



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

On reading and re-reading a lengthy interview with the Syrian Information Minister conducted by the Voice of Lebanon radio and published by the daily A-Sharq Al-Awsat, we looked and searched for a single word of truth but could not find any. Indeed, our long experience with the Syrian regime taught us that its foundations are secrecy, hypocrisy and dissimulation, from the day it was founded and to this day. For the Syrian regime, lying has become the rule and honesty is the exception. The following are some of the headlines from the interview:

"Syria has absolutely no interest in any tutelage over Lebanon, and relations between the two countries occasionally encounter a few negative issues that we manage in a spirit of brotherhood based on a democratic dialogue and a respect for mutual convictions. As to political relations, they are at their best because friendship and cordiality govern relations between the presidents of the two countries... Syria welcomes a visit to Damascus by the Maronite Patriarch as it would any other prominent figure... Syria's borders with Iraq are long, and controlling them is an American responsibility... etc..."

We will keep our answer short because this subject has been repeatedly discussed, and because the last ignoramus on earth would know by now that the truth is simply the opposite of the Minister's comments! Syria's absolute lack of interest in lording it over Lebanon should be understood as Syria's absolute interest, and managing negative matters with democratic dialogue and respect for mutual convictions should be interpreted, in the Syrian doublespeak, as dealing with opponents by throwing them in jail, exiling them or physically eliminating them. And political relations are at their best because Lebanese policies have been subsumed under Syrian policies because of hegemony, and the cordiality between the presidents of the two countries is rather the relationship of a president and his created subordinate. As to equating the Maronite Patriarch with all the other agents crawling on all four to Damascus, it is truly an act of abject insolence. To say that Syria's borders with Iraq are long and that controlling them is an American responsibility is plain lies, insolence, and condescendence. Syria's borders with Turkey are longer and tightly controlled, and so are its borders with Jordan, not to forget that Syria's borders with Israel have been the quietest for 30 years.

To anyone wishing to understand the nature of the Syrian regime and its true intentions, we recommend always reading the opposite of what it says and declares, which pre-empts any unnecessary analysis and theorizing. This recommendation is especially directed at those political departments that handle the dossier of the Middle East, chief among them the Americans whose policies have often fumbled in this area because of their complete ignorance of the Arab mindset in general, and the Syrian in particular. By taking language coming out of the region for what it says on the surface rather than for what it does not say in the background, these political experts have to date failed in resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict, much as the initial victory in Iraq has been marred by today's continued failure and the growing enmity between Arabs and America.

Incidentally, we draw the attention of the American administration to the fact that its new "Al-Hurra" satellite network will meet the same fate as the American "together" network and "Hi" magazine if it fails to engage the Arab mindset in a language it understands. Before anything else, it must consider two things: First, people in this part of the world disdain failure and those who fail, and glorify heroes and victors; and second, to always keep in mind and at hand the Arab saying "Sweetness he gives you from the tip of his tongue as he cheats you like a fox."

Lebanon, at your service,

Abu Arz,

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