SYRIA AND LEBANON

INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE REESTABLISHMENT OF
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SYRIA AND LEBANON

SOOD.00/931

Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation With the
British Minister of State for the Middle East (Casey)

[WASHINGTON,] January 5, 1943.

Former Minister Casey,¹ who for some months has been stationed
in Cairo, called to pay his respects.

In the course of a general exchange of information in regard to af-
fairs in Egypt and Africa, the Minister said that he had been obliged
to exercise great restraint in conversations with General De Gaulle²
about affairs in Syria and the Lebanon and that it was almost impos-
sible for him to talk to De Gaulle in the circumstances. He said that
the French have no idea whatever of giving up Syria or allowing
Syria to have her independence. He added that the French were
rebuffing the British at every turn.

The Minister had no sidelights on the Palestine situation.

C[ORDELL] H[ULL]

SOOD.00/947

Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Foy D. Kohler of the Division
of Near Eastern Affairs

[WASHINGTON,] January 8, 1943.

Participants: Mr. Richard G. Casey, British Minister of State.
    Mr. Murray.³
    Mr. Alling.⁴
    Mr. Kohler.

During his call at the Department today, Mr. Casey spoke of the
Syrian situation along the lines of the attached copy of the memo-
randum ⁵ he prepared on this matter after his recent visit to the Levant

¹ Richard G. Casey, formerly Australian Minister to the United States.
² Gen. Charles de Gaulle, President of the French National Committee.
³ Wallace Murray, Adviser on Political Relations.
⁴ Paul H. Alling, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs.
⁵ Not printed.

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States. He said that Britain’s initial commitments to the Fighting French, in connection with turning over to them the administration of Syria and Lebanon, were unfortunately too broad. While the implementation of the independence of the Levant States could not, because of these commitments and because of war conditions, be undertaken along the whole front at the present time, he felt the British pledge of independence for these States given at the time of the invasion and British military interests made it imperative to secure promptly the specific reforms which he had proposed. He said London backed him up in this and that he intended to tackle these problems “hammer and tongs” upon his return to Cairo.

1. As regards “free elections” he said the Fighting French had agreed to this for the near future, probably to take place in March, and that he proposed to see that they lived up to their word.

2. As regards reform of the Intérêts Communs he explained that the Fighting French had held onto the collection and administration of the indirect taxes (customs, monopolies, et cetera). When the local governments had insisted these revenues should be turned over to them, Catroux ⁶ had indicated he would do so if they worked out a plan, anticipating they would never agree on the distribution. To his surprise they promptly got together and presented a scheme providing for immediate distribution of forty percent of the total to each state, the balance of twenty percent remaining to be divided by arbitrators. Catroux had thereupon started stalling and was continuing to do so.

3. Mr. Casey said the Gardes Mobiles and French Special Service officers were . . . a menace to any orderly régime. He thought it urgent that the former be abolished and the latter shorn of the powers which make them local despots and altered simply to Intelligence officers.

4. Finally, as regards increased British participation in censorship and security matters, Mr. Casey said this was regarded as a necessity in view of British responsibility for the military defense of the area and of the unsatisfactory manner in which the French had handled it by themselves to date.

Mr. Casey said that while the last two projects were solely British responsibility, he very much hoped to have American support on the first three, and was sure that he could count on it in view of our sympathetic attitude toward the implementation of the independence of these States. Mr. Murray replied that he could, adding that he

would find Mr. Wadsworth both well-informed and cooperative. Mr. Casey said he knew this was so.

Mr. Murray raised the question of the British recognition of a “predominant and privileged” position for France in the Levant States. Mr. Casey quickly injected that the phrase “among European nations” had been added to the statement. Mr. Murray continued that he realized this, but that this Government’s policy contemplated equality of opportunity for all rather than recognition of a special privileged position for any country, including the mandatory power, in any of the mandated States. In practice, he thought, our stand would lead to an equal position for all powers in the Levant States, since we would insist on equal rights with those which might be granted to France and other powers, including the British, would no doubt insist on equal treatment with us. Mr. Casey agreed with this view.

890D.01/671: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, January 25, 1943.
[Received January 25—6:14 p. m.]

47. ZTN evening January 23, for publication yesterday’s newspapers, French Delegation General issued following communiqué signed by Monsieur Helleu “For The French National Committee”:

The French National Committee,

Resolved to reinforce the independence of Syria and Lebanon, an independence proclaimed in its name by General Catroux in 1941,6

And considering, after consultation with the British Government, that the evolution of the military situation in the country warrants reestablishment of the constitutional regime,

Has given mandate to the Delegate General and Plenipotentiary, Commander-in-Chief in the Levant, to take to this end all necessary dispositions, after consultation with the Governments of the Syrian and Lebanese Republics as well as with the principal local political personalities.

The expected early return of General Catroux to the Levant will thus mark a decisive step in the political life of Lebanon and Syria.

WADSWORTH

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7George Wadsworth, Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut and Damascus.
8Jean Helleu, Acting Free French Delegate in Syria and Lebanon, in the absence of General Catroux.
9For correspondence regarding this subject, see Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. III, pp. 785 ff.
The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, January 29, 1943—9 p.m.
[Received January 30—9:15 p.m.]

51. Reference last paragraph my 48, January 26, 5 p.m.\(^{10}\)

1. President Naccache \(^{11}\) said he wished to talk frankly with me regarding the situation created by the Fighting French National Committee communiqué of January 23. It was humiliating to him personally and to the nation.

He had learned that General Catroux before going to London had said “Elections must be held as I wish and the person I select will be President. Naccache opposes my wishes. He is agreeable and disinterested but he will have to retire.”

He was consequently seriously considering resigning before the General’s return. Against this however was the argument that by so doing he would but serve French designs, while by waiting and if necessary resigning as a protest he might best further his country’s aspirations for independence. He hoped that the United States, while not intervening directly in the internal affairs of the country, would make its great voice heard to defend the principle of independence and respect for a nation which had done nothing to merit such humiliation.

He believed it to be his right and duty to announce that elections would be held. Whatever the “preeminent” rights of France, the projected interference was unjustified either by military necessity or the country’s needs. It was clearly designed to assure election of a parliament and a president predisposed to approve a Franco-Lebanese treaty of alliance.

The French contention was that despite the declaration of independence the mandate survives and that they as the representatives of France properly exercise it. He held that de facto it ceased to exist as of the date of independence and that Fighting France should limit its role to watching over Lebanese administration of its own affairs without direct intervention in its constitutional problems.

The French argued that non-recognition by most foreign states justified in itself a continuing exercise of the mandatory power; to which he replied that one may not plead the acts of others as justification for avoiding the consequences of one’s own act.

It really should, he concluded, be recognized that Free French policy seemed designed rather to maintain the prestige and overseas patrimony of France than to facilitate achievement of the country’s independence.

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\(^{10}\) Not printed.

\(^{11}\) Alfred Naccache, head of the Lebanese Government.
The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 5, 1943—8 p. m.
[Received March 6—4:39 p. m.]

100. Reference my 94, March 3, 8 p. m. Gwynn who lunched with President Naccache yesterday and who called on him at his request today for a confidential talk brings me the following interesting report:

"Naccache wrote Catroux very recently protesting against his pursuing consultations in view of forthcoming elections quite independently of the Lebanese Government which is thus discredited in public opinion and against the agitation caused by these consultations.

Catroux replied that in spite of the proclamation of Lebanese independence the mandate remained in force and must continue to do so until France could account for her tutelage to those who had granted the mandate and be relieved of her responsibility. This he said was the point of view not only of the French National Committee but of all the powers that had agreed to the mandate. Catroux added that he personally had been given the authority and the responsibility of reorganizing constitutional life of Syria and Lebanon and he meant to do it.

Naccache has been consulting his Ministry as to the next step to take. He has in mind two things: (1) a letter of protest to Catroux against this dictatorial attitude, (2) his resignation together with that of his Ministry. He is inclined to protest and resign. His Ministers are opposed to resigning arguing that this would simply facilitate things for Catroux.

Naccache added he had good reason to believe that Fighting French and British came to an extensive understanding recently: the French to have exclusive control politically in Madagascar, North Africa and Levant; the British to retain a preponderant voice in military questions. He thinks the British now have much less interest in elections here than formerly."

WADSWORTH

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 12, 1943—noon.
[Received 10:31 p. m.]

103. Reference my 94, March 3, 8 p. m. Recapitulations follow of interesting conversations I had over the weekend with General Cat-

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32 Not printed.
33 William M. Gwynn, Second Secretary at Beirut.
roux, the Syrian Prime Minister, and former Lebanese President Edde. Read together they throw considerable light on the confused political situation in these two Republics. The latter’s views warrant I believe the Department’s careful consideration.

1. With General Catroux after dining with me March 6.

His main objective was to reestablish constitutional regimes in the two states in accord so far as possible with their own constitutional procedures. He had been given full powers to that end by the French National Committee.

That the states wished to enjoy a larger measure of independence was obvious, but there was also a strong demand for protection as well, especially in Lebanon. A majority would welcome having France continue that role. There existed certainly a current of anti-French feeling, especially in Syria, but this was primarily a manifestation of xenophobic tendencies in extreme nationalist circles.

Reestablishment of constitutional regime might be attained in a number of ways: by recalling the former parliaments as urged by national bloc leaders, by permitting the present governments to hold elections or by forming new “neutral” governments for that purpose. New presidents might also be desirable; for in Syria there was strong nationalist demand for former president Attasi, and in Lebanon he was disappointed in President Naccache whose various protests were ill-considered because based on tales as to his intentions. Of those he had informed no one.

Were elections to be held, political rivalries between professional politicians would play a controlling role in the cities. In the country districts the same leading landed families which had elected their representatives to former parliaments would control results. Among the rank and file of the people questions of food supply predominated.

He was planning to return to North Africa within the fortnight and would announce his decision before leaving.

In the field of “Arab unity” he could envisage the possibility of federally reunited Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Trans-Jordan. But he could not perceive justification for including Iraq whose historical background, geographical position and economic interests caused it to look rather towards the east. Nor of Egypt which racially and in its basic social trends was very much a foreign country.

In this connection he appreciated the disruptive influence of expansionist political Zionism. American Zionists would of course continue to campaign for a Jewish state but it was their reported extensive support in influential non-Jewish circles which most excited local apprehensions. While it was probably best that no official declaration of policy in the matter be made during the war, could not something be done to discourage university professors and others from publicly voicing pro-Zionist views?
2. The Syrian Prime Minister who called March 9 especially to talk politics.

Obviously influenced by a discussion he had just had with President Naccache he argued that for the French National Committee to arrogate to itself the power to decide how the constitutional regime should be established was to make a farce of his country's independence.

Syria had been occupied by force of arms by the British assisted by the Free French. In exercise of right of conquest the latter, with the former's consent, had proclaimed Syrian independence with limitations necessitated by conditions of war and had invited the late Sheikh Tajedine el Hassani to assume the powers of the Presidency and consolidate such independence.

The Sheikh had accepted and appointed a Ministry. With his death the latter had properly assumed the powers of the Presidency and were prepared to hold elections. It was for the new Parliament to elect a new President who would appoint a new Ministry. How else could even the fiction of independence be maintained?

To whom could his Ministry now resign? Who properly could appoint a new one? Had not both Britain and the United States recognized the present regime of limited independence? Without their consent, he concluded, Catroux had no right to modify it. And for the Free French to claim as they had increasingly done since General de Gaulle's visit last summer that their powers were those of mandatory France was to deny even that limited independence.

His Government was by conviction cooperating with the Allied war effort. It recognized willingly the war necessitated limitations on the exercise of its sovereignty. It was solving successfully the difficult problem of food supply. It had balanced the budget after one month in office. There was no valid reason to deny it the right to hold the elections.

Neither he nor a majority of his Ministers would stand for election and he was quite prepared to declare he would not accept election to the Presidency. Therefore, self-interest could not be charged.

The Syrian people were determined to gain their independence. Reestablishment of Parliamentary life was a necessary first step. But to follow any procedure to that end imposed by a pretendant mandatory authority would be tantamount to accepting a self-denying servitude.

3. Former President Edde who took tea alone with me March 10.

His aim and that of his party is a politically and economically independent Lebanon . . . as always throughout history a mount of potential refuge, retaining its communal social structure, its people
bound together by a strengthening nationalism, its laws, judiciary and administration modeled on best Occidental principles and practice.

Politically independent means no ties of federation or of confederation with the culturally backward, dominantly Moslem Hinterland, a Switzerland of the East protected in such independence by a strong friendly power or by international guarantees and giving in turn fullest guarantees to its own minorities and to foreign institutions and interests.

Economically independent means to be self-supporting through development of its tourism and summer and winter resorts, its irrigation possibilities, olives, fruits and vegetables and its water power and small industries, a Switzerland of the East in close trade relations with its neighbors but through commercial treaties rather than customs union.

Constitutional life must be reestablished as a first step, for only through Parliamentary action can progress be made towards broadening Government authority and evolving programs for determining Syrian Lebanese relationships and the country’s future international status. If he is again called to office, either as the last Constitutional President or by election, he will accept though troubled at the increasing insistence of Free France on its mandatory responsibilities.

4. I should appreciate the Department’s comment as to whether material of this kind is found of sufficiently timely interest to warrant the courage [coverage] I have been giving in my telegrams or whether its submission by despatch or airgram would be preferable.

WADSWORTH

Memorandum by Mr. Foy D. Kohler of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs

WASHINGTON, undated.]

We had an opportunity to discuss the situation in Syria and Lebanon with Mr. Casey, British Minister of State in the Middle East, during his recent visit to Washington, and found ourselves in agreement with his views regarding the desirability of the progressive

*3* Forwarded to the Secretary of State; attached was a memorandum dated March 16 which read: “Syria and Lebanon. I. How does the British Government reconcile its recognition of the independence of Syria and Lebanon with its commitment to De Gaulle recognizing a continuing ‘preeminent and privileged position of France’ in those States?” Mr. Kohler noted that “Above question put to Mr. Strang of the British Foreign Office by Mr. Wallace Murray.” William Strang, Acting Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was in Washington as a member of the party accompanying British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on talks with the Secretary of State; for correspondence relating to the Eden visit, see vol. III, pp. 1 ff.
implementation of the proclaimed independence of these states by the establishment of elective governments and the transfer of real power thereto. We shared his disapproval of the Fighting French régime's obvious efforts to retain complete mandatory control in denial of its promises of independence to the local populations.

In view of our consistent policy regarding equality of opportunity, we are unable to agree with the British recognition of a "preeminent and privileged position for France among European powers" in Syria and Lebanon, given in the Lytton–De Gaulle agreement of July [August] 1941.16 We made this clear to Mr. Casey, who expressed his own regret that such a commitment had been made.

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The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 17, 1943—8 p. m.  
[Received March 18—4: 10 p. m.]

107. Your 77, March 16, 7 p. m.17 President Naccache writes me under date of March 15 that he has received a message from General Catroux the sense of which is: "Notwithstanding the proclamation of Lebanese independence of November 26, 194118 the mandate remains in force". He adds that he has protested and continues: "President Roosevelt having recognized this same independence,19 I inform you of this protest". My colleagues have received similar letters.

The Lebanese Prime Minister asked me today to telegraph this information to my Government as of possible interest in connection with its current talks with Mr. Eden.20 He confirmed specifically that General Catroux wishes the President and Ministry to resign. This, he said, neither the President nor he proposes to do, although all but one of his five Ministers are "wavering under pressure".

General Catroux tells me he has again postponed his departure for North Africa. The reasons, I gather from him and other sources, lie primarily in this local political crisis and in the unwillingness of Syrian leaders to commit themselves in advance of reassembly of

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17 Not printed.
18 See telegram No. 467, November 26, 1941, 1 p. m., from Beirut, Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. m, p. 305.
19 For correspondence regarding the limited recognition of Syria and Lebanon by the United States in 1942, by the appointment of a Diplomatic Agent, see ibid., 1942, vol. iv, pp. 641 ft.
20 For reference to Syria and Lebanon in talks between Secretary of State Hull and Mr. Eden, see the antepenultimate paragraph of memorandum of conversation, March 22, vol. iv, p. 28.
Parliament to a Franco-Syrian treaty except as a provisional wartime measure.

This stand of both Lebanese and Syrian leadership against efforts to impose recognition of pretended French mandatory responsibilities and acceptance of definitive treaty relationship with France is receiving increasingly marked support in liberal political circles, including American University faculty and alumni groups. They would view the former as a retrogression from the limited independence their countries have achieved and the latter as a presently unwarranted imposition.

WADSWORTH

S90D.00/946 : Telegram
The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 19, 1943—11 p. m. [Received March 20—2: 37 p. m.]

109. My 107, March 17, 8 p. m. General Catroux had a letter put into Lebanese President Naccache’s hands at 5 p. m. yesterday March 18 asking him to obtain the resignation of the Solh Ministry and to resign himself.

Two hours later Catroux had published by posting on Sérail 21 doors three decrees:

The first reestablishes the constitution as of the day when a Chamber of Deputies to be elected within 3 months shall have elected a President. The constitution may be modified once reestablished.

The second stipulates that until a President is elected the executive power will be exercised by a Chief of State—Chief of Government (to be appointed by Catroux) who will be aided by two Ministers of State appointed by himself. He must convoké electoral colleges within 3 months.

The third designates Doctor Ayoub Tabet to the office of Chief of State.

At 8 p. m. same day Catroux addressed the Lebanese people over Radio Levant, stating notably:

“this series of measures emanates from a fundamental intention to solve impartially and democratically the problem of the resumption of constitutional life in conformity with the ideals of France, the principles of the United Nations and the wishes of the population [apparent omission] your public liberties are restored. You will exercise them without constraint during the electoral period.”

21 The Grand Sérail was the building occupied by the French Administration; the Petit Sérail was used by the Lebanese head of government.
During the evening four of the six Lebanese Ministers received letters from Catroux stating that their mission had terminated. The Prime Minister and one of his colleagues, both known to be recalcitrant to French wishes, were ignored.

These decrees were published, speech made and letters delivered before President and Ministers had time to be liberated [to deliberate?], let alone reply. Prime Minister in conversation this afternoon informed me President and he will not resign but will protest. They had received popular ovation at Beirut's principal mosque at Prophet's birthday celebration yesterday morning.

Naccache and Ministers remained away from their offices today. Doctor Tabet took possession of President's office and appointed as the two Ministers of State Jasac [Jawad] Bulos . . . and Emir Khaled Chehab (Sunnite of good family, member of chief opposition party in last Parliament).

Doctor Tabet himself is a man of high character and attainments, religiously a free thinker, a strong Lebanese patriot, moderate Arab unionist and admirer of America where he studied and practiced medicine and preached Arab independence before and during the last war. He was Secretary of State in 1936 when the Franco-Lebanese Treaty of Alliance was signed and is known to have felt for many years that the country's destiny should be linked with France.

In conversation with him last week American University President Dodge and I were struck by his strictly confidential comment that he had come to believe today rather in a smaller predominantly Christian Lebanon; independent of but in close economic relations with the Moslem hinterland and enjoying international rather than exclusively French guarantees and protection.

British Minister Spears spoke over radio at 8 p. m. tonight expressing full approval of action taken. To Lebanon, he said, General Catroux, with courage and insight is giving "the means to secure a place in the great brotherhood of free nations." Catroux left this afternoon for Damascus. There have been no disturbances but I am reliably informed feeling runs high in Nationalist circles (see last paragraph my 107).

WADSWORTH

890D.00/948 : Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 23, 1943—11 p. m.

[Received March 24—8:05 a.m.]

115. My 107, March 17, 8 p. m., and 109, March 19, 10 [11] p. m. There is, I believe, some ground for apprehensions lest the events and
action reported in my No. 109 have more than passing repercussions in this and neighboring Arab countries with possibly deleterious effect on their attitude towards the Allied war effort.

We have based policy on the Atlantic Charter 22 and talked of the four freedoms; 23 while Arab leaders here continued to nurse four fears—of French imperialism, British insincerity, American isolationism, and Zionist expansionism.

Widespread conviction that we support the latter has already undermined our influence in these countries; and disillusionment as to our political influence with our allies might well be a result of our accepting without some qualification the fait accompli in this country.

To comments in the latter sense I have answered that there can be no question of our watering our principles and that the policy enunciated in my letters of credence and presentation remarks are as true today as ever. It may be that the Department will wish me to add that I make such affirmation with its specific approval.

The first two of their four fears, Lebanese intellectuals and leaders nevertheless contend, have now been justified. They argue that General Catroux has in fact by coup d'état tactics reestablished the mandate and is demanding treaty of alliance with France as a sine qua non to its termination; also that General Spears' speech shows that the British Government has again been jockeyed into yielding to De Gaullist importunities despite its recognition of Lebanese independence notably in his own letter of credence and in King George's message of December 27, 1941, to President Naccache.

The latter sent me this afternoon a copy of a projected letter of protest and refusal to resign "except to an authority validly constituted having its source in the National Will", the drafting of which he had completed on the afternoon of March 19 in agreement with the Prime Minister.

That evening, his confidential messenger explained, he had listened to Spears' radio address; his morale had collapsed. What was the use of further fighting? He had not answered Catroux's letter; neither had he resigned or lodged formal protest; but he still considered himself the legitimate Chief of State.

I received this afternoon also a circular note informing me of the constitution of the new Lebanese Government signed by Jawad Boulos, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Tabet will hold the Portfolios of Interior, Justice and Supply, the others being divided between Boulos and Chehab.

22 Joint Declaration by President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill, August 14, 1941, Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. 1, p. 367.
23 Enunciated by President Roosevelt in his State of the Union Message, January 6, 1941, Congressional Record, vol. 87, pt. 1, pp. 44, 46.
I am somewhat perplexed as to what my attitude and action should be and would appreciate receiving the Department’s instructions. Pending their receipt I shall deal with current matters on a de facto basis.

My letter of credence was to President Naccache. Catroux’s action was perhaps unnecessarily arbitrary and based on an authority which our Government may find it difficult to recognize Fighting France to possess. But the British Government apparently has no qualms on this score; and, insofar as concerns prosecution of the war, I understand our policy to include a recognition of British primary responsibility in this theatre of operations.

The authority Catroux invoked in the preamble to his pertinent decree was notably his proclamation of November 26, 1941, “recognizing the independence of Lebanon and defining in its spirit and its forms the collaboration to be instituted between France and Lebanon pending the conclusion of a Franco-Lebanese Treaty of Alliance and Friendship which will definitely establish the independence of the country” and “the decision taken by the Fighting French National Committee on January 24, 1943” (see my telegram 47, January 25).

I have not yet called on the new Government but feel I should do so very promptly unless the Department instructs me to the contrary. Failure to do so would render my position extremely awkward especially vis-à-vis the French authorities.

In Damascus the situation has been complicated by serious bread rioting which began March 20 and announcement of Catroux’s contemplated decrees, similar to those issued in Beirut, has been postponed.

WADSWORTH

800D.00/951: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, March 25, 1943—10 p.m.

[Received March 26—1:30 p.m.]

