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By AK Date 7/1/02

NEA/ARN:EHBaas

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 13, 1960

L I M D I S

SUBJECT: Kurdish/Assyrian Appeal for U.S. Assistance

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. William Yonan, President, Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Sam Andrews, Secretary, Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Zaya Malek Isma'il, Representative of Assyrians in Syria  
Dr. Perley, Attorney for Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Shafiq Qazzaz, Representative of the Kurdish Revolution in the USA  
Mr. Talcott W. Seelye, NEA/ARN  
Mr. Bryan H. Baas, NEA/ARN

COPIES TO: NEA White House - Mr. Saunders  
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Mr. Qazzaz stated that the principal purpose of his visit was to deliver a letter from Mullah Mustafa Barzani to Secretary of State William P. Rogers. The letter appeals to the United States to provide assistance to the Kurds and the Assyrians in their struggle with the Iraqi Government. Mr. Seelye accented the letter and assured the gentlemen that it would be brought to the Secretary's attention.

Mr. Andrews and Mr. Isma'il related approximately the same story they had given to Mr. Davies on May 29 (see Memorandum of Conversation of that date). Mr. Qazzaz added a new dimension to the problem by emphasizing that the Kurds felt compelled to take decisive action against the Iraqi Government. He said it is more imperative now than at any time in the past eight years that the Kurds attack the IPC oil installations and interrupt the flow of oil. He noted that oil income is vital to the Iraqi economy. If this income is denied the GOI, the economy will suffer a severe blow and the government itself will be weakened to its very foundation. The GOI would lack money to purchase arms and its war effort would be severely impaired.

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Mr. Qazzaz asked for assistance from the United States Government. He was not very specific, but he said the Kurds needed money to buy arms and other supplies. He alluded to the sufferings of the Kurds in the north, malnutrition among the children and lack of medical supplies. He said that if the Kurds were provided with essential commodities they could handle the Iraqis by themselves and would not need further help. He said 25,000 Kurds are now under arms. In response to a question about Iranian and Israeli assistance, he acknowledged help from these sources but said it was insufficient. Much later in the conversation, when it became apparent that no US assistance was forthcoming, Mr. Qazzaz noted that if the Kurds succeeded in gaining limited autonomy or independence, they would not forget who had refused them aid when they needed it.

Mr. Seelye told the visitors quite explicitly that the United States Government does not get into this type of clandestine operation. Mr. Yonan alluded to the landings of the Marines in Lebanon in 1958. Mr. Seelye pointed out that times have changed and that the attitudes of the American public and American Government are quite different on the subject of foreign adventures. The gentlemen apparently understood quite clearly that clandestine assistance from the United States was not forthcoming.

Mr. Seelye asked Mr. Qazzaz about assistance for needy Kurds from international organizations. Mr. Qazzaz said that the ICRC had provided some help to the Kurds through the Iranian Red Crescent. He said that the American Red Cross had not been helpful and he felt that that door was entirely closed to help from that source.

Considering the Kurdish question from a humanitarian viewpoint, Mr. Qazzaz said that the Kurds had made an appeal to U Thant to have their problem brought before the Human Rights Commission. Apparently, nothing resulted from this effort.

independence -- only limited autonomy and cultural integrity -- he could not vouch for their demands in another five or ten years. In other words, the Kurds are completely fed up. They have absolutely no trust in the Iraqi Arabs and they are becoming less inclined toward compromise.

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The Assyrian visitors stated that the Assyrians in Kurdish areas have joined the Kurds in their rebellion against the Iraqi Government. Assyrians fight side by side with the Kurds, and one of Idris Barzani's bodyguards is an Assyrian. (Idris is Mullah's son and is a field commander of the Kurdish forces.) Mr. Seelye noted that Assyrian participation in the insurgency entails a number of risks for the Assyrian community as a whole in Iraq, which is more exposed.

Mr. Seelye assured the gentlemen that the United States is sympathetic toward the sufferings of the Kurds and the Assyrians. We do not however support an independent Kurdish/Assyrian state, and we are not prepared to support this objective either overtly or covertly. He added that the United States has many interests in the area and had to take those interests into consideration also. In conclusion Mr. Seelye said that he thought that this had been a useful exchange and said he would be pleased to talk to the gentlemen again at any time.

As the gentlemen were leaving, Dr. Perley took Mr. Baas aside and said that he really wouldn't look with favor upon an independent Kurdish state because he knew that the Muslim Kurds at that point would immediately turn on the Christian Assyrians.

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