

June 7, 1949

Untitled report regarding a trip to Damascus

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Summary:

The Journalist Informer's report on his meeting with Ḥusnī al-Za'īm, the Za'īm regime and security apparatus, Syrian-Lebanese relations and Za'īm's attitude towards Riyāḍ al-Sulḥ.

Credits:

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بیت ۶ / ۹۶۹

قسم ۱۰ غارت بیروت صباغ السیف فی الجاری

وعدت واء السیفیه و هذه تبيح اجابي .

الزعيم

لم اترده في وقت من الاوقات فخرجوا بنفسه كما رأته

هذه المرة اخرجوا ليريد ان يصدق بأنه في البلاد ^{البحرية}

طما لا يجيبه طما لا يقبلني يا ربي قائلًا .

- حاد في بيوت ؟

- طما - ويت له انه في البلاد من يظن ان عمله

سئى من الكذب طما .

- طما لا يريد من يتقدمي ابره حكومتكم - ولها صفي

ما يريد في وقت قريب .

فقلت له - ولكنه لو سمع غيري هذه الاقوالا ونقل

لا تمار حجة و قبل انكم تهدرونه الحكومة اللباني .
اطلب

المراقف الملائم هيام بطله قدوم العون

طلبه الى استناره

وهنا يدل على مدى عقلية فهو كـ... ومع ذلك

لا يتفق وان لا يقال عنه ما يلى كما انه كـ

انه يسيء بظواهر الرجل الماقدونية افعال

مصطفى كمال باشا، وذكروا، وتحتوي عظماؤا العالم ملاحظاتنا

والملاحظات التي بدت لي هي

اولاً - انه الرجل كبره كرهًا شديدًا يا ضالبا

الصالح ولا يفعله حية صنفه

وقوله لي ان كلدكم ما سيد فعله في وقت

حربنا... نتمه... كل قضيه

المصالح المشتركة بصحة عرض لتمامه فقد قال

بـ

د رة في لنا الوسيه المصديه والمكوردية

يلوقوه صعوبات كبيرة في فعاليتهم التجارية لب

بيروت كما انه دؤركم توجب عليهم عرفا الرضا

المتوجهة من سوريا الى تصديبه دؤركم الرضا والرضا

في لانه ربا انهم يريدونه انه يجملوا في دؤركم

قبار عليا... وهذا ما لا يمكنه ان قبله لظفا

د ان سوريا تصد ربهه مارييه من السان في

الوقت الذي يدرية فيه عدد سانه لانه عمل

المليونه ومصننا في المصالح المشتركة هي

وهي في المائة كما في مصنفات الموظفين

لا تتجاوز الـ ٢٠ في المائة من مجموع الموظفين ^{الصالحة} هذه

والتي يمكننا القول بها القاعدة وسببها

من كل بصره فوفقنا لنا سور وقت الحكومه

البنائية ام ابنا

ثانياً - ان الزعيم فساد من عدم التسليم

على اليهود فقد قال لي لا انا على ثقته يا ابا اذا ما

تطور الخلاف بيننا وبين اليهود قائم على سبب

بنا من جهة لنا من جهة لليهود اصدقاء واننا -

بين الحكومه اللبنانية والى يتم علينا السلام
رقيب

لمرقة مرات اللبائيه في الوقت الذي

ترقب فيه اليهود

تلك - أثناء وجودنا عند الاعيم -

الاتفاقية به جارت صدي سنة العام اديب

بك للشيخ ^{الاعيم} وسمعت يقول لك اريد احد

- جالك وارن ربيك في مجموع المياني فقط

بني - ال ادم في نيل ليا عده في حده

طبعة التفة في بيروت حيث علمت انه الترت

التيوية للبحر في

ولما انتهت هذه الحاجة التفت ال الاعيم

وقلت له - لعنه الله هذه الملاحظات فاحسنه
لانه ليا في بيروت طبعه

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وهي اعترافه الهة وقال - بي نوصه وهي
وطيفه السيو عيبه فقلت - له تلك المصيبة
نسمى مصيبة النجاس (والنشر السيو عيبه

لا تطرح قولي

ونظروا له انك رفاص صهي فقل - سيده
مسمع ويديب الامر مع الاله فريده
ابناء - ان اتعيبه يصدق يا - يا قابلك
يجمع الفاضل المعاديه ضد العمل في لانه وضع