119. Reference last paragraph my 116, March 24, 9 p.m. Three decrees closely similar to those issued in Beirut, March 18 (see my 109, March 19, 10 [11] p.m.) were issued by General Catroux in Damascus today. The Syrian Constitution of May 14, 1930, is re-established as of the day a newly elected Chamber of Deputies elects a President of the Republic. A provisional government under Ata Bey el Ayoubi

24 Not printed.
as "Chief of State, Chief of Government" is established. It is to proceed within 3 months to the holding of elections, meanwhile exercising the executive and legislative powers.

The cited authority for these decrees is, with appropriate variations, the same as that on which the Lebanese decrees were based, i.e., primarily Catroux's declaration of September 27, 1941, proclaiming the independence of Syria and the French National Committee's decision of January 24, 1943, authorizing him to take all necessary measures to reestablish constitutional regimes in Syria and Lebanon.

Ayoubi, himself a respected statesman, former Premier and Syrian patriot, has appointed as his collaborating Ministers of State three moderate Nationalists not members of the National bloc: Faydia Tasi of Homs, Naiman Taki of Aleppo and Mustaf Ashehabi member of the outgoing government.

I issued invitations over a week ago to all leading Damascus notables, including Ayoubi, to a reception to be held March 31 to mark the formal opening of our Legation there; and unless the Department perceives reason to the contrary I shall arrange to call on him March 3 [30?], the transfer of power to his government having taken place without popular or official protest or untoward incident.

WADSWORTH

890D.00/949 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, March 29, 1943—8 p. m.

103. Your 115, March 23, 11 p. m., 116, March 24, 9 p. m., and 119, March 25, 10 p. m. 25 The legal bases of Fighting French authority in Syria and Lebanon are of dubious validity but we have in practice admitted their de facto control. While General Catroux's procedure in naming new provisional governments seems high-handed, the resulting change in each State appears to be essentially only a replacement of one French-appointed régime for another, with the new governments specifically charged with the responsibility of holding elections preparatory to a reestablishment of constitutional government. This purpose in itself seems desirable from our point of view, and we have no concrete evidence that the procedure which has been adopted will deny to the Syrian and Lebanese peoples an opportunity freely to express their will.

25 See telegram No. 381, September 28, 1941, 10 p. m., from Beirut, Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. iii, p. 786.

* * * Telegram No. 116 not printed.
SYRIA AND LEBANON

We accordingly see no reason why you should not enter into relations with the new régimes on the same basis as with their predecessors, in conformity with the specific policy toward Syria and Lebanon expressed in the Department’s press release of November 27 [27], 1941, and in your own letters of credence.

HULL

890D.00/952 : Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, April 2, 1943—3 p.m.
[Received 5:36 p.m.]

134. Your 103, March 29, 8 p.m. On March 31 I went to Damascus where by appointment I called on new Foreign Minister Antakipah. He stressed the provisional character of the present regime. Its two primary tasks would be to hold free parliamentary elections and to assure food supplies, notably bread, to the cities.

It would he said exercise the legislative power only if the conduct of pressing current matters so required. To all decrees there would be added a specific proviso that they would have effect only until such time as they might be confirmed, modified or rejected by the new parliament.

Syria’s political maturity he argued had been recognized in 1936, its independence in 1941. There was general acceptance in all political circles that the present transitional regime was a necessary prelude to constitutionality and fullest possible exercise of sovereignty consistent with allied “necessities of war”.

Syria would welcome closest cooperation with the United Nations but felt itself free to accept or reject special treaty relations with France. A point to be emphasized he concluded was that the same parliament which ratified the 1936 treaty had in 1938, following French failure to ratify, declared itself no longer bound thereby.

My only important contribution to the conversation was a statement in the sense of the last paragraph of the Department’s telegram under reference, which he welcomed.

He then conducted me to the new Chief of State to whom I repeated my remarks. Ata Bey requested me to inform you that he “took note

[28] Naim Antaki.
full satisfaction” of this reaffirmation of American policy, adding an expression of confidence in United Nations victory and desire to contribute thereto in fullest possible measure.

Ata Bey and his three Ministers later attended my official reception as did the outgoing and three former Premiers. I was favorably impressed by an obvious general desire to provide against recurrence of bread rioting and get on with the holding of elections. The acid test however will be as to whether they are free or French manipulated. If the latter there is ground for serious apprehension least [lest] serious political rioting ensue.

This morning I called by appointment on new Lebanese Foreign Minister Boulos who will arrange my call on the Chief of State. He spoke in very much the same terms as the Syrian Minister of his Government “provisional and custodial responsibility”.

He too welcomed the Department’s reaffirmation of American policy and reciprocated by reaffirming Lebanese adherence to the United Nations cause “through whose victory Lebanon should realize its aspirations”.

WADSWORTH

890D.00/953: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, April 6, 1943—noon.

[Received 2:23 p.m.]

140. Reference my 134 April 2, 3 p.m. New Chief of State Tabet received me April 3.

When I repeated to him the substance of the last paragraph of your No. 108, March 29, 8 p.m., he asked me to assure you that the reaffirmation of American sympathy with Lebanese aspirations for fuller independence was to him personally the surest foundation for confidence that they would in due time be realized. He wishes to issue a statement to this effect (believing it would strengthen public confidence) and inquires whether the Department would care to suggest a text.

He conceived as his first duty a thorough housecleaning of government administrations where slackness and graft had been all too common for many years. In particular he must get responsible men into all positions of authority in matters electoral. Consequently he proposed to defer elections to the latest date authorized under the Catroux decrees, i.e., early September.
For the post-war future he wants close economic but no political ties with Syria or with an Arab federation; no cession of territory, thus retaining room for settlement of other eastern Christians and of Lebanese returning from abroad; and protection guaranteed by the great powers against political pan-Arabism which to him means pan-Islamism.

WADSWORTH

890D.00/952: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, April 10, 1943—7 p.m.

115. Your 140, April 6, noon. The Department is not in a position to suggest the text of a statement to be issued by the Lebanese Chief of State. However, it would of course have no objection to the issuance by him of a statement regarding your reaffirmation of this Government's policy, which has been clearly set forth and remains unchanged.

HULL

890D.01/711

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Alling)

[WASHINGTON,] May 14, 1943.

Mr. Wright 30 said that he would like to explore with me certain questions relating to Syria and the Lebanon. He recalled that a few weeks ago when Mr. Strang was here, Mr. Murray had discussed certain Syrian and Lebanese questions. However, the Foreign Office was not quite clear as to the nature of our complaints and would appreciate an elucidation.

I told Mr. Wright that I thought the problem could be summed up under three headings:

(1) In the exchange of letters between Lord Lytton and General Catroux over a year ago the British had agreed to recognize the "pre-eminent and privileged position of the French in Syria and the Lebanon." I said that so far as we were concerned, that was merely a bilateral agreement between France and Great Britain and we considered that it in no way affected our rights in those territories. Mr. Wright agreed and pointed out that in any case the exchange of letters

30 Michael Wright, First Secretary of the British Embassy.
had stipulated that France was to enjoy a preeminent and privileged position only as regards European powers.

(2) I said that we still considered that the rights which we had acquired under our convention of 1923 [1924] with France in regard to Syria and the Lebanon still remained in effect. I added that a year or more ago the local authorities had endeavored to override an exchange of notes with the French which was subsidiary to that convention, but that the matter had finally been straightened out to our satisfaction. In any case, this effort on the part of the local authorities to invade our rights had indicated to us the necessity of pointing out that those rights still existed.

(3) On the question of the recognition of Syrian and Lebanese independence, I explained that we felt that we could not recognize something which did not exist. It was obvious, for example, that the Syrian and Lebanese Governments were not independent and that many of the functions and attributes of government were actually exercised by the French authorities. I said that we realized of course, during the war and the military occupation of the territories, there would necessarily be some elements of government which would have to be controlled to a certain extent by the military authorities. I pointed out, however, that many of the civilian activities of the local governments were actually exercised by the French and that the latter showed no disposition to turn over those functions to the Syrian and Lebanese authorities.

Mr. Wright expressed his appreciation for the foregoing information and went on to say that as soon as elections were held in Syria his people hoped that we would be in a position to extend full recognition to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. Later he stated that this hope was being expressed on the specific instructions of the Foreign Office. He went on to say that the Middle East, including Syria, would be an important land bridge in the eventual military operations in the Far East; that it was essential to strengthen the Allied position in that area, and the Foreign Office felt that this end would be attained by the American Government extending full recognition to the two local governments. I told Mr. Wright that obviously I could not answer his question offhand; that it would need discussion within the Department before anything definite could be said. I told him that in my own personal view, the question whether we could extend full recognition to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments after the forthcoming elections would depend to a considerable extent upon the manner in which those elections were held, and also whether a considerable degree of independence, bearing in mind wartime limitations, was actually given to the two governments. In this connection I pointed out that there were many governmental functions now being exercised.

21 Convention between the United States and France, defining American rights in Syria and the Lebanon, signed at Paris, April 4, 1924; for text, see Foreign Relations, 1924, vol. 1, p. 741.
by the French which could presumably be carried on by the local authorities. I also said that if the elections merely meant a continuation of the present system, I could not see that there would be any sound basis for recognition on our part of the complete sovereignty of the two States.

Mr. Wright said that if we desired he would be glad to give us an aide-mémoire setting forth the British point of view. I said I thought this would be desirable but suggested that he wait a few days until there had been an opportunity to discuss the matter within the Department.

890E.00/135: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, May 24, 1943—6 p. m.
[Received May 24—1:03 p. m.]

188. In recent conversations with Lebanese and Syrian Chiefs of State, Foreign Ministers and others I have gained increasingly the impression that French authorities are exerting continuing pressure on both Governments to postpone elections, meanwhile endeavoring to assure electoral support of pro-French parliamentary candidates.

In each of the five Lebanese electoral districts rival lists of candidates are gradually taking shape and it is common parlance to speak of one as the government (i.e. French) list. In Syria direct French pressure is generally said to be primarily in country districts.

Dr. Tabet who obviously believes continuance in office enhances his already good chances of election to Lebanese presidency, falls readily into his French made role. Dodge \(^2\) still considers him honest Lebanese patriot and best available presidential timber. Spears however admits himself be fooled and loses no opportunity to protest strongly against further delay.

Ayoubi, besides being by nature procrastinating, is reported by highly reliable source to have been encouraged by General Catroux, with promise of his support for election to Syrian presidency, to postpone elections until after his return from North Africa. On this score also Spears is concerned and is going to Damascus this week similarly to protest further delay. He places little faith in an assurance given me last week by Collet \(^3\) that lists of first degree electors would be posted and date of elections announced by June 1.

\(^2\) Bayard Dodge, President of the American University at Beirut.
\(^3\) An official in the French administration.
Syrian Foreign Minister, an independent nationalist, told me frankly he is only member of either government pressing for early elections. He deprecates particularly the morally undermining effect of French patronage and French-engineered intrigue among political leaders. The result he says is that many have come to view French support as a prerequisite to electoral success and to fear that without it the end of their campaigning would be rather a concentration camp for political undesirables than a seat in Parliament.

I have talked with Spears along the foregoing lines. He voiced general accord although commenting that Helleu seemed personally to believe in and to be furthering policy of free elections. An explanation of the situation might lie in the fact that opposing views were heard by many of his subordinates including Collet who were acting accordingly independently. He concluded substantially as follows: “I advised Casey in Cairo 2 weeks ago that whatever the outcome of the current de Gaulle-Giraud negotiations for French unity we might expect more trouble in Lebanon and Syria; for if unity should result the French would probably wish to take over fuller military and naval responsibilities here; and if not de Gaulle would again concentrate more attention on these countries”.

Rigid press censorship continues, in which connection Spears wrote me last week “It goes far beyond the requirements of security and is used to further French policy”. Office of War Information outpost director Britt who is in close touch with local editors concurs.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/136 : Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, May 25, 1943—7 p. m.

[Received May 26—6 p. m.]

192. Reference last paragraph my 188, May 24, 6 p. m. Regarding censorship Spears makes special point that “it is used to a great extent to prevent the people here from realizing the true position in North Africa.” Again Britt strongly concurs. The most recent instance was a cut of the reference to General Giraud \(^{34}\) in Churchill’s May 19 address to Congress.\(^{35}\)

\(^{34}\) Gen. Henri Giraud, High Commissioner of French North Africa, following the death of Admiral Darlan in December 1942.

\(^{35}\) For text of speech by British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill to the United States Congress, see Congressional Record, vol. 89, pt. 4, p. 4619.
Other striking examples of general censorship control were suppression of Eden’s March 3 statement encouraging Arab unity (later rectified at British Legation insistence) and of references to Arab aspirations for independence in French-solicited broadcasts by the Lebanese mufti and kadi acclaiming Allied victory in Tunisia.

Spears argues: “This state of affairs is so flagrantly contrary to the democratic idea which your country and mine stand for that I think the least we should do is to make it clear that we are fully aware of what goes on and gravely disapprove”. To this end he suggests we call “jointly but quite unofficially” on Acting Delegate General Helleu.

I have replied orally that, while I recognize a strong dog-in-the-manger motif in French policy here, I should not wish to join him in such representations except at your specific instruction, if only because I feel that, from the hypersensitive viewpoint of a French administration only too cognizant of its national defect and present weakness, our démarche would be misconstrued as a move designed to undermine the jealously guarded remnant of its largely shattered former prestige. I added that I felt the Department, in the light of the current De Gaulle-Giraud negotiations for French unity, might consider any such démarche ill-timed.

It may be, however, that the Department would approve my calling on Helleu to inform him of the substance of that part of Murray’s letter of April 30 36 which stresses our interest in seeing constitutional regimes set up through free elections as a first step towards fuller exercise of independence. In that connection I could add without giving undue offense that substantial relaxation of censorship as from now would seem to be an essential element of free electoral expression.

I could too, should you approve, touch on the larger issue by mentioning the specific instances of censorship reported above as well as two recent incidents involving American interests. These were: (1) A decision of the French Political Section to disapprove subscription by its Press Bureau to a United Press news service on the ground that “the Fighting French wanted to assure that Havas 37 would not have its territory encroached upon during the war [?]”; (2) a seemingly clear instance (now under investigation) of the French mail censors opening by steaming and resealing a letter written [to] the Legation by the head of the American Mission at Latakia.

WADSWORTH

36 Not printed.
37 French news agency.
Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, June 7, 1943—6 p.m.
[Received June 8—11:34 a.m.]

204. Reference my 188, May 24, 6 p.m. During weekend visit to Damascus I gathered clear impression that, with achievement of French unity in North Africa, local French pressure to postpone Syrian elections has been lifted.

Foreign Minister assured me lists of electors had been completed and published in all but two districts. He now believes the necessary decree calling for first degree elections can be issued before June 25, i.e., before expiration of the 3 months' delay prescribed in the Catroux decrees of March 25 (see my telegram 119 of that date).

Foreign Minister and others give me to understand that Nationalist bloc leaders have gradually been brought, largely through General Collet's shrewd manipulation, into the orbit of French influence. They appear to feel that only by playing politics with him can they gain parliamentary majorities.

A plausible explanation is that these leaders are less loath to follow this line because, while recognizing that French influence here today is obviously strongest internal political force, France as they see it will come out of the war the weakest of the Allied Powers and consequently be the most amenable to eventual pressure tactics designed to achieve full independence.

In Lebanon, where Chief of State Tabet was clearly playing for additional 3 months' election delay, situation has been clarified by Spears' intervention. Apparently he induced British Foreign Office to bring pressure on French National Committee which some ten days ago had Catroux instruct Helleu to support Spears' contention that elections should be held simultaneously in Lebanon and Syria.

Dr. Tabet informed me June 5th that while he still believed delay was desirable to permit realization of certain internal reforms, he had yielded to Catroux's wishes. While boasting his personal independence and patriotism he impressed me strongly as having come increasingly under French influence. He was bitterly outspoken against Lebanese political union or federation with Syria or participation in any larger post-war Arab federation or confederation.

WADSWORTH

38 For correspondence regarding the formation of the French Committee of National Liberation, see vol. II, pp. 28 ff.
The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, June 7, 1943—8 p.m.

161. Your 192, May 25, 7 p.m. You should seek an appropriate occasion to inform Helleu of this Government's interest in the coming elections in Syria and Lebanon on the lines suggested in the penultimate paragraph of your telegram under reference and draw his attention to the two incidents involving American interests mentioned in the final paragraph thereof.

The Department is of the opinion that no useful purpose would be served by mentioning specific past instances of partisan censorship in Syria and Lebanon. You may, however, point out that there was constantly increasing relaxation of the censorship in North Africa as respects the Fighting French following the Allied landings in North Africa; and that this Government hopes that French authorities everywhere will henceforth suppress all factional tendencies, whether in connection with the censorship or other activities, in a sincere effort to make French unity effective at the earliest possible date.

Hull

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The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, June 11, 1943—4 p.m.

[Received June 12—4:58 p.m.]

207. Department’s 161, June 7, 8 p.m. I have had occasion to talk informally with Helleu of the Department’s interest in free elections and relaxed press censorship and of its hope that after elections a program will be adopted for progressive transfer to the Lebanese and Syrian Governments of powers the retention of which in Allied hands is not deemed “necessitated by conditions of war”.

He assured me that plans for holding elections are now proceeding smoothly and that he intends when final decrees calling them are issued, to assemble his provincial delegates and political officers and impress on them that every opportunity should be afforded the electorate freely to express itself. This he added would include reasonably free press discussion.

I arranged to call on him next week when I shall complete compliance with the instructions under reference.

[Here follows lengthy report of continued conversation, largely conjectural in nature.]

Wadsworth
The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, June 24, 1943—2 p.m.
[Received 3:20 p.m.]

213. Reference my 209, June 16, 4 p.m. Following from Farrell.

Decrees issued June 21 set Syrian first degree elections for July 10, second degree for July 26, to elect Parliament of 122 deputies, this figure composed of 16 for Damascus, 14 for Aleppo, 6 for Homs, 5 for Hama, 4 for Soueida, 3 or less for each of other circumscriptions. Communities are represented as follows: Sunni Moslem 79, other Moslem sects including Druzes 16, Nomad tribes 10, Christian 16, Jew 1.

Neither candidates for deputy nor any political programs have yet been announced.

WADSWORTH

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, June 24, 1943—5 p.m.
[Received June 25—4:40 p.m.]

214. Reference my 204, June 7, 6 p.m. A serious politico-religious electoral crisis has developed in this country during the last week. It was precipitated by the promulgation last Thursday June 17 of two Lebanese Government decrees prescribing the number and sectarian affiliation of the deputies to be chosen. Simultaneously the Government announced that a decree fixing the date for elections would be published June 22.

In the last (1936) elections the total number of deputies was 42, made up of 22 Christians, 13 Maronites and 9 of other sects, and 20 Moslems (9 Sunnites, 8 Shias and 3 Druzes). The new decrees establish 12 additional seats, 10 Christian (5 Maronite and 5 others) and 2 Moslem, on the basis of increase in registered population (1,243,000) which included for the first time 160,000 emigrants recorded as having opted for Lebanese citizenship under the treaty of Lausanne. The latter are not to vote, but their numbers are added to the registered population of the districts (chiefly Maronite Mount Lebanon) from which they emigrated.

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39 Not printed.
40 William S. Farrell, Second Secretary and Consul at Damascus.
41 Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923; for text, see League of Nations Treaty Series, vol. xxviii, p. 11.
It is axiomatic that no such decrees could have been issued without French approval. Prompting such approval, it seems clear, was a desire to see strengthened parliamentary representation of the one important sect (Maronite) whose religious leaders' political creed is a Christian controlled Lebanon independent of the Moslem hinterland and protected by Catholic France.

Spears told me he was not consulted and would recommend strong protest by his Government. Under earlier received instructions he left for Cairo June 22 to join Casey and accompany him to London for general discussion of Franco-British relations.

Local Moslem leaders are bitterly hostile to the new decrees. They first learned of them Friday morning; at noonday prayers there was considerable ferment in the Mosques. Saturday a representative group of 60 met with the Mufti, and a protest was prepared for presentation to the Lebanese Government and French Delegate General.

Briefly summarized this protest (which is addressed also to the British, American, Egyptian, Iraqi and other United Nations representatives in Beirut) demands rescinding of the decrees and the holding of elections on the basis of a new census conducted “under the supervision of a trusted neutral committee” or alternatively on the old basis. In default of either, the protest pledges Moslem boycott of elections.

Hellen, I am reliably informed, endeavored to dissuade them from protesting to other governments, offering his good offices to arrange the matter. This was but more fuel to fire, and invitations were issued to provincial Moslem leaders to attend a further protest meeting.

This meeting was held on Monday, followed by a larger gathering at the Young Men's Moslem Association. Attendance was fully representative, the first occasion I am assured since the last war on which all Moslem groups have truly combined to defend their common interests. The Mufti presiding, Saturday's protest was reaffirmed. Ablest Beirut leader Riad Solhkey [Solh?] noted “Lebanon is Arab and must find its strength in union with the Arab world.” It was argued that, if Maronite Mount Lebanon truly preferred French protection to Arab federation, the remaining districts with their Moslem majorities should rejoin Syria.

Tuesday I dined with Solh and other Moslem leaders at the Iraqi Consulate General. They propose full exposition of their case to Nuri Said 42 (who will visit Damascus and Beirut next week en route to Cairo to discuss Arab unity plans with Nahas 43) and will solicit Arab world support. With others who called on me yesterday they

42 Nuri as-Said, Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defense of Iraq.
43 Mustapha Nahas Pasha, Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs.
urge Anglo-American intervention. All bitterly attack French policy in general and characterize the decrees as the last straw in country-wide pre-election intrigues designed to return a French controlled parliament which would accept the 1936 treaty as the irrevocable basis of Franco-Lebanese relations.

In the local Greek orthodox community (influential by wealth and position rather than number which as [is?] only one-third the Maronites resident 318,000) there is considerable sympathy with the Moslem view. In Syria also, where a decree was issued June 21 calling elections for July 10 and 26, a growing sympathetic indignation is reported.

Finally it is of interest to note that, while no textual publication or editorial discussion of the Moslem protest has been permitted, the Lebanese decree promised for June 22 fixing the date of elections has not been issued. One cannot but speculate as to whether the French have not achieved a heads I win tails you lose position. For if the June 17 decrees are enforced their candidates should win the elections; and if not they will have gained at least another postponement thereof.

WADSWORTH

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890E.00/144: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, June 28, 1943—6 p. m.
[Received June 29—11:50 a. m.]

217. Reference my 214, June 24, 5 p. m. On June 24 Helleu had the Mufti and other Moslem leaders to lunch with his own chief political advisers. Arab sources reported that after the guests had maintained their protest Helleu undertook that no decisive action inimical to Moslem interests would be taken without further consultation with them.

Nevertheless, a Lebanese decree was issued the following evening fixing the date of elections for September 26 and 27. This is the latest date possible under Catroux’s decree No. 147 of March 25 (see annex No. 8 to despatch No. 76 of April 2).44

Dr. Tabet, I gather, had meanwhile given the Mufti adequate assurances that Moslem interests would be safeguarded; and this appears to have been done in a Lebanese Government communiqué published yesterday.

