

AGAINST BIG 5 TALK

Churchill for Meeting of U. S., Britain and France on Levant

WANTS FRENCH-ARAB PACT

He Asserts Firing Continued After Time De Gaulle Says Cease Fire Was Given

By **CLIFTON DANIEL**

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, June 5—In a factual, unemotional statement Prime Minister Winston Churchill contradicted today Gen. Charles de Gaulle's implication that British interference had provoked the recent battles in the Levant and expressed a hope that the British proposal for a British, French and American conference in London to negotiate a settlement of the Levantine dispute would not "be cast aside."

Addressing the House of Commons, he asserted that a five-power conference, including China and the Soviet Union, to discuss all Middle East problems, as first proposed by Moscow and formally advocated by the French Cabinet today, "would certainly cause a great deal of delay and require very careful consideration on many grounds."

[The French Cabinet disclosed it would propose a conference of the Big Five powers and "interested States" to discuss the Middle East, according to a Paris dispatch.]

In substance, Mr. Churchill's speech attributed the outbreak of fighting between French troops and Syrian forces to provocative acts by the French authorities, including the dispatch of military reinforcements to the Levant, against which the British Government repeatedly advised.

The Prime Minister asserted that, "far from stirring up agitation in the Levant states, our whole influence has been used in precisely the other directions." Until British forces intervened to restore order, he said, "no arms were issued by us to the Syrians or Lebanese except by agreement with

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CHURCHILL DENIES INCITING SYRIANS

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the French Government," although the Syrian Government earnestly requested arms to enable the police to restore order.

He added that "for the sake of preserving order we are now issuing arms."

As an earnest of Britain's disinterest in the Levant, he reiterated that all British troops would be withdrawn from Syria and Lebanon "the moment a treaty has been concluded" between France and the Levant states. He stated that he had long since informed General de Gaulle that Britain had no ambitions in the Levant.

Reviewing British efforts to forestall the present crisis, Mr. Churchill disclosed that at Cairo in February he had "strongly impressed" upon the Syrian President the need for a peaceful settlement and the British Government had "put a great deal of pressure upon them" to open negotiations for a treaty with France, which was done.

While the French still were delaying, he continued, it became known in the Levant in April that French reinforcements were being sent there. The British Government had already warned against sending reinforcements, he recounted, and continued to do so, telling the French that such action would lead to fighting, as, in fact, it did.

One warning was contained, the Prime Minister said, in "a friendly personal message to General de Gaulle, who had expressed to our Ambassador his concern as to our ultimate intention in the Levant states." That message was sent May 4, but in his reply General de Gaulle made no mention of reinforcements.

Mr. Churchill said he told General de Gaulle that Britain sought no advantage whatsoever in the Levant.

"I also explained that we had recognized France's special position in the Levant, but that does not mean we have undertaken to enforce that special position," Mr. Churchill said. It is France's claim to a "special position" that has agitated the Levant states, and they are determined not to recognize it beyond allowing France to maintain her educational and cultural institutions in Syria and Lebanon.

Discussions between French authorities and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments opened May 4 but were broken off by the latter after French reinforcements began arriving May 17. On May 25, the Prime Minister said, the British Government pointed out that the French were exciting the population by patrolling in armored cars, flying aircraft over mosques at the hour of prayer and posting machine guns in prominent places.

Mr. Churchill then reviewed the fighting. He said that "it was a pity" that General de Gaulle had not seen fit to inform the British Government of the cease-fire order sent to the Levant on May 30, and the result was that the British order for intervention was given without the knowledge of the

French decision. In any case, Mr. Churchill said, "the shelling of Damascus was certainly continued on the morning of May 31."

In Paris today it was stated that order had already been restored before the British decided to intervene, and the disturbance was started again on the arrival of British forces.

Mr. Churchill acknowledged that 200 men of the Sixteenth Arab Battalion of a Palestine regiment were involved in a disturbance in Beirut on V-E Day, but he said there was no evidence that the swastika had been shown and that the battalion had since been transferred.

The man who, according to his friends, helped to lift General de Gaulle to his present estate, is now in the eyes of many Frenchmen the villain of the present piece of Anglo-French bickering — Maj. Gen. Sir Edward Spears, lately British Minister in Beirut. Prime Minister Churchill denied that General Spears, who wrote an article in *The London Sunday Dispatch* this week advocating complete independence for Syria and Lebanon, had been recalled from Beirut at General de Gaulle's request. General Spears came home to fight in the parliamentary election, the Prime Minister said.

"He is the last person on whom General de Gaulle should make reflections," Mr. Churchill said, "because he personally secured General de Gaulle's escape to England from Bordeaux in his airplane and motor car on June 18, 1940."