انني آكدت له عليك ذلك قال

اد ان ادقها - الو - ده لي تدلا على له اتسالم
ارقب

الارمني واروسا صديقه قريبا هي لي

بيروت ، و هكوفتم يمشو من يدت اعدائي لي

تلاقي صته انه قطار عتي تعمد على مرقبه رحالي

وعقله تا ظلم ، كما ان ترك المجال فسيحا

لنا الشيوعيين للعدو و ضد التترب و لما اكدت

له على ذلك و ان له اسير قريبا لي

وذكرته في مقاومه اتا له الشيوعيا والمعاديا

له قال

و انه كبيره - جال التناكر يجره في صته اسلام

بيروت و يطاوله بالمقوفه الالهيه وقد

حرفه عليهم رقايه فطانت النتيجه

تحت الحكومة اللبنانية الى مرفه - جالي
 فاصاً - ان وحد هذه الحركة التي لو دخل
 اعلاه - البند الرابع - هو محمد مع الميراث والليل
 على ذلك هو لانه لا عرف بالموجود الذي عينه
 لي التميم كلب في انه اذكر للتميم التي لحوالي
 تنهده في لانه - وانه الواجب ان يترك
 كتاباً سراً ~~في~~ تايماً للملك انك في يديك
 واقوع في لابل وصيد وانه اذكر له فقير
 به يمكنه ان يقول انك من الملك هو الذي
 محمد مع الميراث، ولكنني لم اقل شيئاً
 رقب

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سأولاً - ان الرعيم بيتك في اكرادك

القلبي وبعيداً من ~~علاء~~ عماد اللبنة

والقسم انك عماد ليلود والقسم انك عماد الملك

عبد الله

عليك حياي .
روث - ساحة لا تتره الحق اما عدنا

اجل تصديق الوثرة السورج او تاليف الوثرة

يرثا من كس ابراهيم الزينة ان الرعيم سيرك

في اسرار ما بعد استقايه ريبا للجهود هو

وتعد بانك ليد هناك به جبر على من منه في

ارثا من جاع انا الا يارب تزي قفصه
تاتيا ساف وتعد على انه لقمه حائده

من الفيفاء ح جارة عينه تنكته

من دمه كذبه من الرعيم الارباب المحمود

الوثني

ومحاوثة الرعيم التقرب من الوثنييه هوكل

تأثر الوثنييه في اعتمادهم وقتها على

الوثنييه

تلك اهل قفلا الخرم لجانهم ورقاقه ال

الحكمة المكريه في دمه

بغا ان الرعيم يات فيه دكا توكي

ومع ورقا دكا توكيته هذه يدققة لملكه

من الاعتقادات له آرقط اعتقاد صنيك

يريد ان يحافظ على راسه من رفق

البارء فيك عطفه صلح البطار ، صبر
السيد الدكتور وهب غمام ، حافظ الخيال

السلامة في البيت ثم تأليف المحل القدي
للحفاظ على الانتداب السوي بما فعل مصطفى كمال

باتت عطا السك (محكم استقلا)

فحاشا - ان الريعيم بات قائما على حياته بديل

آ - انه فوكبير بقوة كبيرة وبعده

التسامح الوقوف على رصفه التوسع وكذلك

يتمتع به - الباءت في كل اللواق

الذي يمد يده في تسمية تقام صوره في اسيا
بات انه قد سئل في تسمية تقام صوره في اسيا
وقد السرايا والديلا على ذلك

ولم يفتنه بالله رسالاً وصدقه الخليفة

قطعا على الترمذ - سياتي ثم نقل عده قطعت

رأسه دونه رتباه نظراً لانتفاء السياره

ل - ر - الرعيه بضمه على الضال الم الامام في

الحافظه على هاتمه - في يقوم قايلاً منهم غير مقته

مع - حال اسمه كما له اليه يظن الحافظه

على رأس القتا برون

ساراً - ان التقه على الرعيه يات صويه

آ - على - حال العهد الملقيا ورسوله اليه

ب - في الحيله الرعيه - القائه اذ وقاف

التريه - وتسه القائمه المدنيه ومقارنه

دخول المسليه - قد جعلت التخصيص

وللهم

كثيره في ~~الكتاب~~ كتابه فتأنيده
يبدو هنا انه يار بشره وبعث في ^{١٤٤٩}هـ

صه لا عيم وقيا حلة صوبه صه والمقتدا

صه صه المله
ج - في علي القوميه فقد اكتف الرعم

وجود كنه به الجيبه منتهيه ال الركب القوميا

او وقف ١٤ صيا صه افراطا و صي كيه حياة

بعض تكا عه ووعكده سره ك توييدوه

اسال ال ارتكوه صاه
وتحققاتي اكدت لي وجود راقلامه النقي

صه صه منتهيه ال الركب القوميه في ^{السوريه} الطبية
راقلمه

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ن - في حجب الفائلات واسمها عيب

الذي لم يصادف حل هذه المسألة .

