

Muslims, Christians balanced

Pact aided Lebanese politics

Editor's note: This is the second of a three-part series on Lebanon written by several members of the Lebanese Student Association to commemorate Lebanese Independence Day on Nov. 21.

by Toni Prince

A unique political system existed in Lebanon from 1943 to 1975. Confessionalism — strict adherence to a particular religious creed — accompanied independence in the Lebanese government. An unwritten understanding, the National Pact, was reached between Christians and Muslims.

The pact set the basis for Lebanon's unique political system. In a country with 17 Muslim and Christian religious sects, a republic was instituted. The republic was governed by a unicameral parliament of 99 members, each elected for four-year terms, and a president who was elected every six years.

To preserve the delicate religious equilibrium, the seats in the parliament were divided be-

tween Muslims and Christians at a ratio of 5 to 6. The president was a Maronite (an Arabic-speaking Christian), the speaker of the chamber was a Shi'ite

Analysis

Muslim and the prime minister was a Muslim Sunni.

This diversity of religious representation was integral to the state's structure. The system generated a relative amount of freedom and guaranteed full civil liberties.

That freedom — coupled with Lebanon's geographic location — made Lebanon the trade and cultural center of the Middle East. Lebanon remained the world's link between the East and West through the 1950s and 1960s.

Lebanese politics centered around the system of religious representation. The system was a compromise between the Christians' western political ten-

dencies and the Muslims' traditional quest for Arab union. Economic development resulted from the compromise and from the nature of Lebanon's people.

One Western diplomat referred to Lebanon as "a country, of course, but above all, a people." The 1948 Palestinian War, the tragedy of the Palestinian people and the Nasserite revolution in Egypt increased social tensions that culminated in a rebellion in 1958. The disturbance was quelled with the intervention of U.S. Marines in July 1958.

President Chehab, who refused to let the Lebanese army become involved in the 1958 rebellion, began the introduction of scientists and engineers into the government, regardless of their religion.

A period of economic development followed and continued until the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The Arab world then focused its attention on the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian problem.

Lebanon's relative freedom permitted the PLO to develop, organize and arm itself. Because of Arab and international pressure, the Lebanese government and the PLO signed the Cairo Accords on Nov. 3, 1969. The PLO was allowed to police the refugee camps and set up military bases. The PLO also was given control over a 270-square-mile area which bordered Israel near Bint-Jubayl. This marked the beginning of a state within a state.

Through the 1960s, social tensions were heightened by an increasing number of qualified and educated Lebanese who could not gain political power because of religious quotas.

In September 1970, King Hussein's army drove the PLO out of Jordan and its leaders fled to Beirut. Along with them came great numbers of Muslim Palestinian refugees. Lebanon's religious equilibrium had been broken. Many intellectuals embraced the Palestinian cause and consequently polarized Lebanese politics.

From 1970 to 1973, corruption in Lebanon's government reached staggering proportions. The PLO took advantage of this and armed itself heavily. In May 1973, the PLO clashed with the Lebanese army. One serious fact was noted: some Lebanese nationalists fought on the PLO's side.

The October 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the oil embargo made the Western world realize a solution to the conflict had to be found. The PLO was the main problem. It either must be eliminated or given a piece of land.

In the meantime, Lebanese militias had formed to counter the PLO's armed presence. The corrupt government, which was under Arab and international pressure, was unable to stop the flow of arms to both sides.

By January 1975, Lebanon became internally explosive because of military and social tensions. The spark that ignited Lebanon came in February 1975 in the southern town of Saïda.

Friday: The Lebanese Holocaust.

Vital statistics about Lebanon

- Official name: Republic of Lebanon
- Capital: Beirut (population 1,200,000)
- Major cities: Tripoli, Saïda, Tyre
- Area: 4000 square miles
- Geography: neighbors: Syria (east and north), Israel (south), western coast on the Mediterranean Sea. Has two mountain chains running north to south called the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon which are separated by the Al Biqaa Valley.
- Highest elevation: Qurnet assauda (10,131 feet)
- Population: 3,161,000
- Percent urban, 40 percent rural
- Principal languages: Arabic (official), French, English
- Religions: Christian, Muslim, Druze
- Agriculture: fruit, wheat, tobacco
- Manufacturing: petroleum products, chemicals, metals, plastics, cigarettes
- Currency: one Lebanese lira or pound equals 100 piastres; U.S. \$1 equals 15 Lebanese liras

Rape discussed Off at OCA meeting

by Brigette Crossland  
Battalion Reporter

Rape is a problem in the Bryan-College Station community, the assistant director of student affairs told the Off Campus Aggies Wednesday night.

"People have the attitude that it will never happen to them, unfortunately that's not the case," Jan Winniford said.

The Bryan and College Station police departments reported 31 rapes last year. Texas A&M has had one reported rape this semester.

But Winniford stressed that usually only one out of 10 rapes are reported.

"Texas A&M is faring pretty well when compared to the number of rapes at other universities, but we have our share," Winniford said.

"The best preventions are the common sense precautions that people forget to take — little

things like locking your door and having your keys ready when you get to your room."

The issue of what to do if you are attacked is a controversial one, Winniford said.

Some experts say to try to minimize chances of injury, death, and some say to use force.

"What a person should do depends on several factors such as what that person is capable of and the circumstances of the attack," Winniford said.

Members also discussed upcoming Christmas Ball meeting.

The ball will be held Dec. 8 p.m. at the Ramada Inn. Tickets go on sale Friday for the MSC Box Office. Bar tickets will be sold, but must be purchased at the bar because 18-year-olds will be admitted.

Women's past Bra subject of talk

"The New Deal and the Forgotten Woman" is the topic of a speech by Dr. Martha Swain tonight at 7:30 in 226 MSC.

Swain, associate professor of history at Texas Women's University, is the author of the biography "Pat Harrison: The New Deal Years." She is currently writing a biography of Ellen S. Woodward and women's work during the New Deal era.

Swain is a member of the Committee on Teacher Education and Certification for the National Council for the Social Sciences. She also is a member of the Committee on Congressional Fellowships and a program

committee member for the American Historical Association.

She has received several awards, with the most recent being the American Philosophical Society grant. Swain received grants to the Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the Harry Truman Library Institute.

She received her doctorate from Vanderbilt University. She is a former president of the Southern Association of Women Historians.

The History Honor Society and the Department of History are sponsoring the presentation.

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