44 Not printed.
After announcing that “the Government has decided to hold a general census before election”, this communiqué states that specialists are studying modalities, that within a fortnight the census date will be announced and that a commission of high state officials will control its operation.

WADSWORTH

890EL.01/194 : Telegram

The First Secretary of the British Embassy (Wright) to the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Alling)

Ref. 563/16/43

WASHINGTON, June 28, 1943.

DEAR MR. ALLING: We recently talked over the question of the recognition of the independence of the Levant States, and you asked me to give you something in writing.45

I need not rehearse the past history of this question, which is familiar to us both. The aspect of it which we particularly discussed was the question of early recognition by the United States Government. The view which I put to you, on the instructions of the Foreign Office, was that if the United States Government felt able to accord early recognition, this would be in accordance with our common policy of increasing the independent status of Syria and Lebanon so far as this can be done in war time and within a vital war area, would have a most favourable effect not only in Syria and the Lebanon, but in the surrounding Arab states, and would help to counter enemy propaganda which is trying to play off the Allies against each other in the Middle East and thus weaken security and tranquility there. Any anxiety on the score of treaty rights might be met either by a specific reservation or by obtaining a special assurance from the Syrian and Lebanese Governments.

You informed me that the United States Government are bearing in mind the possibility of recognition of Syria and the Lebanon, and that when the forthcoming elections in the two states have taken place, and constitutional governments have been formed, might consider that the time had come to accord it. I need not say how much I should appreciate any further information you could give me on a matter which is of such importance to the common policy we are pursuing in the Middle East.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL WRIGHT

45 See memorandum of conversation, May 14, p. 969.
BEIRUT, July 21, 1943—7 p.m.
[Received 6:11 p.m.]

234. Reference my 229, July 16, 6 p.m. This morning Helleu issued two decrees.

The first regulates until election of a President “the organization and functioning” of the executive and legislative powers in Lebanon.

The executive power is to be exercised by a Chief of State appointed by the Delegate General. The Chief of State is to be assisted by a Secretary of State and an Assistant Secretary of State appointed by and responsible to him.

The legislative power [apparent omission] the issuance of decrees having the force of law “under the reservations formulated in the proclamation of Lebanese independence,” is to be exercised by the Chief of State at the instance of the Secretary of State.

The second decree appoints as Chief of State Petro Trad, president of the last Chamber of Deputies.

Trad is 61 years old, of a leading Beirut Greek Orthodox family. He was educated in the law in French schools here and in France and has since practiced his profession with ability and success. He has been a member of each Chamber of Deputies and three times its president. His politics are generally considered to be pro-French.

The new Chief of State entered upon the performance of his duties this noon and issued a decree appointing Abdullah Beyhum and Toufi Aouad as his Secretary and Assistant Secretary of State.

[Here follows section relating primarily to the biographical background of the two new Secretaries.]

WADSWORTH

BEIRUT, August 2, 1943—10 a.m.
[Received 3:47 p.m.]

243. Reference my 238 July 26, 5 p.m. Lebanese electoral crisis assumed last week new disturbing aspect as compromise proposed by Spears and Helleu was accepted by Moslems, bitterly opposed by most Christians and imposed by Free French decree promulgated July 31.

Not printed.
Spears returned from London July 25. On the 29th he reviewed situation for me substantially as follows:

He had consulted in Algiers with Catroux who expressed strong displeasure at Helleu’s handling of electoral problems and felt that issuance of Tabet’s June 17 decrees was a mistake certain to occasion Moslem-Christian conflict.

Only by Catroux’s intervention, on basis of Nahas proposal that 25-29 Moslem-Christian parliamentary ratio be adopted had Moslems been assured [assuaged?]; but Christians had refused to cooperate even though proposal assured them reasonable parliamentary majority.

He had agreed with Catroux that affairs must be solved promptly. Lebanon’s whole future was jeopardized. If Christians persisted in demanding 22-32 ratio or return to old chamber figure of 28-35, Moslems here and in Syria and neighboring countries might be incited to demand assimilation of the whole country in their post war political structure.

This his Government could not approve. Lebanon’s independence had been recognized. Britain had guaranteed it. They could not stand by and see that lost.

He had therefore considered with Helleu the various suggestions for compromise. The figure of 54 deputies was admittedly based on incomplete census records. Why not make it 55? Moslems would have their 25 seats and Christians the same proportionate majority as in last Chamber.

He wanted early elections. Any compromise ratio would probably have to be imposed. He had just seen Maronite Patriarch who was unreasonably obdurate. He had therefore agreed that Helleu issue the necessary decree without further effort towards compromise.

I commented that while the matter was none of my business he might be interested to know that my information was to the effect that the Moslem executive too would strongly oppose imposition of any compromise solution. Its secretary, speaking for the Mufti, and two of its leading members had given me clearly so to understand when calling early in the week.

This may have influenced Spears to postpone action, for next morning he called on the Mufti. Executive consent to 25-30 compromise ratio was obtained on condition that complete census be held within 2 years and Chamber seats be readjusted accordingly.

Meanwhile on afternoon 29th a “Christian Congress” was held under presidency of Maronite Patriarch. Lebanon’s seven leading recognized sects were represented by prominent bishops. Protestants were unrepresented, their official head being absent on church business.

This meeting denounced “the attitude of the Moslem Congress as an attack against both the Christian majority in Lebanon and the
integrity of the state itself” and characterized January Blue Book proposals as threatening such integrity. It decided:

To oppose all intervention by foreign (Arab) governments “because animated by religious fanaticism”.

To refuse wholly the proposals of Nahas and Nuri.

To support the Tabet decrees of June 17 and in particular their provisions optant emigrants “most of whom live in the United States under whose flag many offer their lives in the cause of liberty”.

To accept alternatively the 2–35 [22–35] ratio “in proof of their Christian indulgence and to safeguard national brotherhood”; and

To boycott elections should “such minimum safeguard of Christian rights” be not realized.

This protest was communicated to Spears and Helleu, and the following morning the Maronite and Greek Orthodox Bishop of Beirut called formally on me. The Maronite “feared” a general Christian uprising; both petitioned American intervention. I was politely discouraging; diplomatic practice precluded my interfering in internal political matters.

Next morning the latter called again alone. He was troubled as to whether he should stand by Congress decision or welcome compromise as being in harmony with traditionally tolerant attitude of Orthodoxy. I did not discourage him in this attitude.

At noon same day Helleu promulgated his decree establishing 25–30 ratio and ordering general census within 2 years; and both he and Spears made radio appeal for brotherly unity. Refusal at this stage in world affairs, Helleu said, “would not be understood by world opinion” and, according to Spears, “would be to risk losing the sympathy of the democracies”.

Helleu stressed his “unenviable though necessary role of arbiter” and urged the taking “this step which will permit you to begin the free and full exercise of your sovereignty”.

Spears stressed that “completely free elections should take place at the earliest possible date”, supported by the decree and said: “Great Britain has guaranteed your independence, promised by France. France by the measures which have [been taken by?] Mr. Helleu has begun to implement the promise made”.

I wonder at this somewhat bold use of “France”. It cannot be popular among Lebanese generally and, knowing Spears’ personal inclination to play down Free French activity, it strikes me as being off key unless used under instructions given him in London.

There seems too to have been unnecessary haste in imposing this new decree; for, had the Christian Congress been told of Moslem action in accepting compromise ratio and consequent Franco-British decision to impose it, it is readily conceivable that at a second meeting, Christian acceptance, too, could have been obtained.
As it was, Patriarch’s reaction to decree was one of bitter hostility and almost his first act was to call his cousin Aouad and direct him to resign his post of Assistant Secretary of State in the week-old Trad Government.

One cannot but speculate whether both Spears and Helleu might not have acted also on undisclosed motives of expediency: Spears hoping to regain for Britain a preeminence of prestige with the Moslems which Catroux’s recent visit here undermined; and Helleu being not unwilling to make Spears appear chiefly responsible for overriding Christian pretensions and to profit from possible resulting impasse by again deferring elections.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/136: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, August 4, 1943—4 p. m.
[Received 5:15 p. m.]

244. Reference my 243, August 2, 10 a. m. Orthodox Bishop informed me yesterday that at reconvened meeting previous day of church delegates representative Helleu was informed electoral decree would be accepted without further protest, Christians having no other course when faced with Allies’ strong appeal and stronger insistence that opposition would be prejudicial to common cause with democracies. He confirmed that delegates resented Spears’ speech considering it unwarrantedly threatening and a play to regain Moslem support.

Dr. Tabet also confirms this reaction and speaks earnestly for independence of a smaller Lebanon as only way to preserve its Christian character and protect it from assimilation by Moslem world. He offers in rebuttal of argument advanced in last paragraph my 238, July 26, 5 p. m.\(^{48}\) that equally effective precedent for fair treatment of Christian minorities in Moslem states could be set by a predominantly Christian Lebanon according truly equal treatment to smaller Moslem minority.

Assistant Secretary of State Aouad has resumed office on ground that his resignation was not accepted and raison d’être for its submission no longer exists. This displeased even Maronite majority which considers him inferior in representative caliber to Trad and Beyhoun.

\(^{48}\) Not printed.
Spears confirms that electoral crisis has passed. He is now “going to bat” on Mukaddam case (my 223, July 5, 5 p. m.) and commented that while Foreign Office policy seemed to be to keep things as quiet as possible Prime Minister took stiffer attitude though always with reserve that nothing was to be done to oust France but rather to afford it opportunity to achieve position here similar to that of Britain in Egypt.

Yesterday Spears saw Shukri Quwatly who was pleased with results of Syrian elections, notably because practically old [all?] French sponsored candidates were defeated. Shukri said he had been “playing” French on treaty question and could state categorically new Chamber would never conclude French alliance. He wants early transfer of intérêts communs, solicits British and Americans support and envisages (which probably means he would incite) popular demonstrations should French continue recalcitrant.

Spears holds all this to be strong added reason for insisting on early freest possible Lebanese elections and hopes Department may be considering further parallel démarche with Foreign Office despite fact that while recently in London he had seen no sign of American interest in Levant problems.

Today I was received formally by new Chief of State and his two Secretaries of State. I made special point of saying my Government’s policy as expressed in my letter of credence and presentation remarks remains unchanged and left copies with them. I mentioned, too, Department’s interest in free elections. He welcomed this reassurance and interest as in keeping without implicit promise, not that we undertook to establish full Lebanese independence but rather that we would lend our support to that end now in so far as exigencies of war might permit and definitely at the peace conference provided always that Lebanon meanwhile shows itself worthy thereof.

Manner in which both Moslems and Christians in meeting electoral crisis had subordinated communal interests to those of state was, he held, good augury; it was on this plane that he had induced Maronite Patriarch to assent; it was no time for separatist tendencies; his ideal was a truly independent greater Lebanon which would cooperate freely with its neighbors.

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49 Not printed; the Mukaddam case involved an Anglo-French dispute in Syria and Lebanon concerning the extent of British military jurisdiction.
50 Assumed office of President of Syria on August 17; see his letter to President Roosevelt, infra.
51 In the original letter of credence presented by the Diplomatic Agent on November 17, 1942, it was stated that “... it is the intent of the American Government appropriately to manifest its sympathy with the aspirations of the Lebanese people for sovereign independence, in anticipation of the day when in peace, full exercise thereof need no longer be circumscribed by limitations necessitated by conditions of war”. (123W.111/406)
He plans to issue a decree probably tomorrow setting elections one month hence; to best of his Government's ability they will be free.

WADSWORTH

The President of the Republic of Syria (Kouati) to President Roosevelt

[Translation]

DAMASCUS, August 17, 1943.

Very Dear and Great Friend: Acceding to the wishes of the National Representation, I assumed, today, the Presidency of the Syrian Republic.

Assured of finding in the Government of the United States a disposition favorable to the maintenance and strengthening of the most friendly bonds so happily existing between our two countries, I express the most ardent good wishes in favor of the Great American Republic and the success of the struggle undertaken together with the United Nations for the liberty and independence of the Nations.

I beg you, Very Dear and Great Friend, to accept the expression of the personal sentiments with which I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's faithful friend

CHUCHI KOUATLI

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, August 18, 1943—6 p.m.
[Received August 18—5:45 p.m.]

258. Reference fourth and last paragraphs my No. 255, August 16, 5 p.m. Opening of Syrian Parliament was dignified, colorful with mixed native and European costumes and marked by atmosphere of keen satisfaction. Syria had at long last taken first vital step on road to independence.

Of 124 elected deputies 121 were in their seats before 9 a.m. and promptly on the hour Chief of State Ayoubi opened session, his government took satisfaction in having fulfilled its mission to hold well ordered elections as necessary prerequisite to reestablishment of constitutional life. To this end sympathy of France and Allies had been of precious aid.
Applause was obviously genuine as Ayoubi descended from rostrum and Parliament passed to special session to elect its officers and President of Republic.

Faris el-Khoury, minority deputy, earnest nationalist, veteran of Ottoman and earlier Syrian Parliaments was reelected President of Chamber, supported by representative panel of collaborators. Voting completed he proclaimed with feeling full reestablishment of parliamentary authority. On Chamber’s behalf he welcomed Helleu, Spears and me by name and representatives of Arab and other states present.

Climax of session was then reached in election of Shukri Quwatly as President of Republic. He took rostrum and spoke earnestly of country’s future. High lights were reference to Atlantic Charter supplemented by direct allied promises and fraternal salute to Arab nation with which Syria shared historical traditions, current problems and aspirations for future.

All votes were practically unanimous indicating effectiveness of nationalist leaders (notably Quwatly’s control of provincial as well as urban deputys and general desire to show united front[]). Salute of 21 guns followed voting.

To me at reception hour later he said he had been guided by American rather than French presidential practice. He had wished at outset to trace major lines of national policy. Syria wanted above all to consolidate its new independence, to show itself worthy thereof and to cooperate in cause of United Nations. He knew he could count on continuing American support.

New Government which will probably include five former Prime Ministers under Premiership Saadallah Al-Jabiri, leading Aleppo Nationalist, will be announced shortly. At small private lunch with two of them keynote was constructive optimism.

In evening 400 notables attended gala dinner for new President. Blackout regulations were suspended. Crowds milled and cheered outside. My colleagues were unanimous in recognizing healthy Nationalist spirit and welcoming choice of Quwatly.

An interesting aspect was successful countering of French pretensions to privileged treatment. At Parliament Helleu and his train were not received apart but in new diplomatic anteroom with British, Belgian, and my staffs, and Helleu was seated in diplomatic loge flanked by Spears and myself.

At following Presidential reception we were introduced separately in same order with our staffs and French were told constitutional Chief of State did not return calls. Further, Quwatly parliamentary address was seemingly pointed in referring to Free French, not France; and in conversation French Damascus residency is now referred to as the Ambassade.
From my well informed Iraqi colleague and others I gather that early moves will be made to appoint diplomatic representatives abroad and to press for prompt elaboration of program for progressive transfer of "Common interests". Not improbably the first will be achieved by exchanges with Iraq and Egypt; and as subject may be broached when I make formal calls on new government next week I should welcome Department's guidance as to what I should reply.

Farrell will submit detailed report.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Wadsworth}

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\textbf{890E.00/159: Telegram}

\textit{The Acting Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)}

\textbf{WASHINGTON, August 22, 1943—2 p.m.}

220. Your 258, August 18, 6 p.m. Our action in respect of Syria and Lebanon has been guided by this Government's established policy to defer recognition of another executive until:

1) It is in possession of the machinery of State, administering the government with the assent of the people thereof

2) It is in a position to fulfill the international obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon a sovereign state under treaties and international law.

We welcome the successful reestablishment of constitutional government in Syria as an important step toward the fulfillment of these conditions, but believe that there must be an effective transfer of substantial authority and power to the new government before serious consideration can be given to the extension of full recognition.

The local authorities should accordingly not be given the impression that full recognition of Syrian independence by this Government is to be expected in the near future.

\textbf{Welles}

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\textbf{890E.00/160: Telegram}

\textit{The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State}

\textbf{BEIRUT, September 3, 1943—7 p.m.}

[Received September 4—4:25 p.m.]

266. Reference my 255, August 16, 5 p.m.\textsuperscript{55} Lebanese parliamentary elections were held August 29. In each of 5 electoral dis-

\textsuperscript{54} Copy forwarded by the Chargé at Damascus in his despatch No. 40, August 27, not printed.

\textsuperscript{55} Not printed.
districts except Beirut approximately 60 percent of eligible voters went
to polls, in Beirut only 26%; these percentages being roughly those of
earlier elections.

In Mount Lebanon there were 3 rival lists; in each other 2. In
North Lebanon and Beqaa full quotas of candidates obtained clear
majorities of votes cast; in other districts runoffs (when majority is
not required) will be held September 5 for unfilled seats, namely:
1 of 10 in South Lebanon, 4 of 9 in Beirut, and 9 of 17 in Mount
Lebanon.

Interventions and pressure by French and French supported Leba-
nese regional officials continued—even increasing according to
Spears—but were in considerable measure effectively blocked by lat-
ter’s energetic protests and counter measures.

Most important British protest with 6-page bill of particulars was
addressed August 24 to Helleu whom Spears still believes honest but
distressingly weak in control over subordinate French officials. End-
ing with reservation as to recognition of election results, this protest
led Helleu, although denying charges, to issue public statement urg-
ing all to vote freely. This statement and obvious British support
for freedom of elections were exploited by anti-French leaders to
bring waverers into line; and notably in North and South Lebanon
and Beqaa French favored lists were defeated by relatively inde-
pendent fusion lists substantially representative of local factional
leadership.

In Beirut, despite relatively small vote, interest was keen and re-
sults unexpected, well organized list of moderately pro-French politi-
cian Georges Tabet being defeated by later organized list headed by
former Presidents Naccache and Tabet and Premier Solh.

Probable explanation lies in late popular swing primarily among
Moslems desiring to show displeasure with French by reinstating
these recently French ousted leaders. Some well informed observers
however suggest manipulation of voting by French because preferring
this list generally to rival list supported by Moslem executive and
specifically because reasonably sure they can again control Dr. Tabet
who still aspires to presidency.

In Mount Lebanon, despite Chief of State’s personal comment that
“all elections passed without serious incident”, there was and still is
bitter recrimination and some rioting between long time rival Khouri
and Edde factions, French light armored car unit being sent to local
governor seat at Baab day following elections.

There following earliest unofficial estimates that Khouriist had
gained substantial majority, Governor (notoriously a strong Eddeist)
announced that seven of eight successful candidates were Eddeists.
Accusations of fraud were hurled by angry crowd, notably that seals
on district returns were broken before central counting of ballots. More trouble is expected during runoff elections.

Elsewise most serious charges are extensive purchase of votes (notably in Beqaa) and strong arm tactics (notably in North Lebanon). It was in latter district that Karameh list defeated that of Maronite Patriarch’s nephew Aouad. Patriarch now telegraphs me “Country in ebullition, I recommend setting up inter-Allied commission to establish violations of law before reunion of Chamber”.

In general according to best informed foreign observers (notably my British, Iraqi and Egyptian colleagues) these election results show marked improvement over those of any earlier election as to independence of voting, corruption of Lebanese officials and maintenance of order, reservation being made as to still confused situation in Mount Lebanon. Even there however fact that Edeh himself, even with strong French support, was not elected on first balloting is cited as healthy sign.

WADSWORTH

890D.01/704

The British Embassy to the Department of State

AIDE-MÉMOIRE

Among the problems which can hardly be postponed until the end of the war is that of the position of Syria and the Lebanon as independent states.

As the State Department are aware, independence was promised to the Levant States by General Catroux on behalf of the former French National Committee, and His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom associated themselves with this promise. Elections are now being or are about to be held in these two States and when elected assemblies and popular governments supported by them are in being, there is little doubt that the question of defining the relationship of the French authorities to the new States by the conclusion of some more or less formal agreement will come to the fore. His Majesty’s Government have reason to think that prominent Syrian nationalists and possibly also Lebanese are anxious to negotiate treaties with the French authorities when the new governments are set up. So far as His Majesty’s Government are concerned, they have admitted that, when independence is granted to the Levant States, and without prejudice to it, France should have the predominant position in Syria and the Lebanon over any other European Power. They have

\[\text{Handed to Foy D. Kohler of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs by the First Secretary of the British Embassy (Hayter) on September 18. For the Department’s reply, dated October 25, 1943, see p. 1000.}\]
hitherto not pressed for the conclusion of treaties partly because no popularly elected governments were in existence in the Levant States, partly because the former French National Committee could not conclude such treaties, and for other reasons. But the question seems to require re-examination if only because we may be faced, once the elections in the Lebanon have been held, by a joint move towards treaty negotiations on the part both of the States Governments and of the French Committee of National Liberation.

The obvious precedent is that of Iraq where the mandatory régime of the Anglo-Iraqi treaties of 1922 and 1926 was terminated by the conclusion of the Treaty of Alliance of 1930 and the entry of Iraq into full membership of the League of Nations. Treaties of Friendship and Alliance on somewhat similar lines were negotiated by the French Government with both the Levant States in 1936, but they were not ratified nor approved by the French Parliament and never came into force.

There would be several difficulties about such a development in the Levant States at the present time. First and foremost there is the question whether the French Committee of National Liberation could be regarded as entitled to conclude a treaty of this sort. To this the French reply is likely to be that we have ourselves pressed and encouraged them to promise independence to the Levant States and that it would hardly be logical now to object to their taking steps to implement that promise. Indeed the conclusion of treaties for this purpose was specifically mentioned in General Catroux’s proclamation on entry into Syria and the Lebanon in 1941, and in the declaration made by His Majesty’s Ambassador at Cairo on behalf of His Majesty’s Government. Possibly the difficulty could be surmounted in some way, for instance by initialising treaties in draft form, subject to formal ratification at a later date, and it might be agreed in a concurrent exchange of notes that pending a clarification of the constitutional position as regards the formal conclusion of the treaties, they would be put into force and executed. Such a solution would also overcome the difficulty of securing formal termination of the League of Nations mandate in present circumstances.

His Majesty’s Government are the more unwilling to oppose such a solution, if it were really desired by both parties, since it would be in accordance with the policy they have themselves pursued for many years past of promoting the freedom and independence of the Arab countries. The local population would, besides, inevitably miscon-

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strue opposition to the more definite formulation of their rights of independence as contrary to the promises they had been given, and much local tension might well result in an area which is still essential for the prosecution of the war in the Mediterranean.

It might at one time have been feared that the elections would not be fairly conducted and that the negotiation of treaties with chambers and governments elected and chosen under pressure would in reality be a denial of popular rights. The elections in the Lebanon have not yet taken place, but there seems to be no question that the elections in Syria have given rise to very few complaints. At present there seems to be relatively little to fear on this score, at any rate so far as Syria is concerned.

In the circumstances His Majesty's Government are inclined not to insist on the objections they have previously held to the negotiation of treaties of this kind before the end of the war, or to the negotiation of a treaty by the present French authorities provided that the formal position is covered in some way such as that described above. They would not, however, wish to exercise any pressure on the Syrian and Lebanese Governments for or against the negotiation of such a settlement, but propose to inform His Majesty's Minister at Beirut that he should reply to any enquiries he may receive regarding the attitude of His Majesty's Government that there is no objection to such negotiations.

