such a way as to play one faction against the other.

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(2) Ibid., p. 85.



### The Start of the Dispute

The dispute began with the invasion of Lebanon and Syria. On the day of the invasion leaflets were thrown from the air carrying Catroux's<sup>(3)</sup> proclamation of the independence of the two countries. The British attempted to include a British guarantee of this independence in the Free French proclamation itself. Two days before the campaign, Churchill wrote de Gaulle, "...I welcome therefore your decision to promise independence to Syria and Lebanon, and, as you know, I think it is essential that we should lend to this promise the full weight of our guarantee."<sup>(4)</sup> De Gaulle, however, rejected this demand.<sup>(5)</sup> Similarly, Eden suggested to Catroux that the Free French proclamation include a British guarantee, and in conformity with de Gaulle, he rejected the suggestion and remarked that it was Britain's business to publish her guarantee as she liked.<sup>(6)</sup> Subsequently, the British Ambassador in Cairo, Sir Miles Lampson, issued a statement supporting the Free French proclamation and pledging Britain's guarantee of its terms.<sup>(7)</sup>

### The Campaign and the Armistice of Acre

The Anglo-Free French campaign was launched from Palestine. The causes of the attack were due to the facilities given by the Vichy authorities to the Axis. The British had some political ambitions for the control

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(3) He was the Governor General of Indo-China before he rallied to De Gaulle's cause. At the beginning of the mandate he held the position of the Head of the Political Office at the High Commissariat.

(4) W.S.Churchill, The Second World War, the Grand Alliance, (England: Richard Clay, September 1953), vol. 3, p.266.

(5) Charles de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, 1940-1942, (London: Collins, translated into English by Jonathan Griffin, 1955), p.189.

(6) Général Catroux, Dans la Bataille de Méditerranée, (Paris: Julliard, 1949), p.139.

(7) For the text of both the proclamation and statement, see Eugénie Elie Abouchdid, Thirty Years of Lebanon and Syria, (Beirut: Sader-Rihani, 1948) pp.83-85.

of this part of the world; and de Gaulle wished to extend his control over as many territories under Vichy rule as was possible. He, in the first place, wanted to strengthen his movement by converting more Frenchmen to his cause, and secondly, once he strengthened himself he would have more bargaining power in his negotiations with the Allies, during the War and after.

Five weeks ensued with unexpectedly severe fighting. The British had contributed the larger share in the conquest of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>(8)</sup> The invasion took place without any ultimatum being given to the Vichy authorities, and without any declaration of war. A French writer emphasized two points in connection with the invasion. The first was that at the time of the invasion, there was no Axis threat to the British; and the second was that the last note sent by the Vichy High Commissioner, General Dentz, to the British expressed "la preuve indubitable de sa volonté efficace d'interdire à l'Allemagne l'établissement au Levant d'une base d'opérations contre les Anglais."<sup>(9)</sup> Cease-fire was brought to an end after Dentz sued for peace through the intermediation of the American Consul General at Beirut. An armistice was signed at Acre by General Wilson for the Allies and by General de Verdilhac for Vichy on July 12, 1941.<sup>(10)</sup>

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(8) A good account of the military aspect of the campaign is given by I.S.O. Playfair and others, The Mediterranean and Middle East, (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1956), vol. 2, pp. 199-222.

(9) André Laffargue, Le Général Dentz, (Paris: Les Iles d'Or, 1954), pp. 108 and 96-97.

(10) For full text, see Albert Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, (London: Oxford University Press, third impression 1954), pp. 373-375.

The Dispute Takes Practical Form

The Free French were not explicitly mentioned in the Armistice Convention, nor were the rights of Free France recognized. De Gaulle rejected its terms, and told Lyttelton, the British Minister of State in Cairo, that the Armistice was incompatible with the political and military interests of France. He informed Lyttelton that Free France would not in any way accept that agreement, and reserved the right to act accordingly. He went further to say:

"Free France, that is to say France, is no longer willing to entrust to the British military command the duty of exercising command over the French troops in the Middle East. General de Gaulle and the French Empire Defence Council are resuming the full and entire disposal of all the French forces in the Levant as from July 24th, 1941, at midday."<sup>(11)</sup>

The break that de Gaulle envisaged did not take place. The British backed down. Meetings were held between de Gaulle and Lyttelton in order to resolve the differences between them. The former presented the British Minister of State with a study in which was embodied his solution to the problem.<sup>(12)</sup> On July 23, Lyttelton wrote de Gaulle:

"I am writing to say that the Syrian armistice convention should be the basis of an interpretative arrangement such

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(11) Charles de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, 1941-1942: Documents, (London: Collins, translated into English by Jonathan Griffin, 1955), pp. 190-191.

(12) Ibid., p. 193

as you have submitted to me. The arrangement should be discussed between our representatives this morning. Once we agree upon it, it will naturally be immediately binding upon the military and civil authorities concerned."<sup>(13)</sup>

#### Technical Anglo-Free French Relations Resolved

The technical relations between the British and Free French were resolved in the sense that their respective positions were defined. On July 24, an arrangement fixing the interpretation to be given by the British and Free French authorities to the armistice convention of July 14, putting an end to the hostilities in the Levant was reached. In it the British recognized the Free French as having a pre-eminent interest in all questions affecting the Vichy troops. They were allowed to contact these troops in order to explain their views to the personnel concerned with the "same fullness and freedom granted to the Vichy authorities". The British recognized also that the war material which had belonged to Vichy was French property. Finally, the British conceded that the troops levied from the Levant States - known as the "Troupes Spéciales" - would constitute part of the French forces.<sup>(14)</sup>

Simultaneously, Lyttelton wrote de Gaulle defining his government's policy:

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(13) Ibid., pp. 194-196.

(14) Catroux, op. cit., pp. 166-168.

"I should like to take this opportunity of assuring you that, on the British side, we recognize the historic interests of France in the Levant. Great Britain has no interest in Syria or the Lebanon except to win the war. We have no desire to encroach in any way upon the position of France. Both Great Britain and Free France are pledged to the independence of Syria and the Lebanon. When this essential step has been taken, and without prejudice to it, we freely admit that France should have the dominant and privileged position in the Levant among all European nations."<sup>(15)</sup>

De Gaulle welcomed this policy with great enthusiasm. On July 25, an agreement concerning the collaboration between the two Allies was concluded. According to this agreement, the Middle East constituted on theatre of operations, and military operations were to be coordinated. The Free French, due to their special obligations in the area, were to devote their forces as well as the local forces for the defence of the Levant. Joint operations were to be agreed upon by the British and French commands. Finally, because of British superiority at the time, the British were responsible for drawing up plans and fixing the role to be observed by each party in the joint operations. The supplement to this agreement recognized the power of the British to take all defensive measures necessary against the enemy, with the reservation that in case any such measure should hamper the interests of France in the Levant, the whole matter should be referred

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(15) Ibid., p. 171, and de Gaulle, Documents, p. 201.

to the British Government and to General de Gaulle. Article 3 of the supplement stated in part that, "a section of the British Military Security Service will be attached to the Sureté Générale of the Levant States with the object of ensuring liaison with the British Command."<sup>(16)</sup>

#### The Free French in the Power Pattern in Lebanon

On June 24, 1941, de Gaulle appointed Catroux as "Delegate General and Plenipotentiary and Commander-in-Chief in the Levant."<sup>(17)</sup> Catroux was also instructed to assume "all the powers hitherto held by the High Commissioner of France in the Levant and all the responsibilities which were incumbent on him". Among Catroux's tasks were the preparation for the negotiation of treaties with the governments of Lebanon and Syria to safeguard France's interests and privileged position there, and for the return of constitutional life both in Lebanon and Syria.

When Catroux came to Lebanon after the defeat of the Vichy forces, he took over the affairs of the state in his own hands. Administratively he legislated by decree concerning many problems. He, for instance, regulated trade and prevented commercial relations with the Axis Powers or with the countries that fell under their domination. He had the power to change the judicial system, and organized the "Troupes Spéciales". He could pardon and

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(16) de Gaulle, Documents, pp.201-203, and Catroux, op. cit., pp.168-170.

(17) De Gaulle was probably dissuaded from appointing a French High Commissioner by Churchill who wrote him on June 6, 1941, "I must ask you in this grave hour not to insist on declaring Catroux High Commissioner for Syria." See Churchill, op. cit., p.266. De Gaulle's letter to Catroux is found in his Documents, pp.174-175. It may be possible that Churchill took that step in order to make the French recognize the change from the mandate, at least in form. His request was consistent with later statements made by the British government, notably Lyttelton's letter to de Gaulle, see above pp.40-41, especially to the section dealing with the pledge to Lebanese and Syrian independence.

reprieve as well as declare martial law. He maintained a very strict censorship of letters and of the press. Above all, he could confirm the position of the national governments or dismiss them. He could also appoint and dismiss the President of the Republic. The very important administration of the "Interests in Common" was exclusively French. These Interests in Common included the Customs Department, the control of public concession and the local armed and security forces. They were "common" to Syria and Lebanon. It will be seen that the national government deprived of these interests was in a sterile position. The main sources of national revenues were thus under the French, and thus were the armed and security forces - the chief factor in any government's authority. This could be understood even more when it is known that General Catroux's arretés were not co-signed by any other authority.<sup>(18)</sup>

In normal times these powers would confer upon the Free French a complete mastery of the situation. However, there were several factors that limited their freedom of action. In the first place, they lacked the material resources of a great Power which they pretentiously represented. Secondly, at least Catroux was realistically conscious of Free French weaknesses, and he was willing to compromise Free France's coveted position with the reality of British interests and power in the Levant. On one occasion de Gaulle considered a breach of relations with the British. He consulted Catroux on the matter. The latter answered him unequivocally that such an eventuality

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(18) See The Lebanese Official Gazette from 1941-1943, passim.

would mean the definitive eviction of the Free French from the Levant.<sup>(19)</sup> But irrespective of these weaknesses the Free French went on ruling with the assumption that the mandate was still in force and that their movement was identical with Metropolitan France. On March 20, 1943, Catroux declared at a press conference that the mandate remained in force, because the League of Nations, which had entrusted the French with it, had not yet abolished it.<sup>(20)</sup>

### Free French Policy

After the restoration of public order, Catroux turned to organize the political life of the country. From the beginning of the invasion the Free French proclaimed the independence of the country with one important reservation. The independence of either Syria or Lebanon could not be conceded by the Free French if the national governments did not agree to the conclusion of treaties to safeguard the historic interests of France and to confer upon it a privileged position. That was expressed in Catroux's proclamation on June 8, 1941, and was reiterated by him once again in his second declaration of the independence of Lebanon on November 26, 1941. It was towards this end that Catroux directed his efforts. The best thing for him to do was to prepare for the coming of a government to power that was willing and able to negotiate with the Free French a treaty that would satisfy their ambitions in the two countries. In other words, there ought to be a constitutional government enjoying the confidence of an elected and friendly

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(19) Catroux, op. cit., p. 277

(20) See the Lebanese daily ad-Diyar, No. 355, March 21 & 22, 1943.



parliament. In preparing for such a parliament, the Free French had two factors in mind. The first was to postpone the restoration of the constitution and subsequently, the elections to a more favourable international situation. Secondly, they wanted to retain their domination of the country, at least legally, until such time when they could make sure that the national government was willing to accept their terms of the intended treaty. For this reason, perhaps, they were not willing to hand over the Interests in Common to the Lebanese and Syrian governments, hoping that that would be an instrument in their hands to put pressure on the national governments.

