

Middle East conflict - Lebanon. Correspondence, statements, resolutions: Mi...

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Middle East conflict [1958] - July 25

Sec. Gen.'s notes on talk with amb. Toukan about situation in
Lebanon

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(odds)

Ambassador Toukan saw me this morning at his own request. He started out by asking about Arab participation in the Summit Security Council meeting, and I gave him my usual story.

Toukan then turned to the Lebanese situation. In that context he made the following observations. El-Khourri would be an excellent President. In fact, when he in 1952 discovered that there would be a conflict in case he would stay on, he had shown the statesmanship of leaving. That was Chamoun's work. Chamoun, in the course of this spring, in sounding out the possibility of a new mandate "to serve his own ambitions" had acted rather differently. It was regrettable that the UK and US had not seen that they could not and should not tie their fate to one man. In fact, several of the opposition leaders were people about whom Toukan could speak with great confidence as his personal friends. He could say safely that 80 percent of the Lebanese people were pro-Western, and so were the rebel leaders. That was very true also of Saeb Salaam not to speak about Fouad Ammoun or Pharaon. It was regrettable that Chamoun and Malik had exaggerated the whole situation the way they did. They knew very well, in the depth of their heart, that the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese were for complete Lebanese independence and that they were Western-minded. Why then speak the way they spoke?

Now when everything was quietened down and we seemed to be on the road to a reasonable solution, he had been nauseated reading Malik's statements to the NY Times this morning. He failed to understand how Malik could justify ^{now} these attacks on the UN and the Observers, which could do no good and quite some harm.

In reply to my question if I was not correct in having felt that with some skill in, let us say, March and April, there would never have been a Lebanese problem, he replied that that was definitely so.

I said to Toukan that I did not want to criticise Malik, but that I had been mildly amused seeing in the same issue the statements of Malik and Chamoun. If Malik's were right, Chamoun's were wrong, and vice-versa.

Toukan said that he feared the difficulty that would arise for the British to stay when the Americans got out. He could not say what should happen when the British left, but agreed with me that there was a need for a formula which would have to be quite different from the Lebanese one, but would also represent much more of a real need than any formula that might be worked out for Lebanon. He added that he had abstained from saying anything in the debate in reaction to what Dixon had stated, as he had no views on what kind of formula might apply to Jordan and as he did not want to be put against the wall with any concrete questions at this stage when a public stand would have been premature.

(Toukan's statements on the situation in Lebanon get their full ^{significance} elements in the light of the fact of the extreme concern felt in Jordan because of the Lebanese development, as reflected by Rifai to me.)

Finally, Toukan said a few words about Abbas. We agreed that, so far, he had been acting quite correctly, and that the wisest thing for him to do at present was (to just simply) sit back. Toukan noted the quick drift towards recognition of the new regime in Iraq, and felt that Abbas would not get away with his credentials in the GA. He said that he was certain that neither Kassem nor Jawad had any responsibility for the alleged threats against Abbas.

Reading over this memorandum I see that I forgot to say that Toukan stated that "our people" at an early stage had warned Chamoun that if he tried to take a new term as President, he would set the country aflame and would have to resume the full responsibility for it.