In several directions, however, it may well be necessary to restrain the French from seeking to impose unduly onerous conditions on the Governments of the two States. It would be necessary firstly to make it plain that nothing in the new regime to be set up under the projected treaties could be allowed to prevent the two States from joining any Arab federation which may materialise. As a corollary a close watch would have to be kept on the educational arrangements contemplated by the French as part of the 1936 settlement; the teaching and the use of the English language will have to be secured on an equal basis with French. Indeed, should an Arab federation ever come into being it is highly probable that the teaching and use of English will, in order to secure conformity, tend largely to supersede that of French. Again the French claim to appoint Advisers to the new States will have to be kept within reasonable limits if the administrations are not to be swamped, and their financial stability impaired, by an excessive number of appointments.

The situation envisaged here, is one where both parties desire to conclude a treaty. In such a case His Majesty's Government will hesitate to oppose their desire. If, however, the Syrians or the Lebanese do not wish to enter into negotiation, His Majesty's Government have no intention whatever of pressing them to do so.

Washington, September 10, 1943.
The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, September 22, 1943—7 p. m.  
[Received September 22—5:33 p. m.]

280. Refer my 266, September 3, 7 p. m. and penultimate paragraph my 277, September 17, 5 p. m. Lebanese Chamber of Deputies met in special opening session yesterday and, after choosing its officers, selected Shiekh Beshara-el-Khoury as President of the Republic. For biographic data report please see despatch No. 164, August 6.

Of 55 deputies 47 were present, 3 abstained from voting; balance voted unanimously. Absentees and abstainer[s] were Shiekh Beshara['s] chief rival, former President Edde, latter's remaining partisans.

Khoury's election was result of fortnight intense electioneering during which it became clear he was generally favored by Spears, Syrian Government and local Moslem Executive as well as his own group of primarily Christian deputies. Even French who had been strongly supporting Edde came into eleventh hour line.

Edde's last minute abstention was "in protest against foreign (i.e. primarily Spears) interventions" which considering support given him by French makes him laughing stock of Chamber. All objective observers agree, however, that campaign took an [on?] increasingly color of intense Franco-British rivalry for ascendency of influence, with Spears clear winner.

As Khouri is Maronite, precedent for filling Presidency from member this numerically leading community is met. Similarly Premiership will be filled by Sunni Moslem; but departure from precedent was made at urgent insistence Shia Moslems that presidency of Chamber formerly filled by minority Christian be given member this third leading community.

Sabri Hamadi prominent feudal chief from Bqaa was selected to latter post. Riad es Solh is favored for Premiership by Nationalists and British and is apparently acceptable to French.

Khouri's address to Chamber following election stressed Lebanon's long time aspirations for independence and for internal concord among its communities. "We shall certainly not renounce any of our traditions or our friendships" he said "but we know that no friendship is incompatible with the rights of independence".

He paid highest tribute to Allied cause and referred to Lebanon's relationship with Arab states as that of "a neighbor sure under-

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* Telegram No. 277 not printed.
* Not printed.
standing and fraternal, maintaining a cooperation sealed by friendship and sincerity” in a world where isolationism can no longer exist.

WADSWORTH

890E.01/196a : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, September 23, 1943—7 p. m.

247. OWI\(^2\) has requested, apparently at your suggestion, obtaining official statement from the Department regarding election new Lebanese President. This seems possibly undesirable to us, in view of nonissuance of such statement following recent Syrian elections. However, you may, in your discretion, make suitable statement for public release to the effect that this Government has followed recent developments in Syria and Lebanon with close and sympathetic attention, and that it welcomes the successful reestablishment of constitutional governments in those States as a further important step toward the fulfillment, under the banner of the United Nations, of the aspirations of the Syrian and Lebanese peoples for sovereign independence.

HULL

890E.00/164 : Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, September 29, 1943.
[Received September 29—11:27 a.m.]

1739. Council of Ministers at meeting September 27 approved proposal of Prime Minister that Egypt recognize independence of Lebanon and establish Legation at Beirut. It is reported that diplomatic representative when assigned will also be accredited to Syria whose independence Egypt recognized October 5, 1941 and where Council already on September 19, 1943 approved establishment Legation.\(^3\)

In note proposing recognition, Prime Minister, after referring to desire of Egypt to see independence of these two countries become reality by return to constitutional forms with which endeavor Egypt has been in direct contact (see my despatch 1169 July 17, 1943);\(^4\) mentioned election of Lebanese President and formation of national government, stated that it is important that relations be established with that government in connection with the negotiations concerning

\(^2\) Office of War Information.

\(^3\) Iraq had also granted full diplomatic recognition to Syria on August 30.

\(^4\) Not printed.
Arab union and concluded that recognition conforms with established policy of strengthening ties between Arab countries. Repeated to Beirut.

Kirk

890D.01/707: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, October 2, 1943—2 p. m.
[Received October 3—12: 10 p. m.]

285. During visit to Damascus September 30 for Bairam festival I attended first formal diplomatic lunch given by President. Both he and Foreign Minister took pointed occasion to urge exchange of diplomatic representatives of grade of Minister.

President said he wished American Government to know he entertains high appreciation its general policy towards Syria and Lebanon which had been strong moral support for their leader’s efforts during past year to achieve reestablishment constitutional government as necessary foundation for progressive realization aspirations for full independence not on paper only.

He said he knew those aspirations were regarded with sympathy by American Government and he recognized fully “transitional need for limited exercise of sovereignty due to exigencies of war.” Consequently he hoped now to have our help in achieving early further realization of political and administrative independence along lines already explained to me by Premier and Foreign Minister (please see my telegram No. 277, September 17, 5 p. m.) 66

In political field full recognition by Egypt and Iraq had given him highest satisfaction especially as it was accompanied by promise of early exchange of Ministers. He hoped Syrian-American relations could be put on same basis.

I answered along line of earlier reply to Premier and Foreign Minister (despatch No. 170 of August 27) 68 stressing that I believed Department could not under its long traditional policy feel itself properly able to take such action until Syria had at least first acquired fuller possession of machinery of government.

As his Government’s primary political policy was designed to achieve that and insofar as possible within framework of limitations necessitated by conditions of war, might it not, I ventured to suggest, be more appropriate to await realization of that policy before raising the issue. He closed conversation by expressing hope way could be

66 Not printed.
found and asked that I consider matter further with Foreign Minister. I readily agreed.

Latter took me aside few minutes later and said his office had prepared rough draft of note to send me but in view my conversation with President he would first appreciate my comment thereon. He outlined text later given me informally by his secretary. Copy goes forward by today’s pouch. It makes no new important point.

I sense that, despite my reiteration of Department’s comment (telegram No. 220, August 22, 6 [2] p. m.) that there must be effective transfer of substantial authority and power to new government before serious consideration can be given to extending full recognition, note will be sent if only as formal record of Syrian Government’s desire.

I can, should Department so wish, suggest that if note be sent it include assurance that new constitutional government willingly recognizes and will fully respect all treaty rights of United States and its nationals in Syria. This at least would be advance over somewhat unsatisfactory assurances of former Syrian Government (see despatches Nos. 453, August 22, 462, September 3, and 467, September 12, 1942). 66

As Foreign Minister expressed desire to discuss matter further with me before his departure for Cairo Arab unity discussion about October 10, I should appreciate early reply to foregoing paragraph.

Shortly before departure lunch guests French Delegate General, British Counselor and I were taken aside separately by Foreign Minister and given embossed letters signed by President announcing his assumption of Presidency on August 17 last and expressing warmest wishes for success for United Nations cause. Letter given me addressed to President Roosevelt 69 is being forwarded by pouch.

WADSWORTH

890D.01/707 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, October 5, 1943—8 p. m.

254. Your 285, October 2, 2 p. m. Your remarks to Syrian President and Foreign Minister and suggestion contained in antepenultimate paragraph are approved.

Hull

67 Sent as enclosure to despatch No. 190 of October 2, from Beirut, not printed.
68 None printed; they forwarded the texts of exchanges regarding American treaty rights in Syria. These in turn were based on an exchange of October 22, 1941; see Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. III, pp. 785 ff.
69 Letter dated August 17, 1943, p. 985.
AMERICAN AND BRITISH REPRESENTATIONS TO THE FRENCH COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION CONCERNING THE FRANCO-LEBANESE CRISIS OF NOVEMBER 1943

Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins

[WASHINGTON,] October 9, 1943.

SYRIA AND LEBANON

In the course of a conversation with the President on September 27, 1943, dealing primarily with Saudi Arabia, I mentioned the opinion of Ibn Saud that the French would not voluntarily withdraw from Syria and Lebanon when the war is over.

At this point the President stated that he felt that the French should be forced to live up to their promise to give independence to these two countries, and asked my opinion. I answered that, based on my own knowledge of the situation, I agreed heartily with him in his opinion and stated that I felt justice required this Government to follow such a course.

890D.01/710: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, October 11, 1943—8 p.m.
[Received October 12—2:58 p.m.]

291. Reference my 285 October 2, 2 p.m.; 71 and 290, October 8, 8 p.m. At call on Syrian Foreign Minister 72 in Damascus yesterday he expressed keen satisfaction at vote of confidence given Lebanese Government, admitting readily that he and Syrian Premier 74 had collaborated unofficially with Lebanese Foreign and Prime Ministers 75 in drafting latter’s declaration of policy. The four Ministers are to meet formally next week with view to elaborating (and probably announcing) common program “designed to achieve organization of their respective independencies”.

70 Copies sent by the Department on October 26 to London, Algiers, Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo. For correspondence regarding the Hoskins Mission to countries of the Middle East, see pp. 796–827, passim.
71 Ante, p. 994.
72 Not printed.
73 Jamil Mardam.
74 Saadallah al-Jabiri.
75 Selim Tacla and Riad es-Solh, respectively.
Spears 78 and Helleu 77 who at Ministers’ invitation have been in Damascus over week end had already, he explained, been told of this intention and urged to facilitate early definition of powers Allies (i.e. British and French) consider they must retain under formula “limitations necessitated by conditions of war” and transfer to Levant Governments of all the powers, notably those of essentially internal concern.

It was he said not only question of transfer of “common interests” services; basic definition of what is meant by “independence” is also involved; the French should no longer “legislate regarding internal matters”. There was already informal agreement between Levant Governments that most desirable procedure would be to set up joint Syro-Lebanese Conseil Supérieur pour l’Administration des Services des Intérêts Communs, leaving for later determination all questions of division of revenues and possible eventual separation of certain services.

Spears he believed was desirous of facilitating realization of this policy but Helleu was non-committal averring that before discussion he would have to await early expected return of Chataigneau 78 from Algiers with instructions (see last paragraph my 277 September 17, 5 p. m. 79)

In this connection Minister seemed seriously concerned at de Gaulle’s 80 current assumption of powers of Chief of Government and reference to “indestructible friendships” in the Levant in his Ajaccio speech October 8th. He had already gathered from French that they had every intention of conducting themselves as a government despite British and American formulae recognition; one French argument being that “Russia quite as influential as Britain and America” had accorded unqualified recognition to Committee of Liberation which consequently held itself competent to exerc[ise] [apparent omission] being typical of hardening local French attitude he repeated with uncoiled distaste reputed recent comment by Helleu’s chief diplomatic assistant that “indépendence Libanaise est une plaisanterie”.

Minister will defer addressing note to me regarding status of our representation pending some clarification of this involved situation,

77 Jean Helleu had in early July succeeded Gen. Georges Catroux as Delegate General and Plenipotentiary in Syria and Lebanon of the French Committee of National Liberation, General Catroux assuming a position with the French National Committee as Coordinator of Moslem Affairs.
78 Yves Chataigneau, Secretary General on the staff of M. Helleu.
79 Not printed.
and he seemed readily willing to include therein assurance referred to in Department's 254, October 5, 8 p.m.  

He now expects to leave about week hence for Cairo Arab unity discussions in which connection he wishes to meet Kirk.  

While there, he would also welcome opportunity to discuss with Landis possibility of extending direct Lend-Lease aid to Syria. Department may wish to instruct Cairo regarding latter.

WADSWORTH

890E.01/200: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, October 24, 1943—6 p.m.

[Received October 25—4:06 p.m.]

295. Reference my 290, October 8, 8 p.m., and 291, October 11, 8 p.m. During fortnight since Chamber voted confidence in new Government's "independence" program, strong wave of Nationalist sentiment has swept Lebanese Christian as well as Moslem circles. Even Maronite Patriarch has cordially received President and Premier and given program his blessing.

Generally strongly anti-French in color, this present political trend supports basic plank of Government's policy that Lebanon must achieve full independence in cooperation with sister Arab states based on mutual recognition of separate sovereignty and territorial integrity. In conversations here with several provincial leaders and on recent visit to paramount Druze sheikhs, I found interesting confirmation of reports that this support is as readily given by provincial groupings as by more politically minded Beirut circles.

President of Chamber has twice assured me, deputies will demand explanations if Government delays forthright action designed to implement program. In particular, they urge early modification of constitution, notably article 90 which subordinates exercise of legislative power to "rights and duties of mandatory power".

Significant incident occurred October 13 when French Delegate General Helleu published decree prescribing return to Winter time. Government's reply was immediate publication of similar decree, thus permitting Lebanese to observe their own rather than French promulgated law and deferring showdown on "vital question of the hour".

81 Anti, p. 905.

82 Alexander C. Kirk, Minister in Egypt.

83 James M. Landis, U.S. Director of Economic Operations in the Middle East and principal U.S. representative, with the personal rank of Minister, Middle East Supply Center at Cairo.

84 Not printed.
That question is: Shall French be recognized as having power to legislate by decree? Premier and Foreign Minister assure me they, like Syrian Ministers, will readily yield to Allied military authorities all powers “necessitated by conditions of war”, but they state flatly that exercise of mandatory authority by Free French is without juridical basis, repugnant to Lebanese aspirations and inconsistent with Allied promises and acts of recognition of independence.

Most important political achievement of fortnight resulted from series of meetings between Lebanese and Syrian Ministers, ending with signature at Damascus October 20 of agreement for establishment of joint commission to administer common interests. Premier informs me mémoires of agreement, desiderata and demands are to be presented to French authorities this week; also that support of Arab States is to be urged by Syrian Minister now in Cairo.

President of Republic calling informally on me last week expressed keen satisfaction at course of developments and confidence in good sense of Ministry and leading deputies. Like Premier, he expected strong opposition by French and expressed hope British and American Governments would “assist Lebanese Government in overcoming obstacles”.

In case of United States, he said he hoped this could be done through “moral suasion at Algiers” to end that such further steps as war exigencies warrant be taken progressively to apply Atlantic Charter principles to Levant States. He promised me brief “confidential impersonal memorandum” of Government’s basic position and views.

This memorandum was brought me yesterday by Premier. He was obviously disturbed. Without sympathetic support of Allied and Arab Governments, he said “I fear we shall get nowhere”. He continued substantially as follows:

“We and Syrian Ministers had hopes from early conversations with Helleu that modus operandi could be found for definition of wartime relationships and transfer of common interests. But barometer fell sharply with recent return of Chataigneau from month’s consultations in Algiers.

“During ensuing fortnight we gained increasingly conviction that French will yield nothing of their de facto authority—to us it has no basis de jure—unless we first reaffirm or renegotiate Franco-Lebanese treaty of alliance. This we have no intention of doing; no Government could and retain Parliamentary confidence.

“Now we have just received uncompromising note from Helleu. It protests our program for progressive realization of independence. Special exception is taken to projected modification of constitution. Full mandatory authority is asserted. I can say no more except that matter must be submitted fully to Parliament.”

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85 Choucri Kouati, President of the Syrian Republic.
86 Joint Declaration by President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill, August 14, 1941; for text, see Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. I, p. 367.
Premier added he hoped to be able to give me full documentation end next week. If of special interest to Department, word in that sense would be helpful, for with 20-year background of mandatory control, there is still hesitation to communicate full texts of communications exchanged with French authorities.

Premier appeared, too, to be considerably perturbed by persistent recent rumor that Helieu is to be replaced by a French General and a division of French troops sent here to maintain security following expected departure of British Ninth Army units for European battle zone.

Résumé of memorandum sent me by President follows.

WADSWORTH

890D.01/794

The Department of State to the British Embassy $^{87}$

MEMORANDUM

The views of the British Government relating to Syria and the Lebanon, contained in Mr. Wright's $^{88}$ letter of June 28, 1943, to Mr. Alling, $^{89}$ and in the British Embassy's Aide-Mémoire of September 10, 1943, $^{90}$ have received careful and sympathetic attention.

The American Government's policy in respect of Syria and the Lebanon since the events of July 1941 has been guided by its frequently reiterated sympathy with the aspirations of the Syrian and Lebanese peoples for the full enjoyment of sovereign independence and by its established policy of deferring recognition of another government until such government is in possession of the machinery of state, administering the government with the assent of the people thereof and without substantial resistance to its authority, and until it is in a position to fulfill the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon a sovereign state under treaties and international law.

Within these general lines, the relations of the United States Government with the various authorities in the Levant States have been conducted on a de facto basis, without prejudice to the eventual clarification of the juridical factors involved. Thus this Government was glad to recognize the step taken towards the independence of Syria and the Lebanon in the proclamations of General Catroux by establishing Legations at Beirut and Damascus, and accrediting to the local Governments a "Diplomatic Agent", a rank customarily used in the case of semi-independent States. While this Government has

$^{87}$ Copies sent by the Department to Beirut, London, and Cairo.
$^{88}$ Michael Wright, First Secretary of the British Embassy.
$^{89}$ Ante, p. 979.
$^{90}$ Paul H. Alling, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs.
$^{91}$ Ante, p. 989.
observed with satisfaction the successful establishment of new governments in the two States, it believes that the extension of full recognition by the United States would be neither advisable nor warranted until substantial governmental powers still exercised by the French authorities have been effectively transferred to these local Governments.

The United States Government was not a party to the agreements concluded prior to the invasion of the Levant States by British and Free French forces in 1941, and is not prepared to admit that France should enjoy a "preeminent and privileged position" in Syria and the Lebanon. However, this Government is in substantial agreement with the views of the British Government as regards the possible conclusion of agreements defining the relationship of the French authorities to the new States. This Government would not object to free and voluntary negotiations for this purpose between the Syrian and Lebanese Governments and representatives of the French Committee of National Liberation, provided the instruments concluded contained proper safeguards of the rights and interests of the local populations and of the United States and its nationals and on the understanding that such instruments would be applied provisionally pending their eventual formal ratification and approval by the interested parties.

The United States Diplomatic Agent at Beirut is being instructed accordingly.

WASHINGTON, October 25, 1943.

890.03/104: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 5, 1943—8 p. m.
[Received November 6—5:08 p. m.]

302. Reference my 299, October 30, 5 p. m. On instructions of French Committee of National Liberation French Delegation General here issued communiqué today noon in following sense:

Committee has examined question as to whether Lebanese Government and Parliament may validly modify constitution unilaterally.

Its conclusion is that French authorities cannot recognize validity of any such action, if affecting texts resulting from international obligations undertaken by France and still in effect, unless made with French assent.

* * *

* For correspondence on this subject, see Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. III, pp. 725 ff.
* * Not printed.
Decision is but application of general rule of law. Respect of contracts is basis of independence and liberty of states.

Committee is confident Lebanese nation will recognize wisdom of decision and realize that in practice it is in conformity with determination of France to accord Lebanon complete independence through negotiations undertaken in spirit of friendly cooperation. (End communiqué.)

Reaction in Lebanese Nationalist and Government circles will assuredly be one of bitter opposition, e.g., chairman of Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee tells me that if Government does not immediately proceed with its original proposal, thus denying French right of intervention, he will have full Parliamentary support in calling special session to interpellate Prime Minister.

He informed me that President of Republic when receiving communiqué from French delegate to Lebanon stated in substance “If this is attitude of France we consider ourselves no longer under any obligations to you and free to do as we find best”.

Leading Maronite Archbishop, Mubaraq of Beirut, with whom I also talked this afternoon was indignant. The French are going too far, he said, with their pretensions to unqualified mandatory authority; our constitution provides specifically that Parliament can modify it; the Prime Minister has just told me he is issuing strong statement in rebuttal; I have argued that Christian Lebanon needs foreign protection, but this is servitude.

Lebanese Government communiqué issued this afternoon reads substantially as follows:

Ministry has reviewed French communiqué. It considers that modification of constitution is within rights of Lebanese constitutional authorities under article 76 et seq of constitution.

Consequently it has now presented to Parliament bill for modification of certain provisions of constitution in contradiction with countries’ complete and recognized independence.

Bill had had careful study of Ministry in conformity with its announced program of ensuring practical realization of independence.

WADSWORTH

890E.01/305: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 8, 1943—5 p. m.
[Received November 8—3:35 p. m.]

305. Reference my 302, November 5, 8 p. m. Lebanese Chamber today voted unanimously Government’s bill amending constitution.

WADSWORTH
SYRIA AND LEBANON

809E.01/207: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 9, 1943—10 a. m. [Received 9:07 p. m.]

306. Supplementing my 305, November 8, 7 [5] p. m. By publication of communiqués reported in my 302, November 5, 8 p. m., clear issue was joined in Franco-Lebanese political crisis, French having publicly declared they would not recognize validity of proposed constitutional amendments unless made with their assent and Government having answered by its bill to Parliament called to meet in special session November 8.

Bill proposed amendment of articles 1, 11, 52, 92, and 102 and repeal of articles 9–94, designedly to bring constitution into conformity with country’s present recognized independent status, briefly as follows:

In article 1, deletion of reference to France and League of Nations. Frontiers are those now existing.

In article 11, deletion of provision that French shall be second official language. Envisaged law will permit its use for special purposes, e.g., in mixed courts and diplomatic correspondence.

In article 52, deletion of provision that President’s power to negotiate and ratify treaties is subject to article 3 of mandate.

In article 95, deletion of reference to article 1 of mandate. Further modification of this article will, in line with Ministry’s program be proposed in promised second constitutional bill which will also open question of changing Lebanese flag to avoid use of French colors prescribed in article 5.

In article 102, deletion of sentence placing constitution under safeguard of France as mandatory.

Articles 90–94 are repealed because made up solely of “dispositions relative to mandatory power and League of Nations”.

Bill was circulated to Deputies November 6. Attitude of leaders Government and Chamber was that it should be voted without further Franco-Lebanese negotiations. Their arguments were substantially as follows:

When French Delegate General Helleu left for Algiers*4 October 26 we agreed not to force issue pending his return with new instructions. French broke this gentleman’s agreement by publishing their communiqué of November 5. It is they therefore who have precipitated crisis.

Meanwhile French have consistently endeavored to sow discord and uncertainty in Lebanese ranks by whispering campaign against Government and through “Fausses nouvelles,” e. g., that Helleu was to be replaced by General bearing revived title of High Commissioner,
that latter would be supported by division of North African troops and that de Gaulle himself would come shortly to settle matters; were Parliament to delay vote those machinations might bear some fruit among the timid.

More important, however, is consideration that by further negotiation with French we would afford them opportunity to give their assent to proposed amendments. This they might well do both to save face and to maintain façade of their pretended mandatory authority.