To get the most out of their position, the Free French took several measures that enhanced their position immensely in the country. Catroux appointed many personal representatives in the various districts. To those who were appointed at the capital, he issued administrative directives for the establishment of contacts with the existing government and to keep him informed of its activities. His representatives were supposed to hint to the government the desired contents of the future treaty. He also demanded that they give him all the information regarding the public interest and the factors that influence it. He specified these factors as those of supplies, business and the activities of the British agents.<sup>(21)</sup> Besides, Catroux had his own views regarding the internal political situation in Lebanon. He had the "impression" that the Lebanese wanted "new men, foreigners to politics and not compromised by it, (who would) honestly conduct the affairs of the

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(21) Catroux, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

state."<sup>(22)</sup> Thus, in order to verify this impression, he undertook to visit the provincial centres and rural areas in Lebanon. After his tour, he came out with three important conclusions. The first was that the independence of the country could not be conceived of without the continuation of French aid and friendship. This, he maintained, was "unanimously and everywhere accepted." Secondly, he found out that the "immorality and sterility of the political behaviour of the last chamber and the men in power between 1936 and 1939, were very forcibly repudiated, and that (the people) required a decent conduct of public affairs, an honest administration and an impartial justice. It was from France that these reforms were demanded." Thirdly, the people considered the return of either Bishara el-Khouri or Emile Eddé to power as repugnant.<sup>(23)</sup>

The issues that confronted the Free French were mainly three. The first was that of the parliamentary elections. The second was the implementation of the independence of the country. The third was that of the future status of the Levant states, but mainly the question of Arab union. These issues could not be avoided by the Free French; and the best that they could make out of the situation was in following a policy that would reconcile their interests with the necessities of the situation. Regarding the first issue, the Free French attempted to delay the elections until they thought it was fit for them to do so. As late as August 1942, de Gaulle said in a speech that elections could not yet be held.<sup>(24)</sup> The British put

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(22) Ibid., pp. 229-230.

(23) Ibid., p. 230.

(24) Hourani, op. cit., p. 253.

pressure on Catroux in 1942, to hold elections. He advised de Gaulle to agree; and reluctantly, the latter gave in "throwing the responsibility back at Catroux."<sup>(25)</sup> But the British reverses at Tobruk and the German threat to Egypt caused the postponement of the elections. However, after the victory of al-Alamain, Catroux came to Lebanon and took the necessary steps in preparing for the elections. The Free French were reluctant in holding elections, because they were not sure that pro-French candidates would win.

Closely connected with the question of the elections, was the problem of Lebanese independence. It has already been stated that the Free French decided to give Lebanon its independence provided that the national government would agree to conclude with the Free French authorities a treaty that would secure for France a privileged position. In any case, the Lebanese government which was to negotiate the treaty with the French ought to be constitutional, that is, it must be enjoying the confidence of an elected parliament. It is in this context that the reluctance of Catroux and de Gaulle to hold elections in Lebanon could be best understood.

The third issue was also related to the first two. The future status of Lebanon was to determine its relations with France. In case Lebanon joined Arab unity, what would its freedom be to conclude a treaty with France? What would be the effect of such a unity on France's dominions in North Africa? To what extent would it be under British control? Perhaps it was these considerations that had shaped Free French policy concerning this problem,

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(25) Kirk, The Middle East in the War, 1939-1946, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 125.

Catroux, on one occasion, cabled de Gaulle telling him that the Free French should not oppose a loose Arab union on a confederal basis, where the independence of the various parties ought to be respected. He would try to convince the Syrians that it was in their interests to hope for French support to thwart British influence, on the one hand, and to make "the leading role (in case of an Arab union) return geographically, historically and intellectually to Syria without contest, and that Damascus should be its centre."<sup>(26)</sup> In Lebanon, however, Free French policy would be different. Catroux would exploit the old sentimental link that attached Lebanon to France as well as "the instinct of defence against the projects of absorption."<sup>(27)</sup>

#### The British in the Power Pattern in Lebanon

In commenting on the advantages of Spears, the British Minister to Syria and Lebanon, de Gaulle described in part Britain's position in the Levant. He wrote in his memoirs about Spears what follows:

"He had some incomparable trump cards: the presence of the British Army; the multifarious activity of the intelligence agents; the mastery of the economic relations of the two countries, which lived on exchanges; support in all capitals from the leading diplomatic service in the world, great propaganda resources; official backing from the neighbouring Arab states..."<sup>(28)</sup>

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(26) Catroux, op. cit., p. 336.

(27) Ibid.

(28) de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, p. 210.

The mastery of the economic relations of the two countries, which de Gaulle referred to, manifested itself in the fact that Lebanon and Syria entered the Sterling Bloc, after the occupation of the two countries by Anglo-Free French forces. Furthermore, the Middle East Supply Centre was dominated by the British. The significance of this lay in the fact that Lebanon and Syria were primarily importing nations, and it was necessary to obtain its approval before the importation of certain goods.<sup>(29)</sup> The British, besides, ameliorated the economic situation by undertaking several projects that provided work for some of the unemployed, and by the expenditure by the British army of large amounts of money. The technical position of the British has already been described.

#### British Policy

At the time of the invasion of Lebanon and Syria there was no immediate German threat to the British position in the Middle East. The British command in Egypt was opposed to the opening of a new front, on strategic grounds. The British had already quelled the Iraqi revolt of Rashid Ali, and became well established there. An attempt, in this connection, can be made to explain their decision to occupy Syria and Lebanon. From a military point of view, the occupation of Syria and Lebanon was a precautionary measure against a possible German use of the two countries, in the future, for strategic objectives. From a political point of view, the British had certain ambitions for the control of the Middle East. Apparently, they

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(29) Kirk, op. cit., p. 176.

considered the occupation of the two countries even before May, 14, 1941. On that day, Churchill wrote General Auchinleck, "...Even less can we attempt to dominate Syria at the present time, though the Free French may be allowed to do their best there."<sup>(30)</sup> On the other hand, the British request for the inclusion of a British guarantee in the Free French proclamation promising independence to Syria and Lebanon could not, first, deny completely French allegations, and, secondly, be alluded entirely to the views expressed by British writers. "It was easy" wrote de Gaulle, "to see that our partners wanted to create the impression that, if the Syrians and Lebanese received their independence, they would owe it to England, and so place themselves in the position of arbiters between us and the Levant States in the next phase."<sup>(31)</sup> Catroux, on the other hand, believed that the British, by requesting to include that guarantee, were hoping to win the support of the neighbouring Arab countries.<sup>(32)</sup> One British writer interpreted the event to the effect that "such a proclamation would in itself have no value in Syrian and Lebanese eyes: France had been catastrophically defeated a year before; the Free French movement was very small in numbers and was not a government;...and the majority of the invading forces would be British under British command."<sup>(33)</sup> Consequently, the British demand to include a guarantee could thus be justified. Another British writer thought that the "British (wanted) to add conviction to a promise which would come

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(30) Churchill, op. cit., p. 212.

(31) de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, p. 189.

(32) Catroux, op. cit., p. 140.

(33) Kirk, op. cit., p. 109.

after all, not from metropolitan France, but from a dissident movement denounced by France itself as disloyal and illegal..."<sup>(34)</sup>

The agreements reached by the British and the Free French concerning their inter-relationship and the several British declarations denying Britain's ambitions in Lebanon and Syria and recognizing France's supremacy were not enough to alleviate French suspicions of British policy and to make the British behave in accordance with their declarations. De Gaulle's accusations that the British were trying to replace the French at Beirut and at Damascus<sup>(35)</sup> were not completely imaginary. In any case the attitude of the British authorities confirmed, in so far as the Free French were concerned, de Gaulle's suspicions. The justification given by the British for the behaviour of Wilson and Spears could not be accepted as fully due to the exigencies of the war situation or because of British commitments to the populations of Lebanon and Syria. Great Britain had contributed the largest share in the conquest of the Levant. It, therefore, was not willing to give all advantages to Free France; nor did it like its position to be inferior to that of France in the territories it had occupied. It seems that Great Britain wished to change the powerful position of the Free French hoping that such a change would strengthen itself, but because of its contractual obligations with and commitments to de Gaulle, it did not openly admit it.

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(34) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 309.

(35) de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, p. 188.

In order to achieve their objectives, the British followed the policy of attempting to enlist the support of as many Lebanese as was possible. They, like the Free French were faced with the three issues that have already been mentioned. The first was that of parliamentary elections; the second was that of Lebanese independence; and the last was that regarding Arab unity. This policy would draw to their support the Constitutional Bloc of Bishara el-Khouri and the larger majority of the Moslems.