— ٣ —

يعمل الأشعير على صدق قوله الاستخيار .

على قاعدة القنا بول الشريك المقيد منه

من الرلالة والبيان الوصية التي كانت

الماتيا اقال رسم طيارة اجمع الميالي هتام

الملا نبي وعليم موضع ثقته وقد جمع (الملك الثاني)

وامتلك ايضا ابييه وامتلك احماء احماء اذملت

مفاداة ابي سوزان في شناع وادام قائم كس

نقطه شناع يصادف احماء بولاسه احماء ويريد

اسمه ان يصفه رلاله والذبح بالاس

انما ليخونهم يرفاه القضاة

—

انما ريبه السبيل هو من اسمه

الاسم ولكن صلاته الكريمة القضاة

هو المتردد على توفيقه استجابات

تظا لثابت في كلامه السبعه انما

تم في رثاء رثاء اقا - الهية

وقد عن قيل ظهر استبهر 9/6/919

لثابتة بوا لثابتة مع الميثاق فوض

يتقى على اختلفه في التوقيع والموقف
الاسم حول ان في التوقيع والموقف
اقاب

الارضية وبعده السوربية

فأجبت به بما اعرفه عريفه بصحة

صفتيه . ثم قال

— انه اريد قريه تسمى رقة ووجه كونا

بعده من جباله للقبيل علي اولئك

في ان الله يعلوه كما يا قريه

تأكدت من انك انت بعظم ارضه ^{وفد}

علاقتهم يا رب وانه قال ثلاثة اخفا

لم اعرفه او تأكد لهم وهم ارض عتات

عيب الكوريا ، فهدوا لهما ولا اجنبه

انني ساعفهم ولم اسمح بهم كليني

~~بالحمد لله رب العالمين~~

مع من اعرفه من القاطنين في ارضنا
التي هي للفقير واليتيم والارملة واليتيم

ذلك فودعه بالاعمال

— ٥ —

اما القاطنين في ارضنا العالم العربي
والملك الاتي قديم عمر علي الزركي
وهي اكله ايهم منته تقيه
عمر منته - تاد البريد بالليل
رقاه ائف رتوت الموصف
في سنة ١٩٥٥م - عمر منته كباية
رقل

عصف الهي اريبي

ها ويا الشيخ رهام السلام

وفي الختام اقول - انه الانتصارات التي تمت
 بل مع الامانة بوانه مجموع المبادئ جعلتني
 فتأكد انه ان اعين يقف على نظام القضاة
 التي وضمه له بما عند الامانة وهو يريد
 في تنفيذ هذه القاعدة لب في لبا فقل
 بل وفي البور العيون تكون له قيل كبله
 استجابت قويه ويقف في الدرجه الاولى
 على بيروت التي يسر ربه افة وانظرا
 ببيك قويه تعلاتك ان في ربه وهما
 ثم سبعة

124/1

Beirut 7/6/1949

Al-Za'eem (Ḥusnī al-Za'īm)

I never saw him so full of himself as this time; he refuses to believe that someone in the Arab world does not love him. He told me as he welcomed me:

'What is happening in Beirut?'

When I told him that some people are wary of his actions, he said: 'No; no one is criticizing me save your Government; you want and see... it would soon have cause to be pleased with me.

I said to him: 'If someone besides me hears your words and repeats them, uproar will ensue and it will be said that you are threatening the Lebanese Government.

My words irritated him, his face reddened, and he exclaimed loudly: 'I am powerful, and powerful people are afraid of no one; not their soldiers, supporters, or fifth columnists in Beirut.'

I tried to calm him down a little, and said: 'The people love you and liken you to Mostapha Kemal who came to Syria's assistance; others even say that you are the greatest man ever born after the Prophet Mohammad.'

He calmed down at this, and he sat down and started talking to me; the time allocated to my visit, from 11.30- 11.45 am on Sunday 5 June, was extended by a half hour to 12.15, although he was scheduled to meet with the Iranian Minister, Mr Rahmana, at noon. When Lieutenant Siam came in to announce the Minister's arrival, he said to let him wait.