November 7 Lebanese Premier and Vice Premier met with Syrian Premier and Foreign Minister at Chtaura where full Syrian support of proposed Lebanese action was assured. Syrian Premier confirmed this specifically to Farrell same evening in Damascus, adding that inept French policy has unconsciously aided Lebanese policy by consolidating Lebanese public opinion behind it.

Latter was strikingly borne out yesterday morning by apparently spontaneous closing of majority of stores in Beirut central shopping district as protest against French attitude. They reopened upon Premier making tour in person accompanied by other leaders who urged that demonstrations and disturbances would only play into French hands.

Yesterday morning the French made eleventh hour efforts both to induce Government to postpone parliamentary session pending Helleu's return and, if failing in this, to prevent parliamentary action by assuring lack of two-thirds quorum.

As proof of latter, I have interesting testimony of four reliable Deputies of Edde opposition group that French Sûreté chief urged their dozen members to absent themselves, assuring them at same time full security by Sûreté agents of their persons and properties.

With former object in view French Delegate to Lebanon called on President of Republic and read to him and Premier memorandum of message "just received from Helleu in Cairo". After requesting postponement of session pending personal presentation of "interesting propositions" from Algiers Committee this read: "Mr. Helleu asks that he not be faced with fait accompli. Otherwise he will be obliged to reserve entire liberty of appreciation and action. This should not be taken as threat but expression of desire frankly to define his attitude".

After brief consideration Government expressed regret that "in actual state of things postponement of sessions could not be proposed

\*5 Lebanon.
\*6 William S. Farrell, Second Secretary at Damascus, and Chargé in the absence of the Diplomatic Agent (Wadsworth), who was in residence in Beirut.
\*7 Emile Edde, former Lebanese President.
\*8 French security police.
by it." Reply added "This attitude should not prevent any negotia-
tion with representative of Committee of Liberation".

Lebanese Minister of Interior who brought me these texts on in-
structions from Premier asked me to assure my Government that
Lebanese Government intends to keep dispute on constitutional plane
and do nothing to precipitate trouble. He cited Premier's morning
action in reopening shops adding that effective police precautions
had already been taken to prevent demonstrations during Chamber
session.

He did not hide however serious concern (which I have heard
expressed in all circles over week end) as to what action French
might take in event of vote modifying constitution. Would they
run true to past form and in exercise of pretended mandatory au-
thority issue decree suspending constitution and proroguing Parlia-
ment? If so, he said, deputies will ignore it because under consti-
tution only press [President?] possesses power of prorogation. What
then? Would French use force and physically close Parliament with
armed Senegalese troops? This would also mean fall of Govern-
ment, an emanation of Parliament.

What, he asked, would be my Government's reaction to this? Trou-
ble might well ensue because, while Government could [apparent
omission] certainly not prevent popular protest strikes and these
might lead to serious disturbances.

Fortunately, for the Minister's visit was hurried, I was not pressed
to elaborate my reply that, as he already knew my Government's
sympathetic attitude toward Lebanese aspirations, I felt sure I would
not be misunderstood if I counselled personally and on general
grounds against use of force [while] we were still very much at war.
Not only would breakdown of public security prejudice our common
war effort, but it would afford welcome propaganda material to our
enemies.

On this score British Ninth Army authorities are somewhat appre-
hensive. Ranking staff Brigadier and Judge Advocate have both
consulted me informally. They and Army Commander would view
with strong distaste necessity of British military intervention to
support French suppressive action.

I commented that from my considerable contacts of last fortnight
I believed possibility of disturbances could certainly not be dismissed
but that were British military police to appear on streets they would
probably be met with cheers rather than with any bricks not thrown
at French.

Camille Chamoun.
Beirut was in fact ordered out of bounds to all British troops yesterday. But as events proved this precaution was unnecessary. Parliament met in atmosphere tense with excitement but with well-circulated word of Government’s wishes supported by strong contingents of Lebanese police and gendarmes kept crowds orderly and relatively quiet.

Parliament session itself was serious and orderly. Proceedings were opened by one of Edde group proposing and Edde himself seconding motion that bill be referred to committee. This being defeated Edde and one follower withdrew leaving 48 of 53 Deputies to continue discussion.

Debate was at times heated notably on article even [eleven] regarding which several Deputies urged deletion of any reference to French language. Prepared speeches on general subject of independence and in support of Government were, according to Legation’s interpreter, well delivered and well received. Final voting on roll call was unanimous.

Early in evening French press director called to his office representatives of all local newspapers and instructed them that no mention whatsoever of parliamentary sitting or vote could be made in any newspaper, that for them “it hasn’t happened”; any infraction would be severely dealt with.

Editors later met and decided that despite this censorship order and warning they would publish the facts. They did, and today French Sûreté has seized all newspapers except a few copies which were early delivered or smuggled out of newspaper offices. Copies are now quoted at approximately one dollar.

Next move is presumably up to Helleu who, I have just been informed, will arrive from Cairo this afternoon. French Sûreté chief is reliably quoted as saying “All is prepared for effective reprisals”.

Two final points: British Brigadier referred to above informs me French have actually proposed sending additional troops here from North Africa and that General Wilson has categorically refused. Belgian Chargé d’Affaires informs me Syrian Foreign Minister stated textually in recent conversation “After mature consideration we have decided without reservation to throw our lot (marcher) with Anglo-Saxon bloc”.

Repeated to Algiers.

WADSWORTH

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¹Gen. Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Commander in Chief, British Forces in the Middle East.
The Acting Secretary of State to the Consul General at Algiers

(Wiley)

WASHINGTON, November 9, 1943—midnight.

2096. For Murphy. The Department understands that Mr. Jean Helleu, Delegate of the French Committee of National Liberation at Beirut, is now in Algiers to discuss with the Committee future policy as regards Syria and Lebanon, in the light of the demands of the recently established elective local Governments to exercise all sovereign powers not necessarily reserved to the Allied military authorities for war purposes. This would apparently involve, notably:

1. Transfer to the local Governments of the governmental powers formerly exercised by the French High Commissioners and still retained by the Free French delegation, consisting mainly of the administration of the “common interests” (i.e. customs and monopoly revenues, patents and trademarks, et cetera).

2. Dismantling of the French administration, with transfer of appropriate French personnel to positions as advisers to local Government departments.

3. Changing status of French Delegation to that of diplomatic representation.

4. Appropriate modification of constitutional provisions conferring governmental powers on the French administration.

Despite the proclamations of “independence” issued by General Catroux in the fall of 1941, in the name of the French National Committee at London, the French authorities have continued zealously to retain maximum powers. It is understood that Helleu recently informed the Lebanese Government that the mandate remains in effect and that constitutional modifications would accordingly not be accepted.

It is the opinion of this Government that the French Committee of National Liberation should take practical steps to implement the “independence” promised the Levant States; and that its failure to do so would cast doubt on the sincerity of announced United Nations principles and thus injure our common war effort. In our view, no useful purpose would be served by an academic debate on the juridical technicalities of this complex situation. The validity of the French thesis is dubious, at best, and for practical purposes the League mandate must be regarded as being in suspense.

2 Robert D. Murphy, U.S. Political Adviser, Staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, at Algiers.

3 For reports of the declarations regarding Syria, September 27, 1941, and Lebanon, November 26, 1941, respectively, see telegrams No. 381, September 28, 1941, and No. 467, November 26, 1941, from the Consul General at Beirut, Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. iii, pp. 786 and 965, respectively.
In a recent exchange of communications with the British, copies of which are en route to you under cover of an air mail instruction dated October 25, the Department expressed this Government's essential agreement with the views of the British Government as regards the possible conclusion of agreements defining the future relationship of the French authorities to the new States, stating this Government's position in the following terms:

"This Government would not object to free and voluntary negotiations for this purpose between the Syrian and Lebanese Governments and representatives of the French Committee of National Liberation, provided the instruments concluded contained proper safeguards of the rights and interests of the local populations and of the United States and its nationals and on the understanding that such instruments would be applied provisionally pending their eventual formal ratification and approval by the interested parties."

It was also made clear that this Government does not consider itself associated with the (Lyttleton-de Gaulle) agreements concluded prior to the invasion of the Levant States by British and Free French forces in 1941, and is not prepared to admit that France should enjoy a "preeminent and privileged" position therein.

Syria and Lebanon have never constituted a part of French territory but have been mandated States of Class A, whose independence was contemplated in the terms of the mandate itself and has already been long delayed, despite the relatively high level of education and political maturity of the populations. There would seem to be little doubt that reasonable arrangements accepted on a de facto basis by the principal parties at interest at the present time would be formally approved after the war. Moreover, we are convinced that sincere and generous action to implement the independence of the Levant States now would create goodwill toward the French on the part of the Syrian and Lebanese people and thus protect and serve the long run interests of France much better than insistence on retaining mandatory powers, which would certainly create an explosive quantity of ill-will and resentment. Please take this matter up in the foregoing sense with the appropriate French authorities (this will presumably include General Catroux) keeping the Department and Beirut informed of developments.

The substance of this telegram has been communicated to the British Embassy here and it is expected that your British colleague will shortly be instructed to make similar representations. You are

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* See Department's memorandum to the British Embassy, October 25, p. 1000.
* Not printed.
* August 7, 1941, British Cmd. 6600, Syria No. 1 (1945), pp. 3-4.
* Harold Macmillan, British Minister Resident at the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, Algiers.
authorized to discuss this matter with him, but because of special interests which might be imputed to the British in this area, it would appear preferable that your action be independent of any which he may take.

Sent to Algiers for Murphy. Repeated to London, Cairo and Beirut.

STETTINIUS

S05E00/172: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 10, 1943—3 p.m.
[Received November 11—11:25 p.m.]

309. Reference my 306, November 9, 10 a.m., and 307, November 10, noon. Lebanese Minister of Interior called on me this noon following call on Spears. He informed substantially as follows.

This morning protocol officer of French Delegation General telephoned Lebanese Premier and each of Ministers and, without giving reason or explanation, informed them that "the invitation extended you for tomorrow's Armistice Day military review is annulled".

Ministers immediately met with President of Republic who, although his invitation had not been annulled, decided without hesitation that he would not attend review.

["Government has formally charged me to inform you of foregoing and to inquirre as to what your conduct, as diplomatic representative accredited to Lebanon, will be in the circumstances.

We are addressing ourselves in the same sense to the Belgian, Egyptian and Iraqi representatives as well. ["]

At this moment Spears telephoned me. I said my reaction to question was that we should not attend in person but that, in view of common Allied war effort and review being a strictly French military affair, I should wish Legation's Military Attaché and other American Army officers to attend. We had, I suggested, responsibilities both to Lebanese Government and to our French Allies.

Spears concurred saying that was exactly his view and one with which Minister of State Casey, to whom he had just telephoned, was in full accord. Only his Military Attaché and representatives of Ninth Army would attend.

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8 As telegrams Nos. 7055, 1705, and 266, respectively.
9 Latter not printed.
10 Beshara el-Khoury.
11 Richard G. Casey, British Minister of State in the Middle East resident at Cairo.
I then raised question as to whether, in view of Lebanese approach to our diplomatic colleagues, it might not be well were we to have meeting of Diplomatic Corps to consider matter. He readily agreed, and meeting was held this afternoon.

Spears opened meeting by saying French withdrawal of invitations “great affront to country to which we are accredited” and that he believed “unity of action on our part to be highly desirable.” In view of French action he did not see how we could possibly attend in person; he and I, however, believed representatives our military forces should attend as evidence of united Allied military effort.

There was agreement on this formula and each diplomat present was asked so to inform French Delegation. Gwynn has just returned from doing so. Chief of Delegation’s diplomatic section with whom he spoke did not consider himself competent to discuss question but readily took note for communication to proper authorities of names of four American officers who will attend.

In extraneous discussion of Corps meeting both Spears and Iraqi colleague, Tahsin Qadri, expressed themselves seriously concerned at turn of events. Half hour earlier Lebanese Foreign Minister had informed Spears he had strong reason to believe Helleu would speak on radio Levant, possibly tonight, and announce “dissolution of Parliament and Government and his own assumption of personal rule”.

Spears commented forcefully that Britain as well as Free French had guaranteed Syrian and Lebanese independence. French seemed now to be proving to whole world they had no intention of keeping their word. Britain to the contrary had every intention of doing so.

Qadri emphasized repeatedly that as expert in Arab affairs and well informed on temper of opinion both here and in Damascus and Baghdad, he viewed situation in “gravest possible manner”. French were “playing with fire”. He too had had report of Helleu’s plans; if carried out “reaction in Arab world might be disastrous to Allied war effort in this theatre of operations”. He planned “to tell French so as a friend”.

British Counsellor, just returned from Damascus, confirmed that Government there is “very interested and solidly behind Lebanese position”. He added information that Radio Levant, questioned by his office, admitted that Helleu might speak tomorrow night.

British Third Secretary later informed me Lebanese Foreign Minister had added as he left Spears’ office that, were Helleu to carry out reported plan, Government would go at once to Serei [Sérail] (government offices) and remain there until ejected by force.

During meeting Spears had further telephone conversation with Casey. They agreed that, in event Helleu does not deny report

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William M. Gwynn, Second Secretary at Beirut.
categorically, Spears would strongly insist that action be deferred until London should be informed and afforded opportunity to express its views at Algiers.

Repeated to Algiers.

WADSWORTH

S90E.00/169: Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, November 11, 1943—9 a.m.
[Received November 11—6:42 a.m.]

2032. Due to interruptions of all means communications except military telephone Wadsworth at Beirut has requested that following message be sent urgently to Department:

"I am reliably informed that at 4:00 this morning French Marines and Senegalese troops arrested President of Republic and all members Lebanese Ministry; also that French General has signed unpublished decree appointing Edde President of Republic. Military review scheduled for this morning has been cancelled."

Kirk

S90E.00/170: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 11, 1943—noon.
[Received November 11—11 a.m.]

310. Reference my telephone message 6 a.m. through Cairo, United States AFIME headquarters. Please telegraph urgently if you are informed of situation here. I am drafting report but fear French will delay its transmission. Its highlights are:

Senegalese troops have taken city including establishment of strong cordons around Parliament and Government buildings. Angry crowds have gathered. Troops have shot at demonstrators. Latest reports say 5 killed 12 wounded; situation deteriorating rapidly.

British are intensely concerned. General Holmes is reported returning at once by air from Egypt.

Christian and Moslem civil and religious leaders have made bitter protest Spears, me and Iraqi Chargé d’Affaires, Tahsin Qadri.

Latter insists reactions will be "gravest conceivable throughout Arab world". I concur. He asks prompt Allied intervention, as do Mufti, Maronite Archbishop and other leaders.

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14 See telegram No. 2082 from the Minister in Egypt, supra.
15 Army Forces in the Middle East.
I cannot recommend recognition of Edde regime set up by French decree numbers 464 and 465 announced this morning and in parts oddly resembling numbers 129, 130 and 131 of last March (press [my?] despatch 76, April 2) except that today's decrees begin by suspending Lebanese constitution instead of reestablishing it.

French may argue that technically March procedure constitutes accepted precedent for their action; but the background therefor is radically different, Constitutional Government having meanwhile been reestablished. Further, the similar coup d'état tactics now employed are far more brutal and I can perceive no proper or necessary ground for their use.

Should you make representations to Algiers, which from here appears to be desirable in interest of Middle East position of United Nations, I should appreciate being kept informed.

Repeated to Algiers, Baghdad and Cairo and London.

WADSWORTH

8905.00/171: Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, November 11, 1943—7 p. m.  
[Received November 12—9:04 a. m.]

2038. Afternoon press carries letter sent yesterday by Egyptian Prime Minister to delegate in Egypt of French Committee of National Liberation echoing strong reaction to [of] Egypt and Arab peoples as result of political developments in Lebanon. Nahas refers to previous discussions on subject with Catroux who had given impression of desiring reasonable and just solution but notes these good intentions not carried into effect, as evidenced by questionable tactics used in elections and unjustified French attitude in respect of revision of constitution of Lebanon of which independence was recognized by French and British and is of incontestable legality. Regarding citing of mandate as factor figuring in situation Nahas maintained mandate "disappeared in fact and in law on the day when the French and British Governments recognized the independence of Syria and the Lebanon. At that time they admitted that League of Nations was not functioning and that Syria and Lebanon could not await its problematical resurrection in order to ratify decision of French and British. If the mandate remained in force British and French had no right to declare independence and conversely by so doing they put end to mandate."[7]

Nahas said that by granting independence British and French were in accord with Atlantic Charter and principles of United Nations, that he did not doubt intention of British in that regard and did not desire to doubt those of French Committee. He added that he hoped situation was result of error which French would rectify in manner worthy of great French tradition.

Repeated to Beirut and Algiers.

KIRK

890E.00/183: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 11, 1943—8 p.m.
[Received November 13—2:17 p.m.]

311. Supplementing my 310, November 11, noon. I was awakened half past 5 this morning to receive "urgent message" from French Delegation General protocol officer. He is French by nationality but of Lebanese origin. I have long known he deplores French Levant policy.

He had received orders to visit foreign representatives and religious dignitaries to inform them that Armistice Day military review was cancelled. Trembling he added "They have arrested the President and all the Ministers. French marines and Senegalese troops broke brutally into their houses. I have seen with my own eyes a decree signed by Helleu appointing Ede to the Presidency."

At this point a strongly nationalist Lebanese journalist arrived. His story: "French Sûreté agents called to arrest him; he escaped and ran to home of Interior Minister where he found cordon of Senegalese troops under French officer; servants said Minister had resisted and been brutally beaten."

At Legation building next door to my house, there was only Lebanese policeman on guard. Confusing switchboard plugs I found French central would give no communication. By private [line?] I called Military Attaché; then by special line to British military headquarters had myself put through to Cairo where, Legation not replying, I dictated to USAFIME headquarters message for transmission to you.

Meanwhile I had telephoned British officer on duty at area headquarters. He was unaware of developments but I have since learned that both British Legation and Ninth Army headquarters were early informed of arrests.

Breaking my narrative: Preceding evening Brigadier Hatton commanding Ninth Army in General Holmes' absence in Egypt after
dining with me had said he was so concerned at explosive possibilities of the situation he would urge General’s immediate return. His orders were substantially as follows: If public security be threatened no British troops will be employed unless French territorial command is unable to maintain order and then specifically requests assistance; if employed they will operate only under British officers and primarily to protect communications, et cetera, of vital interest to Ninth Army operational command.

Resuming narrative: Before I was dressed British Military Attaché called to say Spears would like to see me and Iraqi Chargé d’Affaires. We arrived at British Legation residence shortly before 8:00.

There I found intense concern and activity. Spears had talked by phone with Casey in Cairo, and London was being urgently informed; the French were “quite mad” and “almost anything might happen”.; Helleu was making address over Radio Levant at 8:00.

Spears was particularly incensed that Helleu had sat and talked with him an hour after impromptu dinner last night in British Legation in honor of King of Yugoslavia and had given his word of honor that French contemplated no action which might threaten public security. Not an inkling was given of what was to transpire during night.

Again breaking narrative: Word of King’s prospective arrival, primarily to visit Yugoslavian battalion near Haifa under Ninth Army operational command, was received by British only after his airplane had left Cairo. Spears and Hatton hurried to airport, there found Helleu and galaxy of French generals and officials; King was to stay at French residency; arrangements for his security had been made by French. Incident further illustrates French non-cooperative uncommunicativeness.

Resuming narrative: At British Legation I found also Lebanese Vice President of Council Abi Chahla and Defense Minister Druze Emir Medgid Arslan; my early morning informant had erred in thinking all Ministers arrested. They in turn erred in believing a third colleague was still at liberty.

Abi Chahla made to us and later put in writing contention that under Lebanese constitution all executive power devolved upon him and arrested Ministers. Both Ministers protested bitterly against Helleu’s “illegal and brutal acts” and “violation of our independence and constitution and of principles for which Allies are fighting”; intervention to reestablish constitution and free arrestees was urged.

It was an interested mixed group therefore which gathered before Spears’ radio to hear Helleu broadcast and texts of new decrees.

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19 King Peter II.
Comments were few during reading, their sense being that whole was strongly colored by unblushing hypocrisy.

Helleu’s speech began:

“Hour has struck to end insensate maneuvers aimed only at deprivings Lebanon of secular support of France, to subject it to dictatorship at whose hands it would have foun-dered—you would have despised France had she let things drift”.

He then recounted political developments since Ministry had taken office, notably his declared intention to implement promised independence, his advice before leaving for Algiers that consideration of constitutional amendments should await his return and later warnings that such action was illegal, all left unheeded.

Then came strong attack against Premier Solh and Ministry which had encouraged “a tyranny on the street”.

It was “a conspiracy against France”. Could one keep illusions when hearing him called by German radio “the great chief”? Finally he denied forcefully that France had not kept her promises, renewing, “solemn assurance of resolve to accord complete inde-pendence” through friendly negotiation and urging that people give proof of calm and remain deaf to excitements.

The first decree declared void Parliament’s November 8th vote amending constitution, dissolved member of [sic] Chamber of Deputi-ies, suspended constitution pending new elections, reestablished provi-sions for nominated third of Chamber and provided for French appointment of “Chief of State-Chief of Government” to exercise execu-tive authority and, in Council of Ministers appointed by himself, to issue decrees having force of law.

Juridical bases for this decree cited in its preamble included notably articles 90 and 102 of constitution (i.e. chief of those abolished 3 days earlier by Chamber), Catroux’s 1941 declaration of independence and Algiers’ decision of November 5 that constitution might be amended only with French as sent.

Preamble concluded:

“Lebanese President, Government and Parliament by their act of November 8 violated constitution, necessitating recourse to new elections”.

Second decree named Emile Edde new chief executive. Department will recall he once held presidency and was 2 months ago French favored candidate for reelection. “Chief French stooge” was Spears’ comment.

On Helleu’s speech and decrees Tahsin Qadri commented “The French are quite mad”. Emir Arslan asked “How can you expect me to control the Druzes?”
The ensuing conversation with Spears and Qadri former said he already had Casey’s authority to lodge strong written protest. He reiterated indignation at Helleu’s “perfidy”, adding “for French to undertake act of this kind without any warning to Ninth Army is unthinkable if only on security grounds; and this under aegis by [of?] countries of Atlantic Charter which have recognized Lebanese independence; it is challenge to cause for which we are fighting”.

He then asked if we wished to associate ourselves in protest. Britain he said had chief responsibility because it had “guaranteed” that independence “but we are all in the same boat”; there could be no doubt Helleu acted under instructions from Algiers where, he hoped, urgent representations would be made for restoration of constitution and release by arrestee [of arrestees].

His final point was that no one should recognize any government named by Edde “not only stooge but also one called traitor by his colleagues where he quit the Chamber before its final note [vote?] for independence”.

Qadri agreed, said he viewed French action as “directed against Allies and us”, commented again “French are mad” and added “blood will flow before tomorrow unless British troops intervene”.

I commented that French appeared to be using same coup d'état tactics as last March when ousting Naccache regime but in a situation so changed, by reestablishment of constitutional regime, from that of 9 months ago that their use could not as then be condoned; I should consequently feel strongly hesitant to recommend recognition of Edde regime.