Regarding the first point, Casey, the successor of Lyttelton as British Minister of State, was putting pressure on the Free French to hold elections, both in Lebanon and Syria. They had high hopes that the elections would result in a victory for the nationalists who were demanding the termination of the French Mandate. Once the nationalists turned the Free French down, the British would have a better chance of achieving their aims in the absence of French intervention and, probably, obstruction. In so far as Lebanese independence was concerned, the British were not interested in it per se. On November 26, 1941, Catroux declared for the second time the independence of the country. In the course of his proclamation, he stated that Lebanon, politically and territorially, constituted an "indivisible unity". Spears protested to Catroux against this statement and demanded its change. (36) This coincided with a similar statement made by Riyad es-Sulh submitted to Catroux, to which it will be referred later. The protest of Spears against Catroux's proclamation clearly shows to what extent she was willing to go

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(36) Catroux, op. cit., pp. 230-231.



in support of the Moslems in Lebanon, expecting that the Moslems would not deny them their support should it be needed. In brief, the British, in supporting the nationalist cause for independence, had two factors in mind. They, first of all, wanted to win the backing of the nationalists, not only in Lebanon, but also in the neighbouring countries which sympathized with Lebanese national aspirations. Secondly, they took it as a point to put pressure on the Free French, when they deemed necessary, and to remind them that they were committed to the independence of Lebanon. In July and September 1941, Churchill made speeches in Parliament declaring, "We seek no British advantage in Syria. Our only object in occupying the country has been to beat the Germans and help to win the war..."

"The historic interests of France in Syria and the primacy of those interests over the interests of other European nations, is preserved without prejudice to the rights and sovereignty of the Syrian races."<sup>(37)</sup>

By endorsing Arab unification, the British authorities in Lebanon had a double purpose. First, they hoped, once more, to win the support of those Lebanese Moslems who stood for Arab unity, as well as that of the other Arab nationalists who cherished the fulfilment of such a unity. Secondly, they wanted to be consistent with Britain's general Arab policy as announced by Eden in May 1941. In his Mansion House speech, the British Foreign

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(37) Churchill's speech of July is in House of Commons Debates, (H. M. Stationary Office, 1940-1941), Vol. 373, Cols. 464-465; and the speech of September is in Ibid., Vol. 374, Col. 176.

Secretary, Mr. Eden said:

"The Arab World has made great strides since the settlement reached at the end of the last war, and many Arab thinkers desire for the Arab peoples a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy. In reaching out towards this unity, they hope for our support. No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties, too, should be strengthened. His Majesty's Government for their part will give their full support to any scheme that commands general approval."<sup>(38)</sup>

#### The Lebanese Internal Situation

There was no fundamental change in Lebanese politics on the eve of Dr. Tabet's appointment in March 1943, from what it had been in the late thirties. It is true that British entry into Lebanese politics had tipped off the balance of power in the country, yet it must be made clear that the basic political views were not altered as a result, but that they were

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(38) The Times, (London), May 30, 1941, quoted by George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, (New York: Cornell University Press, second edition, 1956), p. 503. Following Eden's statement, Nouri Pasha es-Said and Emir Abdullah submitted two complimentary plans for Arab unity. The Said Plan stated that "if they demand it, the Maronites in Lebanon shall be granted a privileged régime such as they possessed during the last days of the Ottoman Empire. This special régime... shall rest on an International Guarantee" in the unity that it advocated. The second plan of Abdullah demanded the return of the territories annexed to Lebanon after the First World War in case it refused to join the considered unity. A summary of Nouri's plan is in J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, (U.S.A.: Van Nostrand, 1956), Vol. 2, pp. 236-237. Abdullah's plans are found in The Jordanian White Book, pp. 64-71. The effect of pan-Arabism on Lebanese politics will be discussed at length in the third chapter.

sharpened, especially those regarding Arab unity. At the time, there were four power groups in the country. In the first place, there was President Naqqash and his government headed by Mr. Sami es-Sulh. Secondly, there was the National Bloc of Mr. Emile Eddé. Thirdly, the majority of the Moslems as represented by the Mufti of the Republic, Riyad es-Sulh and Abdul Hamid Karamé formed another power group. Fourthly, the Constitutional Bloc of Bishara el-Khoury were another important power group. There were, however, other personalities and power groups who could be thought of as sharing the views of one group or another of the mentioned four.

#### The position of the Government

President Naqqash had been in power since 1940. When General Catroux proclaimed the independence of Lebanon in November 1941, he asked the President to remain in office. That offer was accepted by Mr. Naqqash, and he remained as president until his dismissal on March 18, 1943. He and his government had some control over the administration. However, their position did not rest on any popular support, though as a politician he was highly esteemed by the Lebanese. Their holding their offices depended on French favour. When the latter decided to hold elections, they asked him to submit his resignation. He refused, because he argued that there was no authority to which he could do so. Catroux, told him that he should submit his resignation to him. The President retorted by saying that Catroux had already declared the independence of Lebanon, and hence, he could not submit his resignation to Catroux. Thus President Naqqash assumed that the country was independent and followed the prescriptions of the constitution and submitted

his resignation to the Lebanese Parliament at its first session in September 1943.<sup>(39)</sup> The second point that should be mentioned about President Naqqash deals with his views regarding elections. He was opposed to the holding of elections for two main reasons. First, he believed that it was better for the country to be ruled in a calm atmosphere. He maintained that the struggle between the various factions was not likely to "feed the people with bread". Besides the international situation itself was not encouraging. Secondly, he thought that the problem of the elections was an affair that concerned the Lebanese government alone; and since this question fell within its jurisdiction, it alone had the right to decide upon and take the necessary measures towards that end.<sup>(40)</sup>

#### Mr. Eddé and his National Bloc

Mr. Eddé was a politician who had very strong views concerning Lebanese identity. His bloc included a few Moslem notables, but in general it represented Christian interests, mainly the Maronites. He believed in Lebanese independence, and advocated close cooperation with the French. The electoral programme of his party included as its first item the unconditional independence of his country.<sup>(41)</sup> On one occasion he is supposed to have sent Mr. Habib Abou Shahla, a member of his bloc, to Catroux pledging

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(39) Youssif Mizhir, Tarikh Lubnan al-'Aam, (No place of publication, publisher or date mentioned), Vol. 2, p. 1061. The General History of Lebanon. (In Arabic.)

(40) Ibid., p. 1059.

(41) Robert Abella, Attwaru-l-Hukmi fi Lubnan, (Beirut: Manshouratu-l-Anba<sup>t</sup>, 1943), p. 74. The Phases of Government in Lebanon. (In Arabic.)

to fulfil the latter's political program should he choose to charge him with the government of Lebanon.<sup>(42)</sup> Catroux noted in his memoirs that Mr. Eddé was safe in so far as he was willing to accept concluding a treaty with the French, in order to safeguard the interests of France.<sup>(43)</sup> A gentleman who does not wish to be quoted disclosed the fact that the British vetoed his appointment to govern the country in preparation for the elections. They believed that he was subservient to French policy. Finally it must be mentioned that he was very hostile to any form of Arab unity.

#### The Moslems in the Power Pattern

Generally, the Moslems, mainly the Sunnis, were hostile to the mandate. They stood for complete independence. At heart they wanted to join Syria or any other form of Arab unity. The Mufti of the Republic, Mohammad Tawfiq Khalid, was a most notable figure among them. The most eminent leaders were Riyad es-Sulh and Abdul Hamid Karamé. Whilst they did not participate in any government the two leaders were not passive. Riyad's views were expressed in a memorandum that was communicated to Catroux, the British, American, Turkish and the Arab governments of Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Mr. es-Sulh protested to the Free French authorities against their proclamation of Lebanese independence in November 1941. He maintained that that proclamation conflicted with the explicit promises made by the British and Free French authorities to give Lebanon its full independence. Whilst the

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(42) Mizhir, op. cit., p. 1059.

(43) Catroux, op. cit., p. 335.

Free French provided in an earlier proclamation the possibility of the Syrians and Lebanese to live either in one state or in two separate ones, that proclamation barred the Lebanese from that possibility. He ended this memorandum threatening that, he reserved the "right to reconsider this internal situation, which is contrary to our national aims."<sup>(44)</sup>

#### Mr. Bishara el-Khourî and His Constitutional Bloc

Despite his rivalry with Mr. Eddé, Bishara sought to reconcile that rivalry and suggested to Catroux that he act as an arbiter between them. But that led to no final agreement.<sup>(45)</sup> His political ambitions were extremely conspicuous. He is reported to have said to de Gaulle, "Eddé has had the position already, it is my turn to be President."<sup>(46)</sup> In comparison with Eddé, he was the more moderate of the two. Though he was not hostile to the French, he often caused them some anxiety. He, in the first place, had already committed himself to complete independence. Towards that end, he enlisted the support of the Maronite Patriarch. On Christmas Day 1941, a group of Lebanese politicians called on Bkerké. The most eminent visitor was Bishara himself. There, speeches were made and the Patriarch declared himself in full support of Lebanese independence. Several resolutions were taken at the meeting. The most important were the following:

- (1) the pledging of full independence to the country;
- (2) the demanding of the freedom of Lebanon to conclude agreements with foreign states;

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(44) Mizhir, op. cit., pp. 1050-1053.

(45) el-Khourî, op. cit., p. 249.

(46) de Gaulle, The Call to Honour, p. 209.

- (3) the demanding of handing over public power to the Lebanese;
- (4) the deciding to consider the acts of the then present government as invalid, and the emphasizing that no government could commit the country to anything unless it enjoyed the confidence of an elected parliament.<sup>(47)</sup>

Finally, Bishara had cordial relations with both the British and Nahhas Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt, with whom he discussed, informally, the future relationship among the Arabic speaking states.<sup>(48)</sup> He was dismissed as a possibility of being charged with the government to prepare for the elections for several reasons. It is true that Catroux thought that his return to power would assure the French the conclusion of a treaty to safeguard their interest,<sup>(49)</sup> yet they suspected his willingness to do that. He, like his adversary, Emile Eddé, was a partisan; and Catroux had the impression that the return of either was resented by the people.<sup>(50)</sup>

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(47) el-Khouri, op. cit., pp. 293-298.