The above is an indication of the man's mentality; he likes to be lauded and hates to be criticized or anything negative said about him. He also likes to extol the virtues of great and admired men like Mostapha Kemal Pacha, Franco, Tito, and great leaders from Islam's heyday.

Observations:

These are my remarks:

First: The man intensely hates Riad al-Solh (Riyaḍ al-Ṣulḥ) and bears him ill will. His words to me 'your Government will soon be pleased with me' are a veiled threat that he intends to solve the issue of our mutual interests in a way that will not please Lebanon. For he also told me:

'Our Syrian traders, both exporters and importers, are facing difficulties with customs in Beirut; your Government requires that all licenses obtained in Syria be legalized by Lebanese Economic and Agricultural Departments. In other words, they want Lebanese departments to monitor us ... This is something I will never accept; there are four million citizens in Syria and barely one million in Lebanon, and although our share of joint interests is 55per cent, the total number of our employees barely reaches 30per cent. This is why we cannot accept to work on this basis and should solve the problem to our advantage, whether the Lebanese Government likes it or not.'

Second: Al-Za'eem is displeased because not enough pressure is being brought to bear on the Jews; he said to me: 'I am convinced that if the conflict worsens between us and the Jews, we will be in danger from Lebanon because the Jews have friends and supporters in the Lebanese Government. We therefore have to be vigilant and watch the Lebanese as well as the Jews.'

Third: While I was with al-Za'eem, the telephone rang and Adeb Beik al-Shishakli (Adīb Shishaklī), Director of the Sûreté Générale, was on the line. I heard al-Za'eem tell him: 'send one of your men, preferably Mamdouh al-Maidani (Mamduḥ Mayḍanī), and give him a letter to Emir Farid Chehab asking for his assistance in raiding the al-Nahda Printing Press in Beirut where I am told communist newsletters are being printed.'

When the telephone conversation ended, he turned to me and I said: 'I think this information is wrong because there is no printing press by that name in Beirut.'

He got angry again and said: 'Yes there is; and it is the communist's printing press.'

I replied 'The printing press you are referring to is al-Najah, but communist newsletters are not printed there.'

It seemed as if he wanted to cut me off, for he said: 'Mamdouh will go there and deal with it with Emir Farid.'

Fourth: al-Za'eem believes that Riad al-Solh is encouraging elements hostile to him to operate from Lebanon, and although I assured him that the opposite was true, he said:

'Information reaching me indicates that there are heightened Jordanian and Russian activities against me in Beirut, an instead of helping me avoid these angers, your Government is following my men and obstructing their work. This leaves the door wide open for communists to operate and publish newsletters. When I told him that the situation was quite different and that Emir Farid and his department were actively combating communist activities, including those against him, he said:

'Many tribal chiefs are coming to Beirut these days and contacting the Jordanian Legation, so I had them followed; as a result, the Lebanese Government is now following my men.'

Fifth: Mamdouh al-Maidani is the source of the information about the above movements (item four). The proof is that when he learned about my appointment with al-Za'eem he asked me to tell him about the threats against him in Lebanon and the need to establish a secret office in Beirut, under the Deuxième Bureau, with branches in Tripoli and Sidon. He also wanted me to tell al-Za'eem that the best candidate to run this office is himself - Mamdouh al-Maidani - but I did not do that.

Sixth al-Za'eem is suspicious of most Palestinian refugees; he believes that part of them are Lebanese agents, another Jewish agents, and another yet, agents for King Abdullah.

2. I learned the following:

First: There is no truth in what the newspapers have published yesterday concerning the possibility of a Syrian government reshuffle if Mohsen al-Barazi formed a new government. Al-Za'eem will wait until after he is elected President of the Republic, because he is certain that no one dares challenge him for the presidency.

Second: Nazeer Fansa left for Paris yesterday and I learned that a mosaic tableware set and an expensive carpet will be shipped from Damascus as a present from al-Za'eem to the French President.

Al-Za'eem is trying to get close to the French in order to frustrate Lebanese attempts, every now and then, to depend on the French.

Third: Akram Tabbara and his colleagues were referred to the military court in Damascus

Fourth: Al-Za'eem is now acting in Damascus almost like a dictator; this is evidenced by a series of arrests the last of which was that of Husni Beik, the latest Governor of Aleppo, then of Michel Aflak, Salah al-Bitar, Jalal al-Sayed, Dr Wahib Ghanem, Hafez al-Jamali, from the leadership of Hizb al-Baath, and by the establishment of the Judicial Council to protect the coup, in the manner of Mostapha Kermal Pacha's Independence Courts.