I added that, as British position here was special, as Spears had said, I felt it would be unwise for me to associate myself directly with his protest; I would however endeavor to see Helleu and report fully to my Government.

Here we were interrupted by series of reports on spreading demonstrations as word of French decisions circulated in the city. These were cited in my telegram under reference.

There followed visits from Maronite Archbishop and Mufti. Former called French action “coup de folie which may well lead country to revolution”. He added “You who stand for Lebanese independence should meet force with force; I speak with voice of all Lebanese Christians when I say this coup d'état cannot be tolerated.

Mufti greeted me with “Are we slaves?” and I garnered following bits from his ensuing protest “This cannot be done. What is this constitution I protest strongly for all Moslems. We cannot let this bloodshed worsen. Reaction will be bitter and violent here and in all Arab countries and strongly prejudicial to United Nations’ cause”.

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29 See pp. 953 ff., passim.
Upon my return to Legation I found two further protests, one from speaker and six deputies who had installed themselves in Chamber before it was encircled by cordon of Senegalese troops. Informed of events of the night and prevented from lawfully meeting with their colleagues they protested to those countries which had recognized Lebanese independence and to sister Arab states.

Note: Shortly thereafter these deputies left Parliament under threat of forceful eviction but met again during afternoon in house of one of them with some 20 other deputies.

My second protest was from representatives of Plalange and Najjada, respectively leading Maronite and Moslem youth organizations. That these traditional rivals came as joint delegation illustrates unanimity of anti-French protest.

Later a representative delegation of nearly 100 doctors, lawyers, engineers and journalists visited Legation. Many among them were leaders in their professions and demonstrating for first time in their lives.

Tomorrow I am to see six foreign correspondents, four British and two American, flown here today in British plane from Cairo at Spears' suggestion.

There has been no further marked deterioration of public security during afternoon. Most shops remained closed. No crowds circulated, but there was little disorder beyond tearing down of French propaganda posters of de Gaulle. Largest crowd, perhaps 1,000, demonstrated at President's house where there was some shooting by Senegalese troops posted on neighboring roofs, two demonstrators who endeavored to enter house being shot in leg.

Lady Spears braved this fusillade and with President's wife, whom she found in terrified state, returned to British Legation amid demonstrators' applause. There are ugly tales of harsh and inconsiderate treatment by soldiery of member of President's family. American Legation automobile passing this crowd was also applauded.

British and American Army reports confirm general friendly attitude of populace toward two countries, but there is undercurrent of feeling that our declared principles are on trial. I sensed this too when receiving protests mentioned above.

A 6:30 curfew has cleared streets and on tour just made Legation Secretary found city "quiet as tomb" with few troops in evidence, only apparent evidence of disorder being half dozen still smouldering overturned French Army automobiles and as many ineffective barricades.

There are unconfirmed reports of tension accompanied by unimportant demonstrations in some provincial towns, notably Tripoli.
where Moslem leader and Deputy Karami was also arrested during night. I have just learned that he and Minister were taken to Rashaya where, according to Helleu, they will be treated considerately, like gentlemen and not as criminals.

British Legation is concerned lest these arrestees and President (who is reported held elsewhere possibly Chateau) be flown to French Africa; watch-out orders have been given British control authorities.

From British Legation I learn also that, having been unable to obtain appointment during morning to see Helleu, Spears sent him vigorous written protest against French action and methods and reserved liberty of action. Presumably because of reference therein to Helleu’s misleading answers to Spears’ questions of preceding evening, this note evoked acid reply which has led to near rupture between two Missions. Denying charge, reply said “My honor has no need of lessons [lessons?]”.

At 6 p.m. I visited Helleu by appointment and will report conversation in following section.

Following are highlights of my conversation with Helleu, delayed in coding because of shortness of staff.

I said I had had day of report and rumor, protest and worry. He replied he had found painful need for drastic action.

I said it was not only situation in country that troubled me but also probable reactions in neighboring Arab states. He saw no basis for serious concern unless others fished in troubled waters.

In Algiers he had obtained really practical propositions to make to Levant states. In confidence these were: He was to say National Committee was now prepared to ratify 1936 treaties 21 with minor modifications earlier suggested by states; then to negotiate for such transfer of common interests as exigencies of war might permit.

Note: This struck me as hypocrisy or ignorance, and latter seemed improbable; he must know for long Syria and now Lebanon would have nothing of treaties.

He insisted forcefully French policy was thus to accord independence to states; I had his “word of honor” for it.

He endeavored to explain, as in morning’s radio broadcast, that National Committee had given Lebanese Government every chance to act reasonably but the latter had refused Committee’s suggestion.

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21 Franco-Syrian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, signed at Damascus, December 22, 1936, and Franco-Lebanese Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, signed at Beirut, November 13, 1936. These treaties were never ratified by France. For texts, see France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban (année 1936), pp. 201 and 229, respectively.
This offense to France, similarly ignoring his request for delay was slap in face. He had but returned these acts in kind.

Reverting to his reference to fishers in troubled waters I asked: “Frankly do you mean the British; and do French today generally believe British are endeavoring to oust them from Levant and take their [apparent omission].” He replied in substance: “They are, there can be no doubt, it is more than policy of man on the spot. Churchill and Eden 22 have told Massigli 23 not to take Spears too seriously, that policy is determined only in London; but we know from long experience it is more than that.”

Note: Never before have I had so clear authentic answer to this question. I believe it constitutes one of two basic motives prompting present French action; other being imperialistic desire to retain hold on country. I said reports on reactions in other Arab countries to last week’s period of tension had been bad enough, up to [after?] today’s events they would be more bitter; result might well be serious undermining of United Nations’ position in Arab world. Should there not, as Spears suggests, have been prior consultations, between Allies? He replied he knew Spears was angry and “thinks I misled him by saying last evening that if anyone disturbed security it will not be I.” He added “Could I tell him what had been prepared in greatest secrecy for me to do that night[?] There should be no serious trouble if no one intervenes.”

I said reports of procedure of arrests, made in dead of night with seemingly intentional discourtesy and rough handling, were also troubling. He thought I would find reports exaggerated; there had been no lack of consideration for arrestees; they would be treated as gentlemen, not criminals.

I asked him to keep me informed of state of security. He agreed to do so. His reports were that during day only one person had been killed and two wounded, regretful though this was.

Note: American military tells me that while figures at time we talked were probably 5 killed and 20-odd wounded, extent of shooting (probably only some five to ten thousand shots) was relatively light.

Finally I urged him in interest of common war effort, to keep himself promptly informed on reactions in other Arab countries. He replied he held that effort in mind.

WADSWORTH

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22 Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
23 René Massigli, in charge of foreign affairs for the French Committee of National Liberation.
Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, November 11, 1943—8 p. m.
[Received November 12—9:14 a.m.]

2040. My 2038, November 11, 7 p.m. Following translation of telegram received today from Egyptian Prime Minister and Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

“In the name of the Egyptian Government I address to Your Excellency an energetic protest against the arbitrary action of the French Committee of National Liberation which has just ordered the arrest of the President of the Lebanese Republic, the Prime Minister and two Ministers. In addressing myself to the representative of the United States rampart of liberty and democracy I am convinced that the great power which is fighting for noble principles will exert itself to assure respect of the great Atlantic Charter to which the French Committee of National Liberation adhered. Its violation of the independence of the Lebanon is an act which cannot but arouse general condemnation and it will encounter in the United States I am sure a dolorous echo.”

I understand that protest also sent by Nahas to the British as military associates of Free French in occupation of Syria and Lebanon and co-guarantors of their independence. Third communication reported sent de Gaulle saying Egypt and all Arab peoples solidly behind Lebanese whom [whose] only wrong was to desire Independence Day; expressing astonishment that such an act could be committed by representatives of a France reputed as refuge of liberty; asking if such is the conduct to be expected of a France itself deprived of independence and liberty; asserting such violation of creed of United Nations is object of universal reproach; and concluding that if situation not remedied “Egypt will be led to consider its position vis-à-vis France in the light of events”.

Sent to the Department. Repeated to Beirut and Algiers.

Kirk

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Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, November 11, 1943—9 p. m.
[Received November 12—2:14 p.m.]

2041. My 2040, November 11, 8 p.m. The King sent for me this afternoon and protested emphatically against the French action in the Lebanon. He said that as ruler of Egypt which had in the past

King Farouk I.
striven for liberty and was seeking to strengthen its independence, he was profoundly shocked by the treatment of the Lebanese and was convinced that the repercussions throughout the Arab world would be extensive. If such methods and action were allowed, the prestige of the United Nations would be seriously impaired and faith in their declarations lost. He asked me to convey the foregoing to my Government.

The King added that he would have preferred to have allowed his personal delegation to the Lebanon to proceed as scheduled but as he feared that its arrival might aggravate the situation, he proposed to withhold it for the present in order to avoid additional complications which would harm the Allies and serve German interests.

I fully concur in the opinion that these events are thoroughly deplorable from the point of view of Allied prestige in the Middle East. The present crisis, however, cannot be judged solely on the basis of the defective French policy and methods in Syria and the Lebanon, for the problem of Anglo-French relations is also largely involved and in that it is necessary to consider the continued tortuousness of those relations in that area. An action on the part of our Government in the present crisis therefore must needs be predicated on the situation with which we are actually confronted without regard to the wisdom or folly of the parties to the development of that situation and based on the declared principle for which we stand.

Not repeated anywhere.

Kirk

890E.00/170: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, November 12, 1943—10 p. m.

270. Department instructed Murphy, promptly upon receipt of your telephonic message via Cairo, to insist on immediate restoration full and free code communications. Your 310, November 11, noon subsequently came through without delay. Please confirm receipt of Department's 266, November 9, repeating its 2096 to Algiers for Murphy. For your information Department is considering issuance disapproving public statement if response of French Committee is negative.

Sent to Beirut, repeated to London, Cairo, and Algiers.25 Hull

24a See footnote 8, p. 1009.
25 As telegrams Nos. 7142, 1731, and 2136, respectively.
The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, November 12, 1943—10 p.m.

269. You should have no official relations with Edde regime, as per your 310, November 11, noon.

Sent to Beirut. Repeated to London, Cairo and Algiers for Murphy.²⁵

Hull

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The Secretary of State to the Consul General at Algiers (Wiley)

WASHINGTON, November 12, 1943—midnight.

2139. (For Murphy.) Please urgently inform the French Committee of National Liberation that this Government has learned with surprise of the repressive action of the French authorities in the Lebanese Republic against the duly elected officials of that Republic. It is difficult to understand how the French, whose country is now groaning under the heel of the invader, can be unmindful of the aspirations toward independence of another people. The recent acts of the French authorities in the Lebanese Republic must cast the gravest doubt upon the sincerity of the avowed declarations of all the United Nations and this Government cannot permit itself to be associated in any way with such acts of repression. Unless therefore the French Committee of National Liberation takes prompt steps to restore the duly elected government of the Lebanese Republic and to implement the solemn promises of independence given to the Lebanese people in the name of the French National Committee in 1941, the Government of the United States will be obliged publicly to announce its complete disapproval of the acts of the French authorities in the Lebanese Republic and to take such further steps as may appear appropriate.

We would take such action only with the utmost reluctance but we feel that it would be less detrimental to the united war effort than for us by silence to appear to accept a situation which is contrary to the aims and principles for which the liberty-loving nations are fighting.

Sent to Algiers. Repeated to Beirut, London, Cairo,²⁷ for information of appropriate authorities.

Hull

²⁵ As telegrams Nos. 7141, 1730, and 2135, respectively.
²⁷ As telegrams Nos. 272, 7154, and 1734, respectively.
President Roosevelt to the President of the Republic of Syria
(Kouatli)\(^{28}\)

GREAT AND GOOD FRIEND: I have received with great pleasure your letter of August 17, 1943 (15 Chaaban 1362)\(^{29}\) announcing to me your assumption of the Presidency of the Republic of Syria following your election to that high post by the National Assembly.

I can assure you that the Government of the United States and the American people are following with sympathy and attention the progress of the Syrian Republic and welcome the establishment of the new Government which you head. I am confident that the close ties which have so long existed between our two nations will be strengthened during your Presidency and that this country and its Allies can count on the whole-hearted support and cooperation of the Syrian people in the great struggle in which we are engaged.

Please accept my best wishes for the prosperity of the Republic of Syria and for your own health and happiness.

Your Good Friend,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

WASHINGTON, November 12, 1943.

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Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

CAIRO, November 13, 1943.

[Received November 13—9:56 a.m.]

2066. My 2041, November 11, 9 p.m. Casey has just informed me that he is leaving immediately for Beirut as situation in Lebanon appears to be deteriorating and he wants to be on spot to evaluate conflicting reports emanating from area. If use of force by French continues he is inclined to use British military to restore order. He expects to return to Cairo tomorrow.

Casey informs me that British Government has demanded of French the immediate removal of Helleu, the liberation of the imprisoned members of the Lebanese Government, and a conference in London. If these demands are not met, Anglo-French relations, he implied, may be endangered.

Sent to Department repeated to Beirut.

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\(^{28}\) Transmitted by the Department to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut in Instruction No. 92, November 16, for forwarding to the President of the Republic of Syria.

\(^{29}\) Ante, p. 985.
The Chargé in Iraq (Gaudin) to the Secretary of State

Baghdad, November 13, 1943—noon.
[Received November 13—8:09 a.m.]

441. During a social call on Prime Minister Nuri yesterday he stated he was greatly disturbed at recent French action in Lebanon. He declared that unless rectified it would lower Anglo-American prestige in not only Near East but in all countries and will be considered an example of how British and Americans intend to live up to Atlantic Charter and other announced principles. Nuri is under impression constitutional amendments provided only for Arabic as official language and use of Lebanese flag. He believes an Anglo-French-American commission should be set up to handle security.

Government press and other informed opinion here is likewise disturbed and disappointed.

Repeated to Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo.

Gaudin

The Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State

Algiers, November 13, 1943—3 p.m.
[Received 10:25 p.m.]

1986. From Murphy [Murphy’s Office?]. In absence of Murphy who is returning from Italy this evening and since Massigli was at an extraordinary session of the Committee of National Liberation which is to last most of the day Chapin saw Meyrier and Guerin, the two Directors of Political Affairs and presented substance of Department’s observations as contained in 2096, November 9 (first section of this telegram was not received until last night). Chapin added that further telegrams from Department were then being decoded and probably some further representations would be made [by?] Murphy on his return since the only instructions we had received were sent before the explosion in Beirut.

Meyrier, who took notes, promised to deliver the views of our Government to Massigli the moment he was free. He said that later reports from Beirut indicated that situation had quieted down and that Syria was entirely calm. He said that General Catroux was leaving by air today or tomorrow morning for Beirut.

Selden Chapin, First Secretary of Embassy, on duty with the Personal Representative of the President in North Africa (Murphy).
Makins who has been in charge during Macmillan's absence stated he had been sent for last night by Massigli and de Gaulle who complained that the affair had been exaggerated, that recent election had been rigged by the British and that Spears had encouraged Lebanese to take action on the amendments to the constitution without waiting for French ratification. Makins had just received strong instructions from his Government which he proceeded to deliver. They were to the general effect, that, although Lebanese had given some provocation, the severity of French action was entirely unjustified, that the entire Near East had been greatly aroused to the point where a continuance of the disturbances might well affect the war effort and that British Government demanded that President and members of Lebanese Government and other political prisoners arrested by the French should be immediately released and restored to their positions. De Gaulle replied that if British Government should insist on this last stipulation and would not permit reinforcement of French forces in that area he would have to withdraw all French authority in that area and to let matters take their course. The conversation, although cordial, ended on that note.

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890E.00/184: Telegram

The Chargé in Iraq (Gaudin) to the Secretary of State

Baghdad, November 13, 1943—6 p.m.
[Received November 13—3:36 p.m.]

442. There follows the translation of a protest just received from the Palace in confirmation of a verbal protest made to me at noon today by the Acting Regent: I understand that he made a similar protest to the British Ambassador.

"Please convey to your Government in my name and in the name of the Iraqi Government our strong protest against the illegal activites which the French authorities have undertaken in the Lebanon by dissolving its constitutional Government, and arresting the President of the Republic and the head and members of the Government together with other members of the legal Parliament. We request the American Government to take the measures which it sees fit for returning the situation in the Lebanon to its legal course. We also request that French interferences in the Lebanon be stopped in accordance with the official promises which have been made in the name of the Allies for guaranteeing the independence of Syria and the Lebanon and in accordance with the provisions of the Atlantic Charter, as by

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*Roger M. Makins, Assistant to Harold Macmillan, British Minister Resident at the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, at Algiers.*
this action the French authorities have proved that they do not respect these pledges and pacts."

The text of a resolution of protest passed today by the Chamber and Senate and to be addressed to the United Nations is not yet available.

Repeated to Beirut, Damascus, Cairo and Jerusalem. GAUDIN

890E.00/188: Telegram

The Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State

ALGIERS, November 13, 1943—6 p.m.

[Received 11:58 p.m.]

1990. From Murphy. I received your 2139, November 12, midnight, on my return from Italy this evening and promptly called on Massigli.

Macmillan, with whom I consulted prior to visiting Massigli, arranged to call on the latter immediately afterwards. Macmillan informed me of the instructions received from his Government and the written communication handed to Massigli last evening by Makins in which the British Government demanded the immediate release of the political prisoners arrested in the Lebanon. Before I communicated to Massigli the contents of your instruction under reference he outlined to me the French position which I shall summarize as follows:

The French National Committee of National Liberation, acting within the scope of its mandate, fully intends that action be taken to respect the duly elected government of the Lebanese Republic. Incident to Helleu's visit to Algiers he had been instructed to the effect that the French Committee desires to ratify the treaty of 1936, which had failed of ratification by the French Parliament. Before Helleu could return to Beirut the Lebanese authorities decided (Massigli intimated that very possibly the action was inspired by Spears) by unilateral action to violate the mandate. The French insist that this is irregular in violation of their mandate and, if countenanced, seriously damaging their prestige. Massigli emphasized at this point that his associates, while deploiring the hasty and ill-advised acts of violence, nevertheless, believe that they have been jockeyed into a position which is not at all in accord with their intention.

Helleu, according to Massigli, ordered the police action on his own initiative without prior consultation with the Committee. As soon as news of the action was received in Algiers it was decided to despatch
Catroux to Beirut to negotiate a peaceful settlement. He leaves early Sunday morning.

Massigli also stated that Helleu, whose judgement apparently he does not rate highly, would be quietly shelved and that the political prisoners would be released.

However, it is his opinion that unless the French position looking to settlement of the mandate question by negotiation and bi-lateral action is acceptable that the Committee would decide to withdraw its authority and forces from the area as indicated in Chapin’s telegram No. 1986, November 13, 3 p. m.

Summing up Massigli insisted that the French Committee definitely respects the Government of the Lebanese Republic and proposes its complete and early independence to be arrived at in accordance with the terms of the mandate for which the Committee considers itself responsible.

Massigli also complained that the Cairo and Jerusalem radio stations have grossly exaggerated and misrepresented the entire affair. He denied especially a report that the Lebanese officials were seized by Senegalese troops.

I then communicated to Massigli the substance of your present instruction.

Macmillan feels as I do that Massigli is doing his utmost to arrive at a prompt solution which will satisfy the points made in your present telegram.

Sent to Department. Repeated to Beirut, London and Cairo.

[Murphy.]

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890E.00/176: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Kirk)

WASHINGTON, November 13, 1943—8 p. m.

1741. Please reply to the telegram from the Egyptian Prime Minister and Ministry for Foreign Affairs quoted in your 2040, November 11, 8 p. m. stating that this Government has welcomed this expression of the views of the Egyptian Government and informing them of the substance of this Government’s representations to the French National Committee as set forth in the Department’s recent telegrams to Algiers and Beirut, repeated to you in Department’s 1705, November 9, midnight; 1731, November 12, 10 p. m.; and 1734, November 12, midnight. 82

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82 See footnote 8, p. 1009; footnote 25, p. 1021; and footnote 27, p. 1022, respectively.
Your 2041, November 11, 9 p.m. Please make similar communication to King.
Sent to Cairo. Repeated to London, Algiers and Beirut.\(^{33}\)

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8902E.00/189: Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State

LONDON, November 13, 1943—8 p.m. 
[Received November 13—5:35 p.m.]

7928. Department’s 7154, November 12, midnight.\(^{34}\) Instructions conveyed to Murphy were indicated to the Foreign Office today which expressed satisfaction at the Department’s vigorous attitude. Foreign Office showed us copies of their messages to Algiers and said that they had been communicated to the British Embassy in Washington with instructions to inform the Department of their contents.

The Foreign Office takes a very gloomy view of the Lebanese situation; not only because Lebanon is a military theater, but also because of the potential reaction throughout the Arab states.

In connection with this latter point, the Foreign Office said that the Egyptian Government’s sensible attitude is highly satisfactory. Telegrams to Nahas Pasha and Nuri Pasha giving the British position in the Lebanese matter, which have not had final approval in the Foreign Office, are expected to be sent this evening. The Foreign Office describes the action taken by the Lebanese Parliament as precipitate and foolish, but it can find no excuse for the violence of the French action. The Foreign Office said that it had been its endeavor for a number of years to persuade the French to lighten their hand and give Syria an independence equal to that of Iraq. It had frequently been held out to the French that no serious steps had been taken by them to grant such independence which was within the meaning of the French mandate over the area.

The Foreign Office stated that the situation as described by Spears is considerably more dangerous than that as obtained by the War Office from its sources. The use of British troops to restore order is not desired if it can possibly be withheld, and instructions to this effect have been sent to the Middle East Command.

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\(^{33}\) As telegrams Nos. 7197, 2154, and 275, respectively.

\(^{34}\) See footnote 27, p. 1022.
Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Ailing)

[WASHINGTON,] November 13, 1943.

Mr. Hayter called to inform the Department of the steps which the British Government had taken in regard to the situation in the Lebanese Republic.

On the morning of November 11 Mr. Casey, the British Minister of State at Cairo, was informed that the British Government considered that the military situation demanded that order be kept in the Lebanon. If necessary, British forces were to intervene to maintain order. Mr. Casey was to inform the French, the Lebanese and the Syrians that the British could not tolerate disorders during the war. He was to suggest that the French come to a modus vivendi with the Lebanese and with the Syrians and suggest that a conference might be in order, to be attended by representatives of France, the Lebanon, Syria, the United Kingdom and the United States. Such a conference might assist in drawing up a provisional arrangement between France and the Levant States.

Mr. Macmillan at Algiers and Mr. Spears, the British Minister at Beirut, were to take action in accordance with the foregoing.

Later in the day the Foreign Office learned of the action taken by M. Helleu in arresting Lebanese officials. Thereupon further instructions were sent to Mr. Casey. These instructions, which were to be carried out by Mr. Macmillan at Algiers, were to urge the withdrawal of M. Helleu and the release of the Lebanese officials who had been arrested. The view was expressed that the Lebanese Chamber should continue in suspension until calm had been restored but that it should be permitted to reassemble at the earliest possible date. Authority was given for the use of British forces to maintain order.