(48) Ibid., pp. 243-247.

(49) Catroux, op. cit., p. 335.

(50) See above, p. 46.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DR. TABET'S TERM OF OFFICE

#### The Decision to Hold Elections

The Free French decision to hold elections in Lebanon coincided with Great Britain's policy at the time, and partly fulfilled the aspirations of the nationalists who wanted to terminate the French mandate. However, the Free French managed to postpone the holding of parliamentary elections until the summer of 1943. By that time they had a stronger position than the one they had in the early days of the conquest of Syria and Lebanon. That was due to the facts that by the summer of 1943, they had been ruling the two countries, retaining in their own hands the most important departments in the governing of any state, practically as efficiently as during the mandate, whilst in the early days of the conquest they were taking over power from Vichy France. On the international level, the Free French movement was also gaining more force. Thus, on March 18 General Catroux took the necessary steps in preparation of the elections, and appointed a "Head of the State Head of the Government". This power of appointment was a Free French prerogative, whose importance cannot be diminished. In Lebanon, the policy of the government could to a very large extent affect the results of the elections. It could go as far as rigging the elections, or it could put pressure on certain chieftains who had some sort of interest with the government, or else it could make promises to key men in the electoral process to affect the voting one way or the other according to its own desires. It was, therefore, only natural for the Free French to appoint friendly politicians



during the transitional period between the appointment of the government and the return of constitutional life to the country.

The Appointment of Dr. Ayoub Tabet

On March 18, 1943, General Catroux issued three arretés dealing with the reorganization of political life in Lebanon. The first provided for the return of the Lebanese constitution after the election of the President of the Republic by the forthcoming parliament. The same arreté abolished the power of the President to appoint a certain number of deputies in the Lebanese parliament. The second arreté established a system of government for the transitional period. It stipulated that the government would be composed of a "Head of the State Head of the Government" supported by two ministers of state appointed by and directly responsible to him. This provisional government was enabled to legislate by decree, subject to the reservations made by Catroux in his proclamation of Lebanese Independence on November 26, 1941.<sup>(1)</sup> The third arreté appointed Dr. Ayoub Tabet as "Head of the State Head of the Government."<sup>(2)</sup>

The choice of Dr. Tabet to form the government fitted in well with French policy at the time. In the first place, he was not a partisan; and therefore he was under no obligation to either the bloc of Emile Eddé or that of Bishara el-Khoury. Secondly, he was known for his strong views,

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(1) These reservations were regarding the conclusion of a Franco-Lebanese treaty, to safeguard France's interests in Lebanon.

(2) For full text see The Lebanese Official Gazette, 1943, pp. 10967-10970.

especially those dealing with the necessity of "French protection and guidance". Thirdly, in so far as he was an enthusiastic supporter of the 1936, Franco-Lebanese treaty, the Free French could have assumed that Dr. Tabet would be willing to conclude a similar treaty with them. On the other hand, General Catroux justified the appointment of Dr. Tabet, at a press conference, on the grounds that:

"It is important, for the national prestige, that Lebanon be truly represented in the parliament. Because of this the elections should be held free from any kind of influence, within the general framework of liberty, public order and respect of opinions.

"For that, the government, which is to supervise the elections must have no political affiliations. Such a government must be directed...by a personality known for his honesty and objectivity."<sup>(3)</sup>

But in his memoirs, Catroux disclosed the most important reason, in so far as he was concerned, to the effect that he took that step because Dr. Tabet was independent and "reputed for his probity and (mainly) his attachment to France."<sup>(4)</sup>

### The Ministry

A day after his appointment Dr. Tabet issued a decree naming the two members of his cabinet. Emir Khalid Shihab, representing the Moslems, was

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(3) See the Lebanese daily ad-Diyar, No. 354, March 20, 1943.

(4) Catroux, op. cit., p. 337.

charged with the ministries of Finance, National Education, Commerce and Industry, Agriculture and the Post and Telegraph services. Mr. Jawad Boulos became the Minister of Public Works, Health and Public Assistance and External Affairs. Dr. Tabet retained for himself the Ministries of the Interior, Justice and Supplies. (5)

Emir Khalid was a politician who had inherited his position of leadership as a youth. When he was a young man, he was an advocate of Arab nationalism and a supporter of Faysal during and after the First World War. When he was interviewed, Emir Khalid said that at the beginning he was opposed to the French Mandate, and that at one time he had four thousand men fighting the French under his command. However, after the defeat of Faysal he was approached by the French authorities in Lebanon, and he agreed to cooperate with them for the good of the country. As a result of appeasement with the French, Emir Khalid became deeply involved in Lebanese politics. From 1922, onwards he sat in every parliament until 1939. In May 1927, he was charged for the first time with a ministerial post, namely the Ministry of Finance. He was elected Speaker of the House in 1936, and two years later he became Prime Minister. It must be mentioned that he was one of the earliest Lebanese politicians to demand the termination of the Mandate and its replacement by a treaty between Lebanon and France. This demand was made in 1931, in parliament. (6)

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(5) The Lebanese Official Gazette, 1943, p. 10970.

(6) Bishara el-Khoury, op. cit., p. 171.

Mr. Jawad Boulos, on the other hand, was quite different from Emir Khalid. In the first place, he was a Maronite. In this respect, he was traditionally friendly with the French. Secondly, when he was appointed in Dr. Tabet's government he was relatively a new character in Lebanese politics. The first time that he entered the Lebanese parliament was in 1937, when he was appointed as deputy from the "Muhafazah" of the North by the then President Emile Eddé. He became Minister for the first time in Dr. Tabet's government of 1943. Generally, he is more impressive as a dignified intellect than as a Lebanese politician. He entered politics after his becoming a brilliant lawyer. It was due to his personal achievement that he became a deputy and later as minister, and not because of his inherited feudal position.

#### The Problems of Government

The first problems to face the government were those of supplies and provisions as well as the problems directly connected with them like rationing. Provisions were secured for the country through British means, for after the Allied victories in the Mediterranean region, the British became able to maintain a safe line of communication. After the obtaining of supplies, it was necessary that the government should distribute them among the population in as fair a manner as was possible. The government, therefore, undertook to take a census of the population in order to determine the number of ration cards that each family should receive. However, the government was faced with various problems related to the question of supplies. In one respect, it was confronted with the problem of smuggling or trafficking in certain commodities. It, therefore, issued two decrees

to stop moving sugar and cotton cloth from one place to the other without a permit.<sup>(7)</sup> The government made an attempt to prevent hoarding of sugar by issuing a decree demanding that any person who had more than two hundred kilograms of sugar, which were not intended for his family's use, should declare the amount in his possession to the department concerned.<sup>(8)</sup> It, also, prevented the sale of some commodities on certain days of the week.<sup>(9)</sup> In facing the question of the rising cost of living, the government defined the authority of the head of the Department of Combatting Hoarding and Rising Cost.<sup>(10)</sup> It was these reforms that made the government decide to reorganize the Ministry of Supplies.<sup>(11)</sup> The people who were interviewed by the present writer could not help but remark that Dr. Tabet was exceptionally strict regarding these questions.<sup>(12)</sup>

In so far as the organization of the state was concerned, Dr. Tabet made some valuable contributions, considering the short period when he was in power. He was responsible for some reforms in the judicial system. He

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(7) The Lebanese Official Gazette, 1943, pp. 11046 and 11046-11047.

(8) Ibid., pp. 11087-11088.

(9) Ibid., pp. 11270-11271.

(10) Ibid., pp. 11142.

(11) Ibid., pp. 11212-11219.

(12) Several stories have been told about him in this connection. One story tells of the butcher who sold Dr. Tabet's servant some mutton on the day when it was not allowed to do so. He is reported to have refused to eat the mutton and ordered that the strictest measures be taken against the butcher. Another story says that Dr. Tabet reprimanded some officials in the Ministry of Supplies because they sent him unmixed wheat flour. He refused to accept the wheat flour and demanded that mixed flour be sent to him like the one that was sold to the people. Even if these stories were not true, they actually reflect Dr. Tabet's austere way of living.

removed judges from political and administrative positions. He also made changes in and completed the regulations dealing with the cadre of the judiciary and acknowledged that only those who had the educational qualifications could be appointed in that cadre.<sup>(13)</sup> In the Ministry of the Interior, he reorganized the department of the gendarmerie.<sup>(14)</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture was also reorganized.<sup>(15)</sup> Dr. Tabet's government improved the general status of civil servants by increasing their salaries in compensation for the rising cost of living and for family expenses.<sup>(16)</sup> In the social sphere the government issued a decree for the establishment of a reformatory.<sup>(17)</sup> Finally, it must be added that during Dr. Tabet's term of office an unexampled period of orderliness and respect for the law was known in the country. The state administration was run smoothly and efficiently.<sup>(18)</sup>

#### Prelude to the Crisis

This part of his internal policy as has been described was a by-product of his being in power. He was not appointed to take care of these problems. His main task was to prepare for the parliamentary elections. But in any case the problems which he tackled were not disputed by the Lebanese.

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(13) The Lebanese Official Gazette, 1943, pp. 11226-11247.

(14) Ibid., pp. 11012-11013.

(15) Ibid., pp. 11181-11184.

(16) Ibid., pp. 11123-11126.

(17) Ibid., p. 11163.

(18) During Dr. Tabet's term of office, the officials in the Serail were very punctual. He forbade them to eat their breakfasts or to smoke the "arguili" in their offices. There are some other petty reforms, which are of themselves meaningful, but cannot be mentioned in this work.

The holding of elections in Lebanon even in normal times usually causes trouble. The fact that Dr. Tabet's government was confronted with an unprecedented situation complicated the question further. It had to modify the electoral laws, including the distribution of parliamentary seats among the various communities and the different electoral districts. This was on the internal level. On the other hand the government had to reckon with the struggle between the British and Free French and to face the preliminary steps leading ultimately to one form of Arab unity or another. Above all, the government assumed an independent course in its actions, while it was in no independent position.