Fifth: Al-Za'eem is afraid for his life, as evidenced by:

His motorcade drives very fast and they push people away from sidewalks and forbid cars from driving on roads which he is scheduled to drive through.

He is surrounded by very tight security whether at the military headquarters of the Saraya; the proof is that when I came to meet him I had to show the permit allowing me to see him to five different military policemen waiting at every corner.

When I left after the visit and he stood at the door leading to the corridor to see me out, four different pistols were aimed at me until al-Za'eem turned and went back in.

In the evening of 3 June 1949, al-Za'eem telephoned military headquarters and found the line cut; so he called the regular line and found it also cut. When he called the regular line once again and realized that it was still cut, he panicked, feared a coup, organized a defense force at his home, and sent one of his aides to get his coat. He was only reassured when he learned that a passing high military vehicle had inadvertently cut the telephone lines.

Al-Za'eem relies on German officers to protect his life; two of them accompany him wherever he goes alongside the local security detail, and the rest maintain the Gestapo-style organization.

Sixth: The following bear a big grudge against al-Za'eem:

The old regime and political party circles.

The PPS: because he annulled the Awqaf (Islamic religious endowment) (...), imposed civil law, and fought the Muslim Brotherhood. The fundamentalists, and many other Syrians, were angered by his policies and expressed their reaction in a newsletter (behind which the Muslim Brotherhood was thought to stand) distributed on 5 June 1949, bearing a scathing attack against al-Za'eem.

PPS circles: Al-Za'eem discovered that there was a group of PPS members in the military; he arrested 21 soldiers in whose possession he found copies of secret military orders they intended to send to Antoun Saadeh.

My investigations revealed that there were no less than two thousand soldiers in the Syrian Army belonging to the PPS.

Prominent and feudal family circles unaccustomed to such stringent measures.

3. Al Za'eem is organizing his intelligence services along Gestapo lines. This is why he is surrounded by Germans and young Syrians who once lived in Germany, like Akram Tabbara, Mamdouh al-Maidani, Hicham al-Mahaini, and others whom he trusted. He housed the Deuxième Bureau, Friends of the Army Bureau, Supporters of the Front Bureau, and the Counter Espionage Bureau, on the same street located at the corner of Baghdad Street, and surrounded it with soldiers and security guards under the control of the Germans whom the people call the Gestapo.

4. Adeeb Beik al-Shishakli is the Director of the Sûreté Générale, but his assistant, Ahmad al-Qasaibati, is in charge of intelligence on account of his past experience at the head of the Deuxième Bureau and the News from the Front Bureau.

I was invited through Mamdouh al-Maidani to meet him on Monday morning 6 June 1949 and he started firing questions at me in the same vein as al-Za'eem's, about the communists' activities, the Jordanian Legation, and a number of Syrians, and I briefly told him what I knew about some of them. So he said:

Emir Farid Chehab has put some of his men to either spy on us or follow those who work for us in Beirut. I am sure that some of them have contacts or a relationship with the Emir, though there are three I neither knew nor was sure about, namely Adham Mumtaz, Habib al-Khoury and Kheiro al-Homsy. When I told him that I also neither knew nor had never heard of them, he asked me to check with my contacts at the Lebanese Sûreté Générale and the Jordanian Legation and let him know. So I promised to help.

5. As for those who work for the Syrian Sûreté Générale and Deuxième Bureau, they are Mohammad Ali al Bizri; Kheiry al-Ka'ky; Ibrahim Mneimneh, the brother of Mohammad Mneimneh; Rachad al-Barbir; Basel Daqqaq; Ra'ef Zantout, employee at the Kettaneh office, Mohammad Rustom Tabbara; 'Afif al-Tibi; Adeeb Hinnawi; and Sheikh Dahham al-Sandal.

6. In closing. I would like to say that the contacts I had with the Germans through Mamdouh al-Maidani confirmed to me that al-Za'eem relies on the Gestapo system which his German contingent has established. He would like to establish a similar system not only in Lebanon, but also in other Arab countries in order to have a strong intelligence network, on which he can rely in Beirut, and which maintains tightly linked bases and operates under the supervision of the security forces. These have not yet been established.