At the same time, Mr. Macmillan was instructed to point out the deplorable effect which the French coup d'état had had in London.

On the following day, November 12, two telegrams were sent to Mr. Casey for action by Mr. Macmillan at Algiers. The first of these telegrams pointed out that the situation in the Lebanon had grown worse and worse and the French action more and more outrageous. As a result, excitement was growing throughout the entire Middle Eastern area. In the opinion of the Foreign Office, the French actions were wholly indefensible. The Foreign Office therefore urged compliance forthwith with the demand that M. Helleu be removed and the Lebanese politicians released. Mr. Macmillan was instructed to say that unless immediate satisfaction was received on these points, the

W. G. Hayter, First Secretary of the British Embassy.
British Government would take a line which could only be displeasing to the French.

Subsequently on November 12 further instructions were sent to Mr. Casey and Mr. Macmillan, pointing out that the British Cabinet had endorsed the above-mentioned demands and desired Mr. Macmillan to make clear to the French Committee of Liberation that future British relations with that Committee depended upon the readiness of the French to grant satisfaction on these demands.

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890E.00/201: Telegram

The Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State

Algiers, November 14, 1943—9 p.m.
[Received November 15—2 a.m.]

1998. From Murphy. Sent to Department, repeated to London, Cairo, Beirut.

Massigli called this morning with reference to our yesterday's conversation (see my 1990). I had confirmed our conversation by letter in which I conveyed to him communication as instructed by your 2139, November 12. Massigli asked whether Department would be willing to reconsider the second sentence of communication which Massigli affirms works great injustice to French authorities. It reads "It is difficult to understand how French whose country is now groaning under heel of the invader can be unmindful of the aspirations toward independence of another people".

I advised him I had no discretion in the matter but would refer question to Department. 38

General Catroux departed early this morning for Cairo and Beirut.
[Murphy.]

WILEY

890E.00/207: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

Beirut, November 14, 1943—9 p.m.
[Received November 15—5:34 p.m.]

314. Refer last paragraph my 313, November 13, 11 p.m. 39 I saw Casey very briefly this morning at his request. He said that he had seen number of representative leaders, talked at length with his own people and made up his mind: Local situation was full of explosive

38 See telegram No. 4, November 25, 9 p.m., to Algiers. p. 1048.

39 Not printed.
possibilities, might go from bad to worse, end up in full revolt; arrested Lebanese politicians would have to be released, Constitution and Parliament restored since our position in Middle East required it.

He said he would return to Cairo by air today, see Catroux there this evening and send latter here in his plane tomorrow morning. He believed 48 hours should be sufficient for Catroux with good will to clear up situation. If he did not, British would have to take [steps?], probably occupying chief urban centers of Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli, or perhaps by proclamation full martial law throughout country. On latter point no decision has been taken.

I said that before commenting on situation I wished he would read Department's latest instructions to Murphy. I showed him your 272, November 12, midnight. He read it with interest, commented it should be very helpful.

I then said that with such instructions in hand, I believed Spears and I could go to Arab leaders here, and by putting our cards frankly on table, obtain their ready and willing undertaking that there would be no insurrection. We should counsel patience, say wheels of diplomacy necessarily grind slowly.

I believe consequently that demonstrations could be kept "peaceful" except for isolated incidents. I added that if for instance, present quick-triggered French military patrols were replaced by British or mixed Allied military police, I thought there would be practically no serious disturbances of public security incited by native leaders.

He replied that this was interesting but in manner which suggested he had already made up his mind on need for British military intervention.

I suggested it might be desirable to have in mind even now at least some tentative outline of diplomatic formula for settlement. After brief discussion we reached something close to the following: Reestablishment of status quo ante November 11, with setting up of Allied Commission to negotiate with Syrian and Lebanese Governments for program which would insure progressive transfer to those Governments of all powers now retained by Fighting French further retention of which, by them or other Allied authorities, is not necessitated by conditions of war.

I explained that, by saying "Allied Commission" I had in mind that, by their actions on and since November 11, French had forfeited any claim they may have had to act in this matter exclusively for the Allies.

Finally, I asked if he believed new relationships with French and local governments would be worked out here with Catroux or whether, as others suggested, there should be conference in London. He was

* See footnote 27, p. 1022.
definite in reply that latter should be venue and Massigli himself required to represent Algiers Committee.

Repeated to London, Algiers, Cairo, Baghdad and Jidda.

WADSWORTH

\section*{Telegram}

\textit{The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State}

\textbf{Cairo, November 15, 1943—1 p. m.}

[Received 7:55 p. m.]

2086. Department's 1741, November 13, 8 p. m. I saw Nahas last night and informed him in sense of Department's telegram under reference. Nahas was obviously delighted to receive information and was profuse in thanks. I emphasized to both him and Under Secretary of Foreign Office that information was for background only and not for public announcement or publication and both expressed understanding and agreement.

Aside from Nahas' reiteration of firm attitude regarding Lebanon in yesterday's Wafd \(^i\) Jubilee speech only local developments have been arrival of Catroux here yesterday en route Beirut and appeal made by Nahas last night asking population to desist from demonstrations in order to avoid regrettable incidents and to leave to him handling of Lebanese question. Appeal was made after noisy, but as far as is known, not serious student demonstrations here yesterday including unruly scene in front of French Delegation which today being protected by riot squad. Consul in Alexandria, however, reports more serious disorders there yesterday with number of French shops smashed and incidental acts of hooliganism resulting in damage to other than French property. Consul adds that in view of apathy of Egyptian police British military police had to intervene yesterday but that local authorities apparently taking firmer hand today.

Sent to Department, repeated to Algiers and Beirut.

\section*{Telegram}

\textit{The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State}

\textbf{Cairo, November 15, 1943—1 p. m.}

[Received November 16—8:54 p. m.]

2095. My 2086, November 15, 1 p. m. In absence of King from Cairo I communicated to him today through the First Chamberlain

\(^i\) Egyptian political party of which Nahas Pasha was the head, traditionally occupying a strong nationalist position.
the same information regarding the attitude of the American Government on the Lebanese crisis which I conveyed to Nahas Pasha last night.

Kirk

890E.00/216: Telegram

*The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State*

Cairo, November 16, 1943—9 a. m.
[Received 10:14 p. m.]

2096. My 2066, November 13, 3 p. m. Casey upon his return from Beirut informs me that he considers the situation extremely serious in the Lebanon and is advocating the use of British troops in case of emergency and a notification to the French that Wednesday is the time limit for compliance with British demands, especially the stipulation as to the release of the members of Lebanese Government. He had a conference with Catroux this morning who rehearsed at length the French thesis and complaints including alleged British political machination in the Levant States. As Catroux gave the impression that he did not consider speed of the essence in dealing with the present crisis and expressed the hope that his hand would not be forced, Casey told him that he considered any delay as not only jeopardizing Anglo-French relations but endangering further the situation in the Lebanon which might gravely deteriorate any moment. Catroux is expected to leave for Beirut this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

Repeated to Beirut and Algiers.

Kirk

890E.00/217: Telegram

*The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State*

Beirut, November 17, 1943—1 p. m.
[Received 7:15 p. m.]

316. Farrell 42 now in Beirut reports following chronology of Damascus reactions and events arising from Franco-Lebanese crisis.

First publication of Algies Communiqué and Lebanese response thereto occurred in Damascus press November 6. There was no immediate reaction either among public or in Parliament which was sitting that afternoon and evening.

Premier whom I saw that evening November 7 did not appear alarmed at situation and seemed optimistic that Helleu would return from Algiers with suitable solution. Looking back, this attitude

42 William S. Farrell, Second Secretary at Damascus, and Chargé in the absence of the Diplomatic Agent (Wadsworth) who was in residence at Beirut.
seems well to have characterized Syrian opinion until crystallized by
November 11 events.

Incidentally Premier seemed more concerned at Egyptian Ahram
news item of November 5 reproducing Willkie’s and Dewey’s 43 decla-
rations advocating opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration.

November 8 all quiet. Iraqi Chargé d’Affaires presenting letter
of credence to Syrian Foreign Office. On morrow press editorialized
on “Sagesse Syrienne,” hinting contrast to Lebanese imprudence.

November 10 I saw Foreign Minister Mardam. Although reflect-
ing Premier’s attitude, he seemed more keenly interested, having
returned from consultations in Beirut, and inquired concerning likely
U.S. attitude to French Levant policy if situation worsened. He
commented that at Cairo Arab union talks solidarity of viewpoint was
achieved.

Early morning November 11 telephone calls from French Delega-
tion informed foreign representatives of cancellation of Damascus
Armistice Day parade. Rumors of Lebanese events reached us in
mid-morning but French imposed obtrusive telephone service and
neither Legation nor British Consulate could contact Beirut.

First approximately accurate news was vouchsafed by arrival
courier toward noon. Damascus Moslem, American-educated Deputy
Sharabati called to say that public feeling now ran high, with majority
of deputies inclined to cede to public pressure for immediate
demonstrations.

President and Cabinet, he said, succeed in circumventing manifesta-
tions by argument that Syria now possesses its own government which
should handle these problems; there was moreover wide speculation
concerning American and British reaction; would our policies toward
French in Levant in last analysis let Syrians down were they to
manifest solidarity with Lebanese.

Friday 12th passed quietly except for noonday mosque ferment, and
that evening dining at Sharabati’s house I learned of prospective
midnight arrival of Lebanese parliamentary delegation referred to in
Beirut Legation’s current telegrams. I was also told Damascus
deputies and elements of populace desired specially to synchronize
demonstrations with those expected to break out in Moslem Lebanese
towns of Sidon and Tripoli.

November 13 evening witnessed orderly protest closing of Damascus
shops and bazaar area. No French armed force was in sight and order
was easily maintained by Syrian police. Delegation of 1,000 Damascus
students demonstrated at Legation and before friendly Consulates.
Five student spokesmen presented written protest condemning
France’s acts in Lebanon adducing Atlantic Charter. I shook hands

43 Wendell L. Willkie, Republican nominee for President in 1940, and Thomas
E. Dewey, Governor of New York.
with them on balcony to cheers of crowd. Shouts for Arab Lebanon were most frequent. No religious issue was voiced. Prominently waved was impromptu version of Lebanese flag abolishing France’s vertical striped tri-color for horizontal striped Syrian colors with three red Lebanon cedars replacing Syrian stars.

My translated reply that protests would be reported to American Government; that though Allies were busily engaged fighting war they would surely not fail to examine Lebanon’s case sympathetically; and conclusion that Allies are out to win this war elicited some cheers for Allied victory.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister had invited me to call. He handed me copy of note of even date to French Ambassador Helleu (so termed rather than Delegate General) expressing Syrian Government’s protest against French action yet making no demand for redress. On contrary note restrainedly states Syrian Government finds itself obliged to “accept with imposed reserve new situation created in Lebanon”.

Mardam again voiced interest as to American attitude and expressed hope that this time Catroux, soon to arrive from Algiers, would bring equitable solution. Sense of Department’s 272, November 12, midnight 44 quoting instructions to Algiers will be communicated to him on my return to Damascus. Please instruct Damascus direct in Brown Code if he may be shown full text. Shops remained closed in demonstration on Sunday but Monday many opened at behest of President. This is confirmed by Egyptian Chargé d’Affaires who interviewed Syrian Prime Minister Monday. He adds that French have assured Syrian Government they will attempt nothing in Syria and will make any reasonable concessions to Syrian demands.

President, Premier and Foreign Minister seem thus to take less outraged and uncompromising attitude than Syrian Parliament and public. They realize that their compatriots unlike the Lebanese, can easily get out of hand with ensuing bloodshed and unpredictable results. They wish to avoid this at all costs, feeling they can handle French diplomatically, so long as methods short of violence are used; believing that should violence occur French would be obliged to request British assistance. They want no clash with Ninth Army.

Syrian Parliament met 4 p.m. November 15 and whole session was devoted to Franco-Lebanese crisis. Government’s attitude was calm while Parliament stormed, with added excitement from visitors’ gallery. Mardam ended session with speech again urging calm and speaking confidence in Government.

Repeated London, Baghdad, Cairo, Algiers and Jidda.

WADSWORTH

44 See footnote 27, p. 1022.
250. Please inform Acting Regent and Prime Minister that this Government has welcomed the expression of their views on the Lebanese crisis reported in your 441, November 13, noon and 442, November 13, 6 p.m. You may assure them that this Government promptly and firmly expressed to the French Committee of National Liberation at Algiers its complete disapproval of the repressive acts of the French authorities at Beirut and its expectation that the Committee would take prompt steps to restore the duly elected Government of the Lebanese Republic and to implement the solemn promises of independence given to the Lebanese people in the name of the French National Committee in 1941.

Sent to Baghdad. Repeated to Cairo and Beirut.

HULL

8050. The Foreign Office is disturbed that no clarification of the Lebanese situation has yet appeared. The British Government does not have in mind an immediate return to the status quo ante but it does insist on immediate release of the arrested members of the Lebanese Government. This does not mean their resumption at once of authority. The British Government does not feel that a complete return to the former situation would have a calming effect; in fact, the Foreign Office is of the opinion that the hotheads in the Government would incite the Lebanese deputies to further aggravations against the French. What the British Government apparently contemplates is a modus vivendi to carry the Lebanon through the war period. This would mean concession by the French of a number of the powers which they have retained and which are entirely unnecessary in the conduct of the war. Nevertheless, certain powers would be retained by the French for obvious reasons. These are security, communications, control of the frontiers, and certain economic powers. Although final approval has not been given by the British Cabinet, if such approval is conceded it is the intention of the British to convey this suggestion to Catroux. It is understood that Casey may fly to Beirut, and, if some settlement has not been reached by Sunday, the
British will declare martial law in the Lebanon, but it is their wish to avoid this if possible. (The Foreign Office stated that the Department had already been informed of this possibility.)

In conclusion, the Foreign Office stated they are just as anxious to avoid misunderstandings and further difficulties with the French over this affair as they are to keep the Arab states from boiling over in indignation because of the French behavior in the Lebanon.

Repeated to Algiers, Beirut and Cairo.

WINANT

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890E.00/210: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, November 19, 1943—10 p. m.

280. Department fully approves decision reported in your 315, November 15, 9 p. m. against participation of United States Military Police in any security patrols. Such American military personnel should be employed solely for protection of American lives and property. War Department concurs in foregoing.

In view of British military responsibility in area and of British commitments to which this Government is not a party, the British should take the initiative in any action which might be necessitated by French failure to meet the British or our own demands, or by undue delay in doing so. The Department would give careful consideration to a request from the French or British or both for American participation in a settlement, including membership in an "Allied Commission" of the type suggested in your 314, November 14, 9 p. m., but this Government is not prepared to take the lead in this respect, or to assume any new military responsibilities in this connection.

HULL

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890E.00/270

Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Alling)

[WASHINGTON,] November 19, 1943.

Mr. Hayter, First Secretary of the British Embassy, telephoned to me today with further reference to the Lebanese situation. He said that the hour of 10 a. m. Sunday, which had been set as the time limit for French action on the British demands, had now been

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45 Not printed.
postponed to 10 a.m. Monday. If by that hour the French have not acted, British martial law will be declared in the Lebanon.

Paul H. Alling

890E.60/235: Telegram

The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

Cairo, November 20, 1943—7 a.m.
[Received 7:50 a.m.]

2128. My voluntary comment on London's 8050, November 18, 7 p.m., repeated here is that the expedient apparently under consideration is immoral in concept and pernicious in effect.

Kirk

890E.60/244: Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State

London, November 20, 1943—9 p.m.
[Received November 20—8 p.m.]

8136. For Secretary and Under Secretary. The Committee at Algiers and Catroux have been informed that unless the French reinstate the duly elected Lebanese Government by Monday, November 22, 10 a.m., the British will declare martial law in the Lebanon. Opinion has somewhat changed in the Foreign Office regarding the restoration of the arrested Ministers to authority. It is now felt that the Lebanese Government should resume its functions as soon as practicable and it is believed that the Lebanese Ministers will realize that they should in future act less abruptly. The British suggestions regarding a modus operandi have been conveyed to the Committee at Algiers and to Catroux and the Foreign Office feels that eventually the Committee will become aware that they must find a way to mollify the Lebanese people.

The proclamation of martial law, if necessary, would be a step taken with extreme reluctance. The Foreign Office says emphatically that the British are not playing politics in the Middle East and that their sole aim is to preserve order. The situation in the Lebanon, according to the Foreign Office, has somewhat deteriorated; there have been riots in Cairo and there is fear of trouble in Palestine. The Foreign Office said that if a major political crisis should arise in the area it would mean the immobilization of Allied troops to enforce order; this is certainly not desired.

Winant
The Secretary of State to the Chargé at Damascus (Farrell)

WASHINGTON, November 20, 1943—9 p. m.

5. Please inform Syrian authorities, replying to your query in Beirut's 316, November 17, 1 p. m., that this Government promptly and firmly expressed to the French Committee of National Liberation at Algiers its complete disapproval of the repressive acts of the French authorities in Lebanon and its expectation that the Committee would take prompt steps to restore the duly elected Government of the Lebanese Republic and to implement the solemn promises of independence given to the Lebanese people in 1941 in the name of the French National Committee.

HULL

The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant)

WASHINGTON, November 20, 1943—midnight.

7373. It would appear from your 8050, November 18, 7 p. m. that in spite of the action of the British and American Governments in welcoming the recent establishment of an elected Government in the Lebanon, the Foreign Office is contemplating a solution of the Lebanese situation which does not call for the restoration of the duly elected Lebanese Government and Parliament.

This is directly contrary to the understanding of the British position we have received from the British Embassy here, which informs us that Macmillan was specifically instructed on November 13 that in demanding the release of the arrested Lebanese personalities, the British Government intended that they should be released not as private persons but as President and Ministers, whereupon they would automatically resume their official status.

Please clarify immediately.

Sent to London. Repeated to Cairo, Beirut and Algiers for Murphy. 46

HULL

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State

LONDON, November 21, 1943—5 p. m.

[Received November 21—2: 52 p. m.]

8145. Your 7373, November 20, midnight. As indicated in Embassy's 8136, November 20, 9 p. m., Foreign Office opinion had changed

46 As telegrams Nos. 1790, 284, and 2223, respectively.
and the restoration of the arrested Ministers to authority was contemplated. We have confirmed that instructions were sent to Macmillan to the effect that he should demand the release of the arrested Lebanese personalities and their restoration to their official status.

Foreign Office has just told Embassy that some progress has been made. The French have agreed to dismiss Helleu [apparent omission] and to release [apparent omission] however they are not prepared to reinstate the Ministers but maybe they would be willing to restore the President to authority. The Foreign Office says that negotiations are going on “hammer and tongs.” Due to delays in communication, particularly between Catroux and Algiers, the time for the declaration of martial law has been postponed until 10 a.m., Wednesday, November 24.

Repeated to Cairo, Beirut and Algiers.

WINANT

8903:00/255: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 22, 1943—5 p.m.
[Received November 23—3:50 p.m.]

327. Lebanese situation has, of course, radically changed since despatch yesterday of my 326, November 21, 11 a.m.47

At noon I saw Catroux who spoke frankly of British ultimatum and of what his actions would be were it to be enforced by declaration scheduled for this morning of British martial law; but he was most reserved when I asked what line French action might be expected to take were Algiers to yield to ultimatum. The whole affair reminded him of Fashoda.48

He did not believe de Gaulle would yield but he still hopes some sort of compromise could be worked out at Algiers or London which would give him more time to work out local solution. Failing this he would, on British military taking over country, have to withdraw all French troops and all French civilians in official or public services placed under British control; for them to remain would be “too humiliating”.

He insisted (and by implication Algiers Committee) had not known in advance of “Helleu’s ill-considered action”; had he himself been in charge he would have simply issued decree declaring Chamber’s action

47 Not printed.
48 Crisis in relations between France and Great Britain in 1898 when the French established a military post at Fashoda on the Nile River in territory claimed by Great Britain for Egypt.
in amending constitution to be "illegal, null and void" and would then have negotiated for solution of problem.

Suspension of constitution he added, was "prime stupidity"; this required ratification as did unnecessary detention of President and Ministers; he had already decided to release latter before receiving British ultimatum; in fact he had had President brought to see him last Thursday and Premier last Friday.

I stressed that our overriding interest in matter was united war effort and that restoration of duly elected Parliament and officials appeared to be only effective way of maintaining confidence of Lebanon, Middle East and our smaller Allies in our bona fides.

Later in day Syrian Foreign Minister called to assure me only restoration of status quo ante would satisfy Syrian Government, Parliament and people. If this be not done, he said, there will be more and far more serious trouble in Syria. As to future negotiations he said that Algiers' "liberal" offer to ratify 1936 treaties, even with modifications and transfer of common interests, was unacceptable; Government in either [neither?] Levant state would hold Parliamentary confidence were it to propose solution on basis of such treaties or of continuance of exercise of mandatory authority by Algiers Committee.

Other callers representative of local thought whom I had asked to talk with George Allen (here for 1-day visit en route Cairo) supported this view and it was confirmed by formal note from Abi Shahla "government". Latter communicated and stressed seriousness of considered vote of Parliament that country "is on verge of revolution" and that only solution for this dangerous crisis is "return to constitutional life of November 10".

Late in afternoon General Holmes called to discuss situation and renew his expression of serious concern at interference with war effort which would be entailed were Ninth Army to have to declare martial law and assume responsibility for Government and internal security of country.

Shortly before 8 p.m. first word of Algiers yielding was flashed in Arabic broadcasts from Palestine and London. Its lack of detail mattered not; in 10 minutes perhaps half Beirut was in streets cheering "Long live Sheikh Beshara," down with Edde, three cheers for constitution, independence Riad Solh".

But as evening passed and wiser heads heard broadcast details (that while President and Ministers were to be released, only former was to

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49 Assistant Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs.
50 Beshara el-Khoury, President of the Republic of Lebanon.
51 Riad es-Solh, Lebanese Prime Minister.
be reinstated) ardor dampened and rump decisions were taken that
general strike and protest would be maintained pending full restora-
tion of status quo ante.

Shortly before first broadcast Spears received telegram from Lon-
don saying ultimatum time limit had been extended 48 hours. He had
replied by vigorous protest, warning again that local situation was
highly explosive.

At 10 p.m. Spears saw Catroux who, according to British Legation,
said Algiers communiqués had been issued without his knowledge;
he expected to release detainees, probably next day; President would
be reinstated, decision as to others had not been taken; Helleu’s decrees
of November 10 (see section 3, my 311, November 11, 8 p.m.⁵²) would
be rescinded so soon as Helleu left country; detailed instructions were
still awaited.

Crowds gathered again early this morning. President and Minis-
ters had not returned to their homes; there were angry mutterings.
Deputies who had assembled at Premier’s home were carried to Par-
liament by crowd of several thousand; French troops stood aside;
Lebanese gendarmerie made them welcome; they took one provisional
decision, that should their cause be won this date would henceforth be
celebrated as Lebanon’s Independence Day.