The problem connected with parliamentary representation, and the struggle to attain a better position in the parliament was the issue of the day. Dr. Tabet, who was an ardent believer in the necessity of a Christian majority in the parliament to secure the continuous independence of Lebanon and its unconditional detachment from a possible Arab unity, was opposed by the majority of the Moslems. These were in favour, as has already been mentioned, of joining other Arab states. They sought independence as a preliminary step in the fulfilment of their aims. Even, in an independent Lebanon they sought to enhance their position. On a religious occasion, the Mufti of the Republic said in a speech, "The Moslems seek social and political stability (in Lebanon) through the establishment of equality and justice between the various communities of the country---This equality, which the Moslems want---is the fundamental condition for the remaining of this country respectable and dear (in Moslem eyes)."<sup>(19)</sup>

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(19) ad-Diyar, No. 353, March 19, 1943.

This equality, though not defined in what field, was not acceptable to Dr. Tabet in the political domain. He was determinedly thinking of the means through which he would obtain a Christian majority in the parliament. About the 20th of April the government was known to have been considering the inclusion of the emigrants who chose none but their Lebanese nationality in the forthcoming elections. But, apparently, there were sectarian obstacles to their inclusion.<sup>(20)</sup> The significance of this point cannot be difficult to note, since the overwhelming majority of the emigrants were Christian. Their inclusion in the elections would, therefore, be to the advantage of the Christians, in that they would increase the right of the Christians to have more seats in parliament. Ultimately, this was expressly opposed to the Mufti's speech and was bound to be met with Moslem hostility.

#### The Re-Emergence of Pan-Arab Politics

On April 8, 1943, Emir Abdullah appealed to the Syrians<sup>(21)</sup> to unite in order to ascertain for Syria an idealistic stand side by side with a general Arab union as aimed at by Egypt.<sup>(22)</sup> In a more efficient manner, informal talks were still being carried out between various leaders from the Arab countries. Mr. Jamil el-Midfa'i, an eminent Iraqi politician at the time, visited several Arab countries and discussed with their leaders the prospects of Arab unity. When he returned to Iraq, he made a statement

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(20) ad-Diyar, No. 377, April 21 and 22, 1943.

(21) He was referring to the inhabitants of Transjordan, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon.

(22) The Jordanian White Book, p. 77. This appeal was supposed to be distributed among the population of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan in the form of leaflets, but the authorities in Lebanon and Syria confiscated the leaflets.



concerning his activities during his visits to the Arab countries. He expressed his happiness about what he felt in Egypt regarding the support of Egypt for Arab unity. He maintained that in Egypt there were continuous negotiations with various leaders in the Arab countries, and it was hoped that these would lead in the final analysis to the convening of a general Arab congress, representative of the different countries, to fulfil Arab national aspirations.<sup>(23)</sup>

The effect of pan-Arabism on Lebanese politics cannot in any way be underestimated. Since pan-Arabism was a burning issue for the Lebanese, the Free French took all the advantage they could to make the Christians endorse their policy in Lebanon. On one occasion Catroux wrote de Gaulle telling him of the means he would follow to achieve for France its basic goal, namely the conclusion of a treaty between Lebanon and France. He wrote, "For Lebanon that will be achieved by the exploitation of the old sentimental links that attach it to France, (and of) the instinct of defence against the projects of absorption."<sup>(24)</sup> This exploitation was hardly necessary to be used with Dr. Tabet. For a very long time, Dr. Tabet had been very hostile to Arab unity. During the First World War he did his best to advocate the separation of the Syrian from the Hijazi Question. In 1943, he still believed in the separation of Lebanon from any Arab unity. In

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(23) ad-Diyar, No. 375, April 20, 1943. See also, for declarations on Arab unity, Oriente Moderno, Vol. 23, 1943, *passim*.

(24) Catroux, op. cit., p. 336.

order to secure the continuance of the independence of his country, he had to depend on the Christians. The best way he could achieve that was by increasing the number of Christian seats in parliament. If he enfranchised only the Lebanese residing in the country, the Christian majority would be thin indeed. The only course left for him was, therefore, to enfranchise the emigrants. In this connection it would be convenient to remember the letter that Dr. Tabet sent on June 6, 1921, to the French Ambassador in Washington. Dr. Tabet wrote requesting:

"The registration of the Lebanese residing in foreign countries, so that their names be entered in the coming census.

"This is a very important point, because names so registered, although not having the right to vote, will add to the right of representation of their respective communities domiciled in Greater Lebanon..."<sup>(25)</sup>

After the decision to enfranchise the emigrants, the government issued on June 17, 1943, two law-decrees. The first, with the serial number 49, stated that "the population of Lebanon, shall consist of the citizens recorded in the registers of personal status by December 31, 1942, and of those persons who are not thus recorded in these registers, and who, despite their residence abroad, have opted for Lebanese nationality." The second law-decree, with the serial number 50, distributed the number of seats among

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(25) Tabet's papers, the letter to M. Jusserand, the French Ambassador, dated June 6, 1921.

the various communities and electoral districts as follows: <sup>(26)</sup>

	Beirut	North Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	The Biqā'	South Lebanon	Total
Sunnis	3	4	1	1	1	10
Shi'ites	-	-	1	2	6	9
Druze	-	-	3	-	-	3
Maronites	1	5	10	1	1	18
Greek Orthodox	1	2	1	1	1	6
Greek Catholics	-	-	1	1	1	3
Armenian Orthodox	2	-	1	-	-	3
Minorities	1	-	1	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>54</b>

### The Crisis

The Moslem reaction to these two law-decrees was very hostile. A large number of Moslem and Druze notables formed themselves into an "Islamic Congress", presided over by the late Mufti of the Republic, Mohammad Tawfiq Khalid. On June 19, they took several decisions for the redress of the injuries, that they believed, had befallen them.. One decision demanded the holding of a census on which the allocation of seats for the communities should be based. In case no census was taken, then the preceding electoral

(26) The Lebanese Official Gazette, 1943, pp. 11209-11211.

law should be applied. (That law gave the Moslems and Druzes 28 seats, of which 20 were elected and the remaining 8 were appointed by a presidential decree. The Christians received 35 seats of which 22 were elected and the rest appointed. However, it must be made clear that the Moslem Congress explicitly demanded that the number of deputies to be considered was that of the elected deputies, that is, the Christians should have 22 seats and the Moslems 20. This demand neglected the five extra seats that the Christians had through appointment.) If this demand was not fulfilled the Islamic Congress threatened that the Moslems would boycott the elections. The text of these resolutions was communicated to the Lebanese government, the Ambassador of Free France and the representatives of Great Britain, the United States, Egypt, Iraq and the other Allied Powers.<sup>(27)</sup>

Several remarks can be made concerning the Islamic Congress. In the first place, all the signatories of the resolutions were invariably Sunni Moslems. Secondly, nearly all of these were Beiruti notables. Thirdly, certain Shi'ite and Druze leaders, such as Mr. Rashid Baydoun and Emir Majid Arslan, were present but they did not sign the memorandum.<sup>(28)</sup> Fourthly, there were several other Moslem and Druze leaders who did not attend the Islamic Congress like Abdul Hamid Karamé, Ahmad el-Ass'ad, 'Adil 'Ussayran and none of the Junblati family.<sup>(29)</sup> Fifthly, there were some Moslems who

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(27) Tabet's papers; for full text and the names of its signatories see Appendix A.

(28) I am indebted for this information to Mr. Amine Nakhlé.

(29) I am indebted for this information to Mr. Mukhtar Khalid, the Mufti's son.

refused to participate in the Congress, because they disapproved of using sectarian methods to achieve political ends. One of these was Mr. Kazim es-Sulh, the founder of an-Nida' party. He had already opposed the Islamic Congress of 1936.<sup>(30)</sup> Sixthly, there were some Beiruti Sunni notables who, though they attended the Congress, refused to sign the memorandum. Among them were Mr. Abdullah el-Yafi and Jamil Makkawy. These were attacked in speeches made in the Mosque and in leaflets posted on the walls of the city of Beirut. Mr. Yafi was susceptible to Islamic pressure and on the first occasion that he had, he made a speech declaring his allegiance to the Moslem community and his willingness to include his name among the signatories of the memorandum. On the other hand, Mr. Makkawy refrained from signing the memorandum despite the attack on him. He refused to include his name, because he believed that the problem ought to remain a domestic issue. He was opposed to the communicating of the memorandum to the foreign powers. He, however, assumed an independent course of action and sent Dr. Tabet, on June 20, a letter in his capacity as a leader of the Moslem Najjadah organization, denouncing confessionalism and its subsequent repugnant fanaticism. He maintained that the only way to put an end to sectarian feud lay in a fair distribution of rights and duties among the Lebanese, irrespective of their religion or sect. He went on to say that the two law-decrees had left a bad effect due to the increase of the number of Christians deputies by ten and that of Moslem deputies by two. The letter expressed the opinion

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(30) I was told this by Mr. Takyu-d-Din es-Sulh, Kazim's brother.

that the government should not have taken the step of allocating the seats between the various communities without a previously conducted census which ought to be just and comprehensive. Finally, he demanded that steps be taken to that effect, so that a just distribution of seats would result.<sup>(31)</sup>

The seventh remark about the Congress is that, despite the fact that it was Islamic in character, a few Christian leaders were endorsing the Congress, notably, Mr. Bishara el-Khoury and Henri Pharaon.<sup>(32)</sup> They did not support the Islamic Congress because they sympathized with its cause, but because they were expecting to be supported by the Moslems in the forthcoming elections. Eighthly, the British were encouraging the Moslems against the French. A Moslem notable, who does not wish to be quoted, said that the British showed interest in the case of the Moslems. The British, he maintained, would listen to the complaints of the Moslems and protest to the French in their favour. This attitude coincided with British policy in Lebanon discussed earlier. Another view was expressed by an antagonist, who does not wish to be quoted also, to the effect that the British went so far as to distribute gold lavishly in support of the Congress. However, the role of the British in the Congress cannot as yet be determined fully due to lack of published documents or first hand material. Ninthly, several of the signatories were obscure political personalities. Tenthly, the Congress can

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(31) I am indebted for the information about Messrs Yafi and Makkawy to Mr. Makkawy and to Mr. Mukhtar Khalid. Mr. Makkawy's letter is in Tabet's papers. For full text see Appendix B.

