

Background Information on Eastern Mediterranean Countries; The Area of Asia Minor and the Middle East:

The next time out of her homeport and her usual operating area SPRINGFIELD will visit a series of ports of the "Middle Eastern" countries bordering the Eastern Mediterranean. The countries we will visit, Lebanon, Greece, and Turkey, are all to a greater or lesser extent more alien to the average American than our usual Western European ports of call. The people, their languages and customs, are, with the exception of Greece, basically different from ours. The information presented here is intended to give a bare background to these differences, in the hope that we will all understand better the reasons for the series of warnings which will be promulgated for each country prior to the commencement of liberty, and that this understanding will enable us to avoid misunderstandings on the beach.

The area of Asia Minor and the Middle East, is divided by alignment in international politics into three "tiers": the pro-Western "Northern Tier Alliance", the United Arab Republic, further to the South and West, and the islands of neutrality between these extremes of the area. The "Northern Tier Alliance", also known as CENTO and the Baghdad Pact, is a link in the chain of alliances which serves the Western strategy of surrounding the USSR with allied pro-Western nations. The original parties to the treaty were Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Great Britain, effectively forming a defensive barrier along the borders of the USSR from the Eastern Mediterranean through the Middle East to India. About two years ago, Iraq withdrew from the alliance as a result of pressures from the rest of the Arab world and a change in government, leaving a gap in the chain which has not yet, at least, been absorbed by Nasser and his UAR.

Behind the Northern Tier lies the Arab world: divided amongst themselves to such an extent that the United Arab Republic is, after the Syrian revolt this fall, no longer United, but together in that all contain a degree of anti-Western sentiment, and all hate the Israel they surround. In fact the hate these countries bear Israel as a result of two defeats at her hands, the Arab refugees that were displaced by the creation of Israel after WWII, and the threat of expansion that the Israelis pose, is the single unifying factor in an area of intense rivalry and distrust.

LEBANON: Lebanon is located in the center of this area of controversy, surrounded in the North and East by Syria and the UAR, and bounded to the South by Israel. In this "hot spot" Lebanon maintains a more moderate policy than any of its neighbors, but the balance is very precarious for a number of reasons which should become more clear as her history is explained.

Lebanon is a small country, (120 by 35 miles) composed of a coastline and mountains, resembling Southern California in topography and climate. In April, when our visit is planned, both skiing and swimming are possible. For political reasons, no census has been taken in the country since 1932, but the 1958 estimate was 1,650,000 plus about 200,000 Palestinian Arab refugees. The great majority of the people are Arabs, but there is a deep and approximately equal division of these Arabs by religion. The basic difference in the country, from which many of its institutions and policies, and most of its problems, stem, is that between Christian and Muslim. In

other words, ethnically almost all of the Lebanese are Arabs, but the difference between peoples is religious, and amounts almost to a racial difference. Arabic is the first language spoken in the country, and French is the second. English is widely spoken.

Within Lebanon Beirut is the capital and principal city with a population of about 500,000. It is located in the central part of the country and is predominantly Christian. For this reason, as well as because it is an international banking and trade center, including a Free Zone, the city seems very European. As a city and a port, its prior importance as the primary port for Syria and Jordan is waning, but it still handles a great volume of transhipped traffic, and is a natural airlines center.

As it is now, Beirut is merely adapting itself to the modern dress version of the old trading port on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean, through which Western Europe traded with the East. Lebanon was part of the Roman Empire until its invasion by the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century. When the Arab conquerors came, the Maronite Christians were already in the central portion of modern Lebanon, and they stayed and flourished alongside the new Muslim Arabs, creating one of the major facts of present-day Lebanon: the deep division of the population along religious lines. From the fifteenth century to WWI, Lebanon was an uneasy part of the Ottoman Empire, with no fixed borders. At the end of that period, when the victorious European Allies were parcelling out the remains of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was handed to France as a mandate. In 1920 the country was established within its present borders including more Muslims and thereby reducing the margin of the Christian majority.