Day before Abi Shahla Government had ruled provisionally that
Lebanese flag (perpendicularly striped French with green cedar on
white band) should henceforth be horizontal broad white striped bear-
ing cedar between half red stripes. Crowd leaders lowered old flag
on Government Building and municipality and raised new flag thereon
and over Parliament and Presidency.

Executive committees of Lebanese National Congress and Women’s
Federation met and took decisions that Algiers’ decisions did not meet
national aspirations. Delegations called on Legation; scene resem-
bled that of November 12 (see section 1 my 313, November 13, 11
p.m.⁵³) but no French troops arrived to mar their orderly protests.
I am told that as of preceding evening Catroux’s directive was that
orderly demonstration[s] were not to be molested.

Word circulated that President and Ministers would be brought
from Rashaya prison about 12 p.m. Hour was exact; more thou-
sands cheered arrival at President’s house. Shortly thereafter a
Minister announced Catroux would call, that Arab hospitality pre-
scribed “the guest is always welcome”, that if crowd could not cheer
him it should remain silent. It did.

Hour later amid cheers of crowd Premier showed Catroux to his
car. Deputies foregathered to be informed that Catroux had said

⁵² Section 3 begins with paragraph reading “Abi Shahla made to us . . .”, p. 1014.
⁵³ Not printed.
in substance: "I sincerely regret this incident. Helleu was personally responsible; he is leaving for Algiers tomorrow morning. Thereupon decree will be published rescinding those he issued; status quo ante will thus be reestablished."

Ensuing discussion led to decision that official restoration will take place Wednesday morning; tomorrow Ministers will arrange unofficially for its celebration by all the nation. Meanwhile general strike will continue, to be ended Wednesday by Presidential manifesto calling for resumption of normal life.

All this was told me by special messenger sent by President with assurance of his and Government's highest appreciation of American support and aid. He returned with my warmest personal congratulations to President and Government. I added I felt certain I spoke as well for my Government. I asked if I might call in person; half hour later appointment for tomorrow morning was made.

I should be grateful if Department would send me urgently some special message to deliver on Wednesday morning.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/249 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State

LONDON, November 22, 1943—6 p. m.

[Received 9:04 p. m.]

8137. Reference Embassy’s 8145, November 21, 5 p. m. A discussion with the Foreign Office on the Lebanon has brought forth the following points:

Although the situation has become somewhat better because of the release of the President and the Ministers, the Foreign Office believes that the situation is still potentially dangerous. Should the Ministers not be reinstated, they would presumably remain at liberty and might very well incite the populace to further disturbances. Should they be reinstated, however, without any understanding with them, they might again take measures which would inflame the French.

At the present time, Spears is working on the Ministers to get them into a reasonable frame of mind and to convince them they must take no aggressive action if they are reinstated, and Macmillan is working on the French Committee to persuade it to reinstate the Ministers.

The British Cabinet has decided that it cannot yield on the status of the Ministers and instructions to this effect were sent last night to Macmillan as Catroux apparently has said that the question of the reinstatement of the Ministers rests with the Committee in Algiers.

In the same cable, the Foreign Office also informed Macmillan that
the British Government believes that negotiations for a *modus vivendi* (see the Embassy’s 8050, November 18, 7 p.m.) should begin within 24 hours of the release of the President and the Ministers. Macmillan has been instructed to say that the 48 hours’ delay in the institution of martial law should not be taken lightly and that the British will take this action if necessary.

The Foreign Office told Macmillan that the Committee might find the word “reinstatement” difficult and that any restitution to the Ministers of their authority could be simply on the basis of their resumption of the functions which they were unable to fulfill while under arrest. Certainly they are legal Ministers duly chosen under constitutional methods and therefore have never been deprived of their rights by any constitutional action. The British believe that all the Arab States will think along these lines and that it is therefore essential that the Ministers be reinstated to authority. Should the President be forced to choose other Ministers the question of personalities would be injected and they would, of course, have to be acceptable to the Committee. The Foreign Office said that such action would naturally delay the negotiations for a *modus vivendi* which, as already indicated, the British consider vital for a settlement of this question.

Repeated to Cairo, Beirut and Algiers.

WINANT

890E.00/258: Telegram

*The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*

**Algiers, November 22, 1943—midnight.**

[Received November 24—6:56 a.m.]

6. From Murphy. As the British Government continues to press for the immediate reinstatement to office of the Lebanese Ministers, Massigli is trying this morning to convince the French Committee of National Liberation to authorize Catroux to take this step which it is understood he favors. By agreement with Macmillan, Massigli is trying to avoid appearance of British pressure and if decision is taken it will be presented as spontaneous French action.

Massigli said that two members Helleu’s staff—Boegner and Balieu—had resigned to manifest their sympathy for their chief. Massigli is sending Ostrorog *54* to Beirut to assist Catroux. Department will recall him as member of staff of Foreign Office at Vichy where he served until last spring handling Russian and Far Eastern

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*54 Count Stanislas Ostrorog, Second French Delegate in Syria and Lebanon.*
affairs. He has always maintained a friendly attitude toward the United States.

Sent Department and repeated to Cairo and Beirut. [Murphy.]

WILSON

890E.00/249: Circular telegram

The Secretary of State to the Consul General at Algiers (Wiley)

WASHINGTON, November 23, 1943—7 p.m.

Please see Massigli urgently and make it clear to him that this Government maintains the position expressed in its 2139, November 12, midnight, and is thus in full accord with the British views summarized in London’s 8157, November 22, 6 p.m. For Wilson.

In our opinion anything less than a restoration of the constitutional situation would not be consistent with the French promises of independence and the French action in arranging for the holding of elections and reestablishing constitutional Government in Lebanon. Having accepted and indeed welcomed this constitutional procedure and entered into relations with the resulting Lebanese Government, we would not be willing to recognize an arbitrarily imposed or appointed successor in its stead. It would seem to us that the easiest and least embarrassing action for the French to take would be the simple annulment of the decrees issued by Helleu on November 11.

While the repressive acts of Mr. Helleu have unquestionably aroused strong resentment on the part of the Lebanese officials, we are confident that they could be persuaded to be reasonable, if assured that the French would likewise be reasonable, and should be glad to instruct Wadsworth to use his best efforts to this end.

Sent to Algiers. Repeated to London, Cairo and Beirut.

HULL

890E.00/254: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, November 23, 1943—9 p.m.

[Received November 23—6:40 p.m.]

329. Projected decree referred to in fourth last paragraph my 327, November 22, 5 p.m., was issued yesterday evening signed by Chataigneau as Delegate General and Plenipotentiary ad Interim.

It abrogates all but first article of decree 464 and all of decree 465 reported in section 3, my 311, November 11, 8 p.m.

Non-abrogated article prescribes that act voted by Lebanese Parliament modifying constitution November 8 “is devoid of all legal character; it is null and void”.

WADSWORTH
BEIRUT, November 24, 1943—2 a. m.
[Received 4:09 p.m.]

330. Yesterday I called as arranged on President Khourri. President received me flanked by released Premier and Ministers, Vice Premier, who had come from Bishamun, and several leading Deputies. He made short evidently sincere address expressing his and his Government’s heartfelt thanks for American support. “Even when things looked blackest”, he said, “we never lost faith that democratic principles would prevail.” Your flag and representative were applauded by crowd filling street approaches.

At Raschaya detainees told me they had been submitted to “prison regime.” President had been given a sergeant’s room with no special amenities and Premier one with camp bed, table and chair. Other four (three Ministers and Deputy Karami) were held in one room furnished only with four camp beds and chairs.

It was only last Friday after full week solitary confinement that President, after secret nocturnal visit to Catroux, was permitted to talk with Premier and only next day, following latter’s similar nocturnal talk, that both were permitted to see other detainees. French troops guarded prison without, Lebanese gendarmes within.

News of developments was got to them secretly. In talks with Catroux, therefore, President and Premier refused all suggested compromise solutions. Only full restoration of status quo ante was acceptable.

They considered Chataigneau decree reported in my 329, November 23, 9 p.m. as satisfactory, on understanding that retention of non-abrogated article of Helleu’s decrees means simply that French Committee maintains its position that Chamber’s modification of constitution was illegal, while they continue to maintain the contrary.

After lunch President saw Catroux and later sent me message that Catroux had said Algiers Committee approved all his actions but still felt Ministry should not be reinstated and that President should exercise his constitutional authority to revoke their appointments. President answered he would have none of it as Ministry enjoyed full support of Parliament and people. Catroux commented he expected such reply but asked that President call off demonstrations. Latter answered they were spontaneous and harmless and would subside after restoration.
 Shortly thereafter Catroux wrote formally to President that Algiers Committee “considers that the return to power of the Prime Minister and Ministers in office on November 8, 1943 is not possible at present.” To this President and Ministry replied by action; they went together to Sérail (Government offices) where crowd of thousands gathered and Premier spoke briefly from balcony saying Ministry had resumed office and calling for return to normal life today. Actually all shops opened at early hour and crowds are in holiday mood.

Message received this morning from Presidency says President has received formal note from Catroux saying he had received yesterday evening text of new decision by Algiers Committee adopting his views regarding “the immediate resumption of power by the Cabinet presided by Riad Solh.”

Thus, before expiration of extended time limit of British ultimatum, all its terms were met by French. And Catroux, accompanied by Acting Delegate General, have since called formally on President and Government now reinstated in office and reinstalled in Government offices.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/256 : Telegram

The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State

Algiers, November 24, 1943—2 p.m.
[Received November 24 (25?)—2:43 a.m.]

22. Following repeated to London, Cairo and Beirut.

Massigli told me last night French Committee had approved Catroux’s recommendation that Lebanese Ministers be reinstated. Comité has thus complied with conditions laid down by British. It will now, according to Massigli, be a question of negotiations between French and Lebanese to cover the situation during the war period and bring mandate into harmony with the independence that has been promised.

Massigli said British attitude had been extremely hard and caused much resentment here. He gave, however, much credit to Macmillan for what he termed his skillful and understanding handling of the matter.

WILSON
The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State

Algiers, November 24, 1943—6 p.m.
[Received November 25—2:40 a.m.]

23. Your circular of November 23, 7 p.m., crossed my 22, November 24, 2 p.m. The information given in the latter telegram was confirmed to me this morning by Makins who stated that the French Committee by approving Catroux’s recommendation that the Ministers be reinstated has met the British conditions and that it is now a matter negotiation of the modus vivendi between the French and the Lebanese. In view of this it seems to me advisable, for the moment at least, to make no further representations to Massigli unless and until it should appear that the French are behaving badly in the matter of the negotiations.

Macmillan left for Cairo this morning apparently satisfied that matters are in a satisfactory way of settlement.

WILSON

The Secretary of State to the Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth)

WASHINGTON, November 25, 1943—7 p.m.

285. Owing to delay in receipt of your 327, November 22, 5 p.m. Department was unable to send special message for delivery to Lebanese President this morning. It is suggested that you may desire to communicate to him, if you have not already done so, a summary of this Government’s views as expressed in recent telegrams to Algiers.

HULL

The Secretary of State to the American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation atAlgiers (Wilson)

WASHINGTON, November 25, 1943—9 p.m.

4. For Wilson. See Murphy’s 1998, November 14, 9 p.m. and Department’s 2208, November 19, midnight. You are authorized to inform the French Committee of National Liberation that we withdraw from the written record and consider as orally expressed the second sentence of communication made in compliance with Department’s 2139, November 12, midnight.

Sent to Algiers. Repeated to London, Cairo and Beirut.

HULL

Latter not printed.
Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Alling)\textsuperscript{56}

[WASHINGTON,] November 25, 1943.

The White House informed the Department under date of November 20, 1943 that the President thought we should support the British position in Lebanon and even try to make it more positive.

Promptly upon receipt of this message, on November 21, 1943, Mr. Hayter was informed that this Government could be counted upon to support the British Government’s policy on Lebanon communicated to the Department on November 18, 1943.

PAUL H. ALLING

\textsuperscript{56} Addressed to the Adviser on Political Relations (Murray), the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), the Under Secretary of State (Stettinius), and the Secretary of State.

Statement Issued to the Press by the Department of State, November 26, 1943

The Government of the United States has noted with approval the action of the French Committee of National Liberation in releasing and restoring to office the President and Ministers of the Lebanese Republic and in abrogating the decrees issued on November 11, 1943, suspending the Lebanese Constitution, dissolving the Lebanese Parliament and naming a “Chief of State, Chief of Government.”

The situation in Lebanon is thus restored to a normal basis, and it is the earnest hope of this Government that friendly negotiations can now proceed in an atmosphere of good will on both sides for the solution of the underlying issue of the independence of the Levant States.

By way of background, it may be recalled that the independence of Syria and Lebanon was contemplated in the terms of the Class A Mandate over these States entrusted to France by the League of Nations. American rights in these States were defined in the Treaty of 1924 between the United States and France.\textsuperscript{57} The Government of the United States has subsequently expressed its sympathy and that of the American people with the aspirations of the Syrian and Lebanese peoples for the full enjoyment of sovereign independence. The proclamations of independence issued in the name of the French National Committee in 1941 were welcomed as steps toward the realization of these aspirations, and this Government extended limited

\textsuperscript{57} Signed at Paris, April 4, 1924, \textit{Foreign Relations, 1924}, vol. 1, p. 741.
recognition to the local Governments established thereunder by accrediting to them a Diplomatic Agent. More recently, this Government observed with satisfaction the successful establishment of elected Governments in these States. Moreover, the Eastern Mediterranean is a theater of war. While it is an area of primary British strategic responsibility, any activities therein which hamper the general war effort are of concern to all the United Nations.

800E.00/298: Telegram

The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State

ALGIERS, December 2, 1943—6 p. m.

[Received December 3—3:05 a. m.]

83. I had a talk yesterday with General Catroux. He said that Helleu had acted very badly, "inexcusably"; and far beyond his instructions. He said that when he left Algiers for Beirut he had in mind the solution which in fact was ultimately reached. The British ultimatum, however, had made it more difficult to work things out because of the resentment produced within the French Committee and particularly on de Gaulle.

He expects to leave again for Beirut on December 5 and hopes to negotiate a modus vivendi with the Lebanon and also one with Syria comprising a series of agreements. His aim is to give France the same position in these countries that the British have in Iraq and Egypt. His policy is to protect the legitimate interests of his own country; e.g., schools, hospitals, airfields, ports and then with reservation of certain matters essential to the war effort, such as internal security, communications, movement of foreigners, to grant complete independence. He referred to the mandates as well as to our 1924 treaties as "essentially juridical conceptions." He said that he intended to turn over the "common interests." He remarked that it was most important that the solution given the "incident" should not be regarded as a British victory over the French, as it would be deplorable all round to renew Franco-British rivalry in the Levant.

He spoke with appreciation of the attitude of Wadsworth but said that unquestionably the affair had been embittered by Spears who, willingly or unwillingly, occupies the position in the eyes of the Lebanese of Champion of any and all Lebanese claims against France.

His attitude seemed to me fair and reasonable. He said that he was hopeful of success in the forthcoming negotiations.

Sent Department repeated to London, Beirut, Cairo.

WILSON
THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE FRENCH COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (WILSON) TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

ALGIERS, DECEMBER 4, 1943—9 P.M.
[RECEIVED DECEMBER 5—4:32 A.M.]

92. MY 83, DECEMBER 2, 6 P.M. General Catroux told me today that he has postponed his departure for Beirut for a week because of matters requiring his attention here. He said that the views which he had expressed to me regarding the manner in which he intends to deal with affairs in the Levant had been approved by de Gaulle and the Committee.

Sent Department, repeated to London, Beirut and Cairo.

WILSON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, BY THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE (STETTINIUS)

[WASHINGTON,] DECEMBER 13, 1943.

Lord Halifax called to see me today. He said he had just had word that his Foreign Office felt our statement on the Lebanon was excellent and that it pleased the British immensely.

EDWARD S[ETTINIUS]

THE DIPLOMATIC AGENT AND CONSUL GENERAL AT BEIRUT (WADSWORTH) TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

BEIRUT, DECEMBER 16, 1943—NOON.
[RECEIVED 4:15 P.M.]

347. On November 6 Lebanese Foreign Minister handed me letter addressed to President Roosevelt by Sheikh Beshara El Khouri announcing his assumption on September 21 of Lebanese Presidency. It varied in minor detail only from similar letter written by Syrian President enclosed with my despatch 190, October 2.

Five days after the receipt of Lebanese letter President Khouri was jailed. At the end of Lebanese crisis I was summoned to Cairo.

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60 British Ambassador.
61 Statement issued to the press by the Department of State, November 26, p. 1049.
62 Copy transmitted to the Department by the Diplomatic Agent in his despatch No. 241, December 22, 1943, not printed.
63 Dated August 17, p. 985.
64 Not printed.
There I delivered letter personally to President Roosevelt who signed reply prepared at his request by George Allen and myself. This reply is conventional except for short passage reading "events of recent weeks in your country have been followed in mine with very special attention and sympathy". It was delivered to Lebanese President through Foreign Minister December 13.

Yesterday Foreign Minister asked me to ascertain by telegraph whether my Government would kindly agree to immediate publication here of this exchange of Presidential letters. Full copies will be forwarded to Department by early pouch.

If such publication is approved, local outpost OWI wishes give matter effective publicity and enquires whether Department cannot at the same time authorize publication of exchange of letters with Syrian President, provided he agrees thereto.

WADSWORTH

850E.00/318: Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, December 17, 1943—noon.
[Received 3:56 p.m.]

351. Period of 3 weeks since end Lebanese crisis reported in my 330, November 24, 10 [2] a.m., has been marked by general celebration of restoration of constitutional regime and by reconciliation of Solh Government's position including extensive changes in higher administrative posts. Latter have been generally well received by Deputies and public.

Parliament met only once on December 1. Speaker stressed "heroic and dignified attitude of Lebanese nation" during crisis. Premier reviewed events. Tribute was paid to British and American assistance and to support by sister Arab states. New Lebanese flag was unanimously adopted.

Foreign Minister tells me only important political developments have been conference between Syrian and Lebanese Ministers designed to outline common position to be taken in discussions with Catroux.
(who arrived from Algiers yesterday) and French agreement in principle (communicated by Acting Delegate General) to transfer of all "common interests" services except in so far as partial retention is dictated by Allied military requirements.

Minister added that subject of discussions with Catroux will therefore be restricted to modalities of transfer and assurances regarding any specific French interests involved; there could be no question of concluding treaty of alliance or "otherwise prejudicing Lebanon's political future as an independent state".

Chief political officer of Spears Mission who has just returned from London expects also tripartite discussions (i.e. between British, French and Syro-Lebanese representation) for definition of authority to be reserved to British and French military commands.

Further evidence of common Syro-Lebanese approach to their common problems is found in action of Syrian President and Deputies in swearing allegiance December 14 to constitution of 115 articles as voted 1928 by Syrian Constituent Assembly. It was promulgated 1930 by French High Commissioner with article 116 designed to reserve rights and duties of mandatory power.

Both countries will therefore enter forthcoming discussions having formally declined by acts of their Parliaments to recognize that French possess such rights and duties.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/319 : Telegram

The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State

BEIRUT, December 20, 1943—8 p. m.

[Received December 21—6:24 p. m.]

356. When calling on Syrian Foreign Minister yesterday in Damascus he corrected British and French Beirut press story reported in penultimate paragraph my 351 December 17 noon. Newly printed constitution of 155 articles, he said, had been distributed to President and Deputies but not sworn to; this would probably be done next week; meanwhile Government held firmly to its nonrecognition of mandate; conversations on that basis would begin this week with Catroux who would probably return to Algiers after Xmas fortnight's visit.

Minister then said Syrian and Lebanese Governments were considering issuing declaration to effect that they were determined to continue cooperation with Allied war effort to fullest measure their strength and resources on basis Atlantic Charter principles and con-
sequently deemed it desirable to declare formally (this probably with parliamentary approval and perhaps retroactively to respective dates of reestablishment of constitutional government) that Syria and Lebanon considered themselves in state of war with Axis Powers. He suggested informally that I inquire regarding my Government’s views on this subject should it care to express any.

WADSWORTH

890E.00/326 : Telegram

The Chargé at Damascus (Farrell) to the Secretary of State

DAMASCUS, December 24, 1943—3 p.m.

[Received 6:35 p.m.]

9. Referring to my despatch number 55, December 15 67 I have the honor to report that Foreign Minister Mardam yesterday informed me that Syrian and Lebanese in conversations had reached agreement yesterday’s date with General Catroux by which certain governmental attributes exercised by French would on January 1 be transferred to the two Levant States. The agreements he stated would not take the form of a treaty or convention but would be proclaimed over joint signatures of negotiators.

Prime Minister in Parliament session yesterday read communiqué to above effect but worded more specifically to indicate that common interests would on January 1 be transferred. This is conditioned by proviso that modalities of transfer of powers will be the object of later specific agreements.

Prime Minister announced that French authorities have ceded following attributes: Sûreté, passport control, tribal affairs, dangerous foreigners, and frontier control, administration of which will be transferred within next 10 days.

Project of Syrian army, that is to say nucleus now constituted by native levies in the service of French Army, will according to Prime Minister be postponed pending study of country’s financial resources. He stated that revenue from common interests is insufficient and Parliament in due course be called on to elaborate budget to cover army requirements. Agreement has aroused universal approbation in Syria. Foreign Minister informs me General Catroux will leave tomorrow for Algiers returning mid-January to conclude specific agreements on modalities of transfer.

FARRELL

67 Not printed.
The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State

Algeria, December 27, 1943.

[Received December 29—10:52 p.m.]

265. The Commissariat for Information issued an official press release yesterday stating that at the close of the conference at Damascus on the Lebanon-Syrian situation the following declaration was adopted:

"Agreement was reached today between General Catroux, Commissioner of State en mission, and the representatives of the Lebanese and Syrian Governments, for the return to these Governments of the powers exercised in their name by the French authorities. By virtue of this agreement, the jointly administered services with their personnel will be handed over to the two states Syrian and Lebanese with the right to make laws and legislate, beginning January 1, 1944."

The press release also stated that the decisions contained in the above declaration had no bearing on the juridical aspect of the mandate.

Repeated to Beirut and Cairo.

Wilson

The American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation (Wilson) to the Secretary of State

Algeria, December 31, 1943.

[Received January 1, 1944—10:39 a.m.]

298. The following is a translation of the more important parts of a press interview given by General Catroux to France Afrique on his return from the Near East:

In the Levant as in all other parts of the world where France once sent her soldiers, her administrators, and her scholars, France continues to exist. In line with the spirit and the terms of her mission she has just resigned in favor of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments certain powers of legislation and regulation that she was exercising in their name by virtue of the common interests of the two states. The Governments thus become responsible for the governmental services, in which, moreover, they will maintain the French personnel now on duty, granting to them the necessary guarantees.

France keeps under her sole authority... the command of native troops... to insure the security of the two countries... the war

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*Omissions indicated in original telegram.*
situation prevents any change in this respect until the end of hostilities.

In a word, while awaiting a general settlement, France and the states of the Levant have established their relationship temporarily on the basis of a modus vivendi which takes into account the rights, obligations and interests of the two parties and which is conceived in a spirit of close and traditional friendship.

Sent to the Department, repeat[ed] to Beirut and Cairo. WILSON