(32) I was told that by Mr. Makkawy himself.

be partly interpreted as an attempt made by some of its members to advance their personal ambitions. The reality of exploiting sectarian feuds for personal ends cannot be ruled out.

In accordance with the memorandum of the Congress, the secretary of its executive committee sent a note to Dr. Tabet, refuting legally his power to issue the two law-decrees. The note read as follows:

"Whereas the present government has issued two law-decrees on June 17, 1943, with the serial number 49 and 50; the first dealing with the increase of the deputies and the second with the distribution of that increase among the electoral districts,

"And whereas the government, in issuing the two law-decrees has exceeded the legislative powers granted to it by the arreté that appointed it,

"And whereas this excess of power has injured the Mohammedan communities greatly, especially when the present government did not have the power to amend the arretés of the High Commissioner, or the ordinary and constitutional laws except within the reservations noted in Article 3 of the Arreté No. 13, dated March 18, 1943,

"And whereas it was necessary to point out this excess by referring to the legal texts themselves,

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"Regarding the inability of the present government to issue the two law-decrees Nos. 49 and 50.

"On March 18, 1943, the present government was appointed by the arreté No. 13, and its powers were defined in the arreté itself as follows:

"Temporarily and pending the election of the President of the Lebanese Republic according to the provisions of articles 49, 74 and 75 of the constitution, Dr. Ayoub Tabet shall take over the powers of the Head of the State the Head of the Government of the Lebanese Republic." Article 3, of the Arreté No. 13 expressly defined his powers as follows:

"The Head of the State Head of the Government shall have the power to issue decrees which have the force of law, within the reservations of the proclamation of the independence of Lebanon in Beirut on November 26, 1941."

"The present government agreed to take over power and hold elections...acknowledging the reservations made in the arreté.

"It was also stated in the Arreté No. 129 FC dated March 18, 1943, that the following provisions of Article 24 of the Lebanese constitution have been changed.

"Article 24 - The Council of Deputies shall be composed of elected members, whose number and the process of their elections were defined in (the several arretés concerned) and such arretés shall remain in force until the new parliament shall pass a new electoral law.



"Thus, it clearly appears, from the texts of the arrêtés of appointment and the definition of power, that the present government cannot touch the electoral laws in force, but to hold elections according to the provisions of these laws only, especially when only the parliament has the right to amend these laws.

"And whereas the electoral law in force, considering its last amendments, has fixed the number of deputies at 42 only, distributed among the communities and districts,

"And whereas the Delegate General has empowered the forthcoming parliament alone to amend the number or distribution according to the sects, in his arrêté No. 129,

"And whereas the present government, in amending the number and distribution of the deputies, has exceeded its powers, especially when such an amendment jeopardized the rights of the Mohammedan communities,

"Thus,

"And for the protection of the laws and arrêtés that must remain in force, pending their amendment by the forthcoming parliament, and in prevention of the injuries befalling the Mohammedan communities, from the representational side,

"We request the government to annul the two law-decrees Nos. 49 and 50, issued on June 17, 1943, because it exceeded its powers..."(33)

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(33) Tabet's papers; it was necessary to quote this note in extenso so as not to cut the logical argumentation of the Executive Committee.

This note was signed by the secretary of the Executive Committee of the Islamic Congress, Mr. Sa'eb Salam.

#### The French Attitude

Mr. Jean Helleu had just replaced General Catroux as Delegate General. There does not seem to be any evidence that he was consulted in advance by the government about the two law-decrees. Mr. Jawad Boulos denied any such consultation and stressed the independent course that the government had followed regarding this matter. Other well-informed persons maintained that the Free French knew about the two law-decrees only after they were signed by the government, and that they tried to dissuade Dr. Tabet from issuing them but he refused. The Free French did not want to raise issues which might end in disturbances, for this would give the British a reason to intervene and ask for the declaration of martial law. In such an eventuality, British military authority would supersede its French civil counterpart.<sup>(34)</sup> Besides the enfranchising of the emigrants had been one of Dr. Tabet's aims.

#### The Government's Point of View

The government, at this stage, tried to ameliorate the deteriorating situation by explaining to the public the reasons for its actions. On June 22, it issued a communiqué stating that the treaty of Lausanne and the other agreements between the French and the Turks had fixed the question of nationality in this country. According to these agreements and the Lebanese

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(34) I am indebted for this information to a gentleman who does not wish to be quoted.

laws dealing with this problem, it is stipulated that those who had opted for Lebanese nationality as well as those who had emigrated after August 30, 1924, would be registered in the records of the census departments. These numbered about 159,000 emigrants and had been registered by 1941. Thus all of those who had opted for Lebanese nationality and fulfilled the required conditions were consequently registered in the records of the census departments. Besides the arreté issued by the French High Commissioner on January 20, 1934, stated that the total number of Lebanese citizens consisted of those who were registered in those records and those emigrants who had been paying taxes to the Lebanese treasury. However, the government did not take into consideration the latter category, because it was not sure of their Lebanese nationality. The government took also into consideration the natural growth of the population as the bases for the issuing of the two law-decrees in question.<sup>(35)</sup>

On June 23, the government gave out another statement regarding the total number of Lebanese that increased the population due to the inclusion of emigrants in the census registers. The emigrants who had opted for Lebanese nationality numbered 159,571 persons. In addition to these, there were 81,694 persons who had been paying taxes to the treasury. As the government was not sure about the nationality of the latter, it excluded them from the registers of the census departments, and consequently were not granted Lebanese Nationality.

These, however, had been treated as Lebanese according to the laws of

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(35) For full text see the Lebanese daily al-Bashir, No. 6889, June, 23, 1943; see also ad-Diyar, No. 408, June 22, 1943.

the country before Dr. Tabet came to power. Since, the government did not include these, the number that was increased by the government to the population of Lebanon was 77,877 persons only from all the communities. (36)

### Moslem Activities

The leaders responsible for the convening of the Islamic Congress asked the Moslem member of the cabinet to resign. Emir Khalid was contacted on the matter by Mr. Riyad es-Sulh. He, however, refused to yield to such a demand on the grounds that his resignation would be untimely. (37) When interviewed, Emir Khalid said that he accepted the two law-decrees because of the fact that the government was merely applying the laws of the country, and, in this sense, the government was not responsible for the crisis resulting from the issuing of the two law-decrees.

In the meantime, Nahhas Pasha of Egypt was contacted to use his influence with the French, in support of the Moslem case. Accordingly, he wrote a personal letter to General Catroux interceding in favour of the Moslems. He wrote that he had the impression that there lay behind the postponement of the Lebanese elections certain ulterior motives which threatened the "principles themselves in their essence", and which were agreed upon between Catroux and Nahhas. (38) The Egyptian Prime Minister maintained that the Lebanese question should be viewed in connection with the "Eastern Question".

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(36) al-Bashir, No. 6890, June 24, 1943.

(37) I was told that by Emir Khalid himself.

(38) Unfortunately, Nahhas Pasha did not mention what those principles were.

He insisted that the relations between the Christians and the Moslems ought to be cordial, and therefore, he could not understand why "they" should follow a policy of division that would abolish the right bases followed in 1937.<sup>(39)</sup> Nahhas Pasha, then, repeated the same arguments embodied in the memorandum of the Islamic Congress, and admitted that he was contacted by the Moslem leaders calling upon him to approach Catroux in order to reach a solution of the problem. In such circumstances, Nahhas threatened that he could not remain indifferent before that painful situation. He finally took the liberty to suggest an "objective opinion", whereby he opposed the Moslem request to hold a census, because such an operation was lengthy and because he was not sure that it would give a correct result. He furthermore proposed that the Christians be given 29 seats and the Moslems 25.<sup>(40)</sup>

The Moslem leaders of the Congress sought the support of Nouri es-Said also. He gave them a golden opportunity by arriving in Lebanon on July 7, 1943. The purpose of his visit was ostensibly for rest. But a day after his arrival, the Moslem daily Sada-l-Ansar, shrewdly commented that "electioneering was generally lukewarm, whilst political activity was on the increase." The arrival of the Iraqi statesman was four days after Nahhas Pasha's letter to Catroux. However, on July 9, a Moslem delegation led by the Mufti of the Republic paid a visit to Nouri Pasha. It was described at the time as a courtesy call.<sup>(41)</sup> But actually it was also for the

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(39) See above pp. 71-72

(40) Tabet's papers; the letter from Nahhas to Catroux dated July 4, 1943.

(41) Sada-l-Ansar, July 10, 1943.

solicitation of Iraqi support. When interviewed, Mr. Mukhtar Khalid, the son of the late Mufti and the secretary of Daru-l-Fatwa, said that Nouri promised the Moslem delegation that he would use his influence in their favour. During his stay in Lebanon, Nouri was very active. On one occasion he met Dr. Tabet and talked to him about the possibilities of Arab unity. Dr. Tabet is reported to have told him to do whatever he saw fit provided that he left Lebanon alone.<sup>(42)</sup> It cannot yet be determined whether Nouri spoke with Dr. Tabet about the Lebanese crisis over parliamentary representation. Before leaving the country, he visited Dr. Tabet, the Free French Delegate General and the Mufti at whose place he was received by the members of the Islamic Congress.<sup>(43)</sup> If Nouri es-Said spoke to Dr. Tabet to modify his stand regarding the two law-decrees, then it would be safe to say that he failed in his endeavour, because the government was firm in its decision and did not back down.

#### The Supporters of the Government

The government was supported by various groups. The Kata'ib, who are still demanding the enfranchising of the emigrants, fully supported the government. However, when responsible people in the party were interviewed, they could not produce the exact quality of their support. In this respect, they were similar to the National Bloc, of Mr. Eddé. Generally, however, the opinion of the majority of the Christians was expressed by the Emigrants<sup>2</sup>

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(42) ad-Diyar, No. 426, July 17, 1943.