The period of French domination is another episode in Lebanon's history that has resulted in a major fact of Lebanon today: its European character. Declared a Republic under French administration in 1926, Lebanon came into the world under French guidance and control, until she gained her independence in 1946. The Lebanese adopted the form of government suggested to them by French example and administration. Executive power is vested in a President who is elected by a representative legislature for one six year term that parallels that of parliament. The president is aided by a Prime Minister and a Cabinet of Ministers selected by him, and approved by the parliament to which they are responsible. The legislative power rests in a 99 chair Chamber of Deputies elected by a universal adult electorate. This system is patterned directly on the constitutional French Republics, in which the Prime Minister and his cabinet do most of the business of government as long as they have the support of the Chamber of Deputies. The legislature produces legislation that is called for by the cabinet, and the President acts as Head of State, executing the laws thus produced.

By an unwritten "political agreement," the President is always a Christian, and the Prime Minister a Muslim. Furthermore, electoral law has established the religion of the deputy from each district, so that a Christian can not represent a Muslim district or vice-versa. This is a form of gerrymandering by the Christians, based on the 1932 census which showed a Christian majority. The Christians, who have thus retained the upper hand in the governing of the country, block a new census, since, by most estimates, they are no longer in the majority.

Lebanese politics are confusing to us because they are based in religion. The country, as has been mentioned, is divided between Christian and Muslim Arabs, and the two communities have predictably different attitudes.

Basically, the Muslims favor Pan-Arabism and lean to socialism in their internal policies. The Christian community wants close ties with Europe and a continuation of the successful routine of internal policy that has made Lebanon the richest Arab nation per capita in the Middle East. There are no really stable political parties, rather, followings in each community form around the strongest leader. The only fully autonomous political party in Lebanon is the Communist Party, led from Syria, which functions mostly as a propaganda center and clearing house for activists bound for the rest of the Middle East, and does not have a great deal of internal influence.

Two major historical influences on the Lebanon we will visit, the divided populace and the influence of the French, have been pointed out. The third influence was the intervention of the United States in the revolution of 1958. The revolution was set off by the action of Camille CHAMOUN, then President, in closing down an opposition newspaper that was protesting very loudly against the strong rumour that Chamoun was going to alter the constitution in order to seek an unconstitutional second term. When the Muslim National Front went into open armed revolt, the United States, through the Sixth Fleet, responded to a direct appeal by Chamoun to President Eisenhower and landed Marines in Lebanon. The presence of the Marines served to preserve order for the period of about a month during which political negotiation calmed the country, persuaded Chamoun to give up whatever ideas he might have had, and provided for new elections.

The present government of Christian president GEN Fuad CHEHAB and Muslim Prime Minister Rashid KARAMI, who led the National Front in revolt, is the result of those elections of July 1958. A compromise cabinet was finally formed in October 1958, and the country returned to normal. The results of this intervention are hard to judge, but even Prime Minister Karami, who speaks a lot of Arab Unity and would like to pursue a fully neutral policy, knows he owes his position to the fact that elections were guaranteed.

Internally, Lebanon is now busy decentralizing the government of its five provinces, nurturing its well-organized industrial sector with American aid, and generally pursuing business as usual. The big internal problem, besides governmental bureaucracy, is the balance between the two religious communities. Externally, the Lebanese seem bent on minding their own business. Situated where it is, and composed as it is, Lebanon is as neutral as possible on the questions of Arab nationalism, very touchy about UAR interference in its internal affairs, and very careful of Israel to the south. The delicate balance is also maintained on East-West issues. Lebanon is an active member of the UN, and although she has trade relations with the Soviet Bloc, she has, as yet, accepted no Soviet aid, and maintains sizable commercial communities in the U.S. and Latin America.

Traditionally, Lebanon is a trading country, which now has an unfavorable balance of trade, but favorable balance of payments, due to tourism, transit trade, remittances of profits made by nationals abroad, and its bank deposits. Lebanon, like Switzerland, has a Banking Secrecy Law, so that a great deal of foreign capital is stored and handled there. The chief foreign investors are French and British, and further investment is encouraged by free trade policies, and income tax benefits.

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..