(43) I am indebted for this information to Mr. Najib Liyan, who was a close friend of Dr. Tabet and was the Head of the Publications Bureau.

Club. On July 1, it sat in extraordinary session to discuss the issue at stake. It decided to thank the government for the step it took to enfranchise the emigrants and pledged its full support to it. The Club sent a memorandum to Helleu and Dr. Tabet, denouncing the "fuss" made about the law-decree 49, and tried to prove to Helleu the legitimate and moral rights of the enfranchisement of the emigrants. From the legal point of view, the treaty of Lausanne, which dealt with the question of nationality concerning this part of the world, enabled the emigrants to opt for Lebanese nationality. Besides article 7, of the Lebanese constitution stipulated that all the Lebanese were made equal before the law. Thus to deny the emigrants, who were Lebanese citizens, any right enjoyed by their compatriots at home, would be an open violation of article 7. From the moral point of view, the emigrants had maintained uninterrupted relations with their homeland - Lebanon. Those same emigrants were responsible for various economic and social enterprises as well as for the vast movement of reconstruction, realized thanks to the millions sent regularly by the emigrants. (45)

#### The Return of Catroux

Catroux arrived at Beirut on July 3, in order to resolve the dispute. He called on different personalities, notably Dr. Tabet, the Maronite Patriarch and the Mufti. He also visited the various districts of the country, hoping to get acquainted with the situation and the effects of the

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(45) Tabet's papers; for full text see Appendix C.

law-decrees, so that he would give the appropriate solution. In his approach, Catroux was criticized for being very negativistic. The Moslem critic, who does not wish to be quoted, said that Catroux did not wish to commit himself to any definite policy. He merely asked the members of the Islamic Congress to have trust in him and that he himself would give the right solution. However, the critic went on to say that the Moslems were determined to have the solution before Catroux's departure.

#### The Government Resigns

A week before the resignation of the government, Mr. Jawad Boulos, the Minister of External Affairs, sent a memorandum to the French authorities justifying the government's action. He maintained that there existed no difference whatsoever between the Lebanese who were living in their country and the emigrants who opted for Lebanese nationality. He clarified that there were emigrants of Lebanese origin who paid taxes to the Lebanese treasury, but as these did not opt for Lebanese nationality, they were not considered as Lebanese. These numbered about 81,000 persons. The law-decree No. 49, was not concerned with these, and therefore this decree did not generate new rights. It did not increase the population also. If preceding governments did not take similar decrees, that is simply because they were not faced with a similar situation. Mr. Boulos emphasized that the question of Lebanese emigrants opting for Lebanese nationality was not a product of Lebanese law. It was the result of an international arrangement. Consequently, he maintained that, "la nationalité libanaise accordée aux optants par (le traité de Lausanne) est un droit qu'aucun gouvernement



libanais ne pourrait contester."<sup>(46)</sup>

Attempts were made to convince Dr. Tabet modify his stand, but they were a failure. When interviewed, Emir Khalid lamented the fate of the government and blamed Dr. Tabet for his bad temper, obstinacy and unwillingness to compromise. There were in such a situation two possibilities for the government action. But neither was likely to happen. It could have either carried out what it stood for, irrespective of Moslem hostility and probably their boycotting the elections, of British opposition and without effective French material support, or it could have abolished the two law-decrees. Actually, all that Dr. Tabet could do and remain true to his principles was in submitting his resignation. The settlement reached at the end of the dispute was in giving the Christians 30 seats and the Moslems and Druzes together 25.

#### Evaluation and End of a Career

The settlement reached, far from being a permanent solution of the Lebanese question is still followed today. The crisis that came about in June 1943, had its origins since the establishment of the state of Lebanon in 1920. The sectarian struggle for power in the country had since then been a recurrent problem in Lebanese politics. Fundamentally, it is a question of confidence and cooperation between all the parties concerned. The history of the country and the political background of the politicians that had something to do with the crisis over parliamentary representation

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(46) Tabet's papers; for full text see Appendix D.

was similar to that of Dr. Tabet in that they grew up in the last days of the Ottoman Empire, and that their political activity matured during the mandate. The differences that could be noted between Dr. Tabet and other politicians were of two kinds. First they might have had different beliefs and consequently adopted other outlooks, and secondly, they might have had different approaches to the problems that confronted them. But what characterizes Dr. Tabet most is the fact that he was very dogmatic and did not compromise his beliefs for political necessities. All Along his political career, he was consistent in his beliefs and actions. The questions that bothered him most were those that pertained to the future of Lebanon. During the First World War he worked for the separation of the Syrian from the Hijazi question, and asked for a French mandate because he felt the need of his country for protection and guidance. During the Second World War, when he was in power, Dr. Tabet attempted to safeguard the separation of Lebanon from any form of Arab unity. In 1943, after the election of Bishara el-Khoury to the Presidency, Dr. Tabet warned him against going too far in pan-Arab politics.<sup>(47)</sup> The relations, that he conceived of, between Lebanon and any other Arab state ought to be defined by a treaty. In such a treaty Lebanon could agree to remove customs barriers with the other contracting country as well as to abolish the need of having a passport to go from one country to the other.<sup>(48)</sup> The question of the emigrants, which was very important to Dr. Tabet, showed also his consistency. As early as

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(47) Bishara el-Khoury, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 18.

(48) See The Minutes of the Lebanese Parliament, 1944-1945, pp. 214-215.

1921 he foresaw the enfranchisement of the emigrants<sup>(49)</sup> and he took the necessary steps to do that in 1943. It is in such context that Dr. Tabet's career could be appreciated best.

In 1943, Dr. Tabet was elected as deputy for Beirut. He was an elderly man at the time and weakened further by a serious ailment. His attendance of the sessions in parliament slackened as the days passed. He hardly participated in the debates or the speechmaking or even in the committees. In the last days of his life he was still a deputy. He died on February 18, 1947. His death was not noticed by the Speaker of the House. He was reminded by one of the deputies that they remain silent for a few minutes in mourning for Dr. Tabet.

The death of an old and broken man did not affect the political situation of the country. The problems that he tackled in his life had their own bearings on the internal situation. He did not solve them himself, nor did the other politicians do so. Two such problems are Arab unity and the question of the Lebanese emigrants. Dr. Tabet took a certain stand. His attitude was very strongly disputed. To the present day, no consensus of opinion has been reached, regarding such problems. No final settlement can ever be attained unless all the parties concerned work in harmony, casting aside the residue of past suspicions and fear.

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(49) See above pp. 28-29.

APPENDIX A

The Resolutions Taken at the Islamic Congress

(In Arabic.)

On June 19, 1943, at 4 p.m.,

The undersigned, the notables of the Mohammedan community, met under the presidency of His Grace, the Great Mufti of the Lebanese Republic,

And, unanimously, took the following decision:

First, the demanding of the government to abolish the decrees issued on June 17, 1943, number 49 and 50, which deal with the increase of the number of deputies and the distribution of seats among the communities and the districts;

Secondly, the holding of a general and comprehensive census supervised by a committee, both neutral and trustworthy;

Thirdly, the holding of the elections on the basis of the new census which we are asking for, or on the basis of the old law that makes the number of the members of parliament 42 elected deputies;

Fourthly, unless these demands were fulfilled, the Moslems, generally, shall boycott the elections all over the Lebanese Republic;

Fifthly, the forming of a committee to work quickly for the fulfilment of these demands, and to maintain the rights of the Mohammedan communities in the just and general popular representation;

Sixthly, the communication of the text of these resolutions to the Lebanese Government, to His Excellency the Ambassador of Free France, and

to the representatives of Great Britain, the United States, Egypt, Iraq and other Allied States.

(The Signatories were:)

Mohammad Jamil Beyhum  
\*Ali Salam  
Tawfiq en-Natour  
Muhyi-d-Din en-Nussouly  
Hussayn Sij'an  
Rafiq el-Barraj  
Mohammad \*Ali Beyhum  
Ahmad el-\*Ajouz  
Riyad es-Sulh  
Malih Sinnou  
Anis Naja  
Abdul Hamid Qaranouh

Taqiyu-d-Din es-Sulh  
Abdullah Beyhum  
\*Umar ed-Da'ouq  
Anis es-Saghir  
Hassan Bahssaly  
Khalil Subra  
Husni Abou Ddhahr  
Sa'eb Salam  
Abdur Rahman Sahmarany  
Missbah Tabbarah  
Ibrahim el-Ahdab  
Mohammad Khalid

Mohammad el-Ghazzouzy  
Muhyi-d-Din el-Makkawy  
Abdur-Ra'ouf Himadeh  
Ahmad ed-Da'ouq  
Salim Tayyarah  
Kamal Jabr  
Rif\*at Qaz'oun  
Zayn el-\*Abidin en-Nahhas  
Mustafa el-Ghalayiny  
Hashim ed-Daftardar  
Mukhtar el-\*Alayily

APPENDIX B

The Memorandum of Jamil Makkawy to Dr. Tabet

(In Arabic.)

Najjad

Beirut June 20, 1943.

(Compliments.)

It is an honour for the presenter of this (memorandum) Jamil Makkawy, the president of the Najjadah to expose to Your Excellency what follows:

The youth of this country have been truly wishing to put an end to sectarianism and its resulting abominable fanaticism. They believe that there could not be an end to confessional feuds in Lebanon without a fair distribution of rights and duties among its children, irrespective of the community to which they may belong. The youth, Your Excellency, cannot but express frankly that the decree 49/50, which deals with the increase of the number of deputies, has left a bad effect because the Moslems received two deputies more than what they previously had, whilst the other communities received ten deputies more.

Your Excellency,

We have carefully studied the legal texts on which your government depended for this increase. No matter how strong was the legal arguments for the justification of this increase, and irrespective of our pretensions in saying that the official records ought to be considered correct until the opposite is proved, yet, the youth cannot but say that before the

declaration of this increase it was the duty (of the government) to have held a just, general and comprehensive census, (supervised) by honest men enjoying the full confidence of both the government and the people.

Your Excellency,

We very much regret - we, who are advocates of general unity for the patriotic (wattaniyah) and national (qawmiyah) sovereignty of our country - to find ourselves obliged to discuss the problem of this increase. It is a cause for the creation of dissension between the children of one fatherland, who live on one land and are shadowed by one heaven. For that, we have come today - and we are confident of your honesty and of your being above sectarian fanaticism - requesting the Lebanese Government to take into consideration the causes which we pointed at and to hold a general, comprehensive and just census on whose result was the distribution of parliamentary seats among the various communities to be based.

We are confident that such a census will put an end to all mis-interpretations and please the members of all the sects.

Please accept, Your Excellency, my best regards.

Jamil Makkawy.

APPENDIX C

The Memorandum of the Emigrants Club  
to Jean Helleu

6 Juillet 1943.

Monsieur Jean Helleu, Ambassadeur  
de France, Délégué Général et  
Plenipotentiaire de la France  
au Levant.

Monsieur L<sup>r</sup> Ambassadeur,

Le 1er Juillet 1943, le Comité Directeur du Club des Emigrés s'est réuni en séance plénière et dument constituée, au cours de laquelle il a pris les décisions suivantes que j'ai été chargé de communiquer à Votre Excellence.

Le Club des Emigrés qui est le porte-parole des aspirations et des revendications des émigrés libanais se trouvant en Amérique du Nord, Amérique central, Amérique du Sud, Australie, Afrique du Sud, Afrique Equatoriale et autres pays du monde, a ressenti un profond regret et un profond étonnement vis-à-vis de l'attitude de certains compatriotes du Liban qui, à l'issue de la promulgation du décret No. 49 relatif à la distribution des sièges au Parlement libanais, ont protesté contre l'incorporation, dans le recensement officiel, de ceux de nos frères émigrés qui ont opté pour la nationalité libanaise.

Dans ce mémorandum nous appuyons le droit de nos frères émigrés et démontrons à Votre Excellence les carés juridiques et moraux qui



confirment leurs droits à la nationalité libanaise, droits irréfutables et auxquels ils n'entendent opposer aucune objection.

1<sup>o</sup>/ - Du point de vue juridique

L'article 34 du traité de Lausanne stipule ce qui suit; "sous réserve des accords qui pourraient être nécessaires entre les Gouvernements exerçant l'autorité dans les pays détachés de la Turquie et les Gouvernements des pays où ils sont établis; les ressortissants turcs, âgés de plus de 18 ans, originaires d'un territoire détaché de la Turquie, en vertu du présent traité, et qui, au moment de la mise en vigueur de celui-ci, sont établis à l'étranger, pourront opter pour la nationalité en vigueur dans les territoires dont ils sont originaires, s'ils se rattachent par leur race à la majorité de la population de ces territoires, et si le Gouvernement y exerçant l'autorité y consent. Ce droit d'option devra être exercé dans le délai de deux ans à dater de la mise en vigueur du présent traité."

L'article 7 de la Constitution libanaise stipule ce qui suit: "Tous les Libanais sont égaux vis-à-vis de la loi. Ils jouissent en parité de tous les droits civils et politiques et supportent toutes les taxes et charges publiques sans aucune distinction entre eux."

De ce qui précède, il découle nettement que l'opposition tendant à priver les Libanais absents du Liban des droits afférant aux Libanais résidents dans le pays, que ces droits soient d'ordre civil ou politique, constitue une dérogation à l'article 7.- de la constitution libanaise.

2<sup>o</sup>/- Du point de vue moral-

Nos frères émigrés ont, de tous temps et depuis plus de 60 ans, entretenu, eux et leurs fils, des relations ininterrompues avec leur Patrie, le Liban. Les entreprises sociales et économiques, autant que le vaste mouvement de reconstruction que nous pouvons constater dans chaque coin du pays, ont été réalisés grâce aux millions qui furent envoyés régulièrement dans le pays par ses fils émigrés.

Nous ne pouvons pas oublier que le plus grand facteur de l'essor commercial, notamment à Beyrouth et à Tripoli est du aux capitaux et aux efforts engagés par ces émigrés et leurs ressortissants.

Il y a lieu de relever, qu'au moment où les Libanais résidant dans leur pays parviennent à accumuler d'importantes fortunes à la faveur des circonstances créées par la guerre, les émigrés affluent partout pour s'engager dans les forces combattantes des Nations-Unies.

En dépit de tous les avantages que les émigrés auraient pu obtenir de l'acquisition de la nationalité des pays qu'ils habitent, ils ont préféré opter pour la nationalité libanaise qu'ils entendent garder jalousement.

Est-il admissible de récompenser cette sincérité et cet attachement en contestant à ces gens leurs droits de bénéficier des memes prérogatives que celles accordés aux habitants du pays?

Cette contestation de leurs droits est d'autant plus pénible qu'elle est soulevée par une partie d'entre nous.

3<sup>o</sup>/- Les conséquences-

Il est heureux que la presse n'ait pas été autorisée à publier quoique ce soit autour de cette question, pour que nos frères émigrés -

dont le nombre égale à peu de choses près celui des résidents dans le pays - ne puissent être au courant de tels faits, car une telle attitude aurait pu provoquer parmi eux une vague de mécontentement et d'amertume d'autant plus profonde qu'elle les blesse dans la base même de leur patriotisme.

Les Libanais dont les nombreuses colonies se trouvent dans les quatre coins du monde occupent une position morale, intellectuelle, financière et politique prépondérante partout où ils se trouvent. Un tel geste aurait pu les pousser à couper toutes relations avec la Mère-Patrie, ce qui aurait entraîné, certainement, une grande perte pour le Liban.

Considérant ce qui précède, nous ne pouvons que manifester notre reprobation, espérant que la question des émigrés déjà tranchée par le Gouvernement Libanais dans son décret No. 49 sera considérée comme une chose jugée et vous prions de nous honorer d'une réponse tranquillissante à ce sujet.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'expression de notre haute considération.

Le Secrétaire,

Ibrahim K. Hitti.

APPENDIX D

The Memorandum of the Minister of  
Foreign Affairs to the Free French Authorities

République Libanaise

Ministère des Affaires Etrangères.

Beyrouth, le 13 Juillet 1943.

Excellence,

J'ai l'honneur de vous exposer les circonstances de droit qui ont amené le gouvernement Libanais actuel à prendre le décret législatif No. 49 au sujet de la répartition des sièges à la Chambre des députés Libanaise.

Aux termes de l'art. 4 de l'arrêté No. 2 du 2 Janvier 1934 (H.C.F.) concernant l'élection des députés de la République Libanaise:

"Le chiffre de la population est composé des inscriptions des  
"citoyens du Grand-Liban sur les registres A et B du recensement  
"auxquels sont ajoutées les inscriptions de ceux qui, portés sur  
"le registre E, payent un impot direct à l'Etat."

Le registre A contient: 1e les noms des Libanais présents. 2e les noms des Libanais émigrés ayant opté pour la nationalité Libanaise. Le registre B contient les noms des Libanais émigrés qui payent un impot direct à l'Etat. (V. l'art. 14 du décret No. 8837 du 15 Janvier 1932.) L'inscription au registre A des Libanais présents ainsi que des Libanais optants a été confirmée par l'art. 15 du susdit décret qui déclare:

"... Les émigrés qui auront opté pour la nationalité libanaise... seront inscrits avec leurs familles; tous les autres figureront sur le registre spécial des émigrés."

Il résulte de ces textes qu'il n'existe aucune différence entre les Libanais présents et les Libanais optants.

Tous les gouvernements qui nous ont précédé ont ordonné l'inscription de ces derniers. Ils ont été suivis en dernier lieu par Monsieur Abdullah Beyhum, Secrétaire d'Etat, qui prit dans ce sens un arrêté No. 2288 daté 24 Octobre 1940.

La question des optants se trouvait ainsi être définitivement liquidée à cette date-là.

Notre décret législatif No. 49 aurait donc dû comprendre d'une part les présents et les optants (ces derniers étant assimilés aux présents), et d'autre part les émigrés payants dont le nombre s'élève à 81,000.

Mais par un scrupule de conscience, né de la crainte qu'une partie des émigrés payants ne soit déjà comprise parmi les optants, le gouvernement a renoncé purement et simplement à prendre en considération le nombre des émigrés payants. Nous avons donc pris en considération seulement les Libanais présents et optants. Notre décret a donc eu pour conséquence de diminuer la population du nombre des émigrés payants et non de l'augmenter comme on l'affirme à tort.

Il suit de tout ce qui précède que le décret législatif No. 49 n'est pas un texte générateur de droit; il n'a pas non plus augmenté le chiffre de la population.

Si les gouvernements qui nous ont précédé n'ont pas eu à prendre un décret semblable au décret No. 49 c'est que tout simplement ils ne s'étaient pas trouvés dans l'occasion de le faire. En effet pareille opération ne se fait communément qu'aux époques préparatoires des élections. Or, les dernières élections libanaises ont eu lieu en 1937. A cette date-là, les délais impartis aux émigrés pour l'option par l'accord franco-turc, étaient encore ouverts, car ils n'arrivent à expiration que fin Mai 1938. Depuis Mai 1938 le gouvernement n'ayant eu à procéder à des élections qu'en 1943, nous nous sommes trouvés dans l'obligation morale et juridique de prendre le décret en question.

Pas besoin d'ajouter que la question de la nationalité des Libanais optants, n'est pas le fait d'une loi libanaise. Cette question est au contraire imposée par l'art. 34 du traité de Lausanne, c'est-à-dire par les dispositions d'un traité international.

En conséquence, la nationalité libanaise accordée aux optants par ce dernier traité est un droit qu'aucun gouvernement libanais ne pourrait contester.

Veuillez agréer, Excellence, les assurances de ma très haute considération.

Jawad Boulos.

Le Ministre des Affaires Extérieures  
et Services des Libanais à l'Etranger.

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