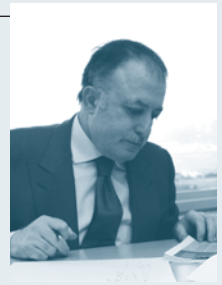


# The Tent Part 9\* or The Tent of Those Without a Tent



**A Maronite:** The world has changed...! I still remember when Bashir<sup>1</sup> used to take us to the monastery for military training ... “The Palestinians and the Syrians are our enemies... and the Muslims are their allies so they are our enemies too,” Father Charbel Qassis<sup>2</sup> used to preach back then. Charles Malek<sup>3</sup> wrote about “an eternal and immortal Lebanon...” and about the “Christian society” resisting the Bedouin incursion.

I fought tooth and nail; I killed and my brother was killed, but I never gave up. Then again, when Bashir was killed; the world started changing and the Christians were no longer united.

I was kicked out from my village in the Chouf and never managed to return until today. The Druze have long been our enemies but now they are our allies; the same applies to the Sunnis. The Shia’a were once our friends, today they are our enemies. As for the Syrians that’s a more complicated story. I still remember when Camille Chamoun<sup>4</sup> and Pierre Gemayel<sup>5</sup> sought the help of Syria when Palestinians were about “to invade” our villages and towns. I also remember the two men’s famous saying: “Lebanon and Syria are just like twins.”

So, Syria was once an enemy then it became a friend, and then back to being an enemy but now...?

I also remember that I was amongst those who welcomed Ariel Sharon in Lebanon. At the time we thought we were amazingly strong because we were allied to invincible Israel. Today, we are the allies of Mahmoud Abbas<sup>6</sup>, Maqddah<sup>7</sup>, and Abu al-Aynayn<sup>8</sup>. I also carried a cedar to the March 14 demonstration and screamed: “Long live Bashir!”

Speaking about cedars, I should tell you

what we did to Bshareh’s cedars forest; we could have tuned it to wood fire but one Syrian officer forbid us... What could we possibly do? It was so cold!

But now things have changed... What did we do to ourselves? “This is not the time to discuss this,” we are told.

**A Sunni:** Things have indeed hanged. I used to be a fighter with Al-Murabitun<sup>9</sup>. Abu Amar<sup>10</sup> trained us to fight, and to collect protection money from “West Beirut.” I fought, killed and my son was killed “all for the sake of Palestine,” I thought at the time. The “Zionist enemy” had invaded Beirut and the Maronites, I mean the Lebanese Forces, were their allies.

Abu Shaker<sup>11</sup>, the Amal Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party ruled over “West Beirut.” We were the law.

We never harassed “our fellow Christians,” but most of them had left West Beirut. “The sheep follow their shepherd,” as the old Lebanese saying goes.

It’s true that we slaughtered people based on their confessions and affiliations, but they did the same to us too. In the old days the “enemy” resided in “East Beirut,” but things have changed now and Syria became our sole enemy.

The Sunnis are no longer marginalized and weakened.

We became best of friends with the Lebanese Forces and we no longer consider the United States as being an imperialist power; on the contrary, the US spreads democracy.

I didn’t know that in the aftermath of the 1967 war, when I participated in burning of the ABC department store in Tripoli, because we thought they were US agents.

I hated the guts of all foreigners; I hated Phoenicians too, because The Phalanges bragged about their (Phoenicians) invention

of the alphabet.

We used to support Egyptian President Gamal Abdel-Nasser; nowadays we support Lebanese Premier Fouad Siniora. Why? “This is not the time to discuss this,” we are told.

**A Shia’a:** What a great relief it was when I saw the Israeli Army enter South Lebanon! The Palestinians treated us awfully and it was time the Israelis entered our land to put an end to the ongoing humiliation.

I sympathized with calls by the Phalange Party that the Lebanese Army should be the sole authority, as well as the Phalanges calls for disarming Palestinian militias inside and outside of refugee camps so that all “Fatah lands” will be dismantled.

It’s true that I threw rice at the Israeli Military but once they became their true selves, “occupiers instead of liberators;” my mother was the first one to pour boiling oil over their heads.

I never felt that Lebanon cared for me; we were even deprived from schools and hospitals in our villages in the South and the Bekaa. We were considered as second class citizens, and pejoratively referred to as “matawleh.”

Also, remind me to tell you about our strong relationship with the Phalanges and the military intelligence, or what was referred to at the time as the “Second Bureau.” My sole focus was to get rid of the Palestinians. “Palestinians out,” I shouted back then.

But Imam al-Sadr<sup>12</sup> recovered our dignity and made us proud. We are now the Resistance against Israel and we will never surrender.

We stand united, along with Syria, and Iran, against the United States and Israel... But what if Israel withdrew from the occupied Sheba’a Farms and reached a peace agreement with Syria? What if a Syria-



Iranian rapprochement takes place?

“This is not the time to discuss this,” we are told.

**A Druze:** Yes indeed things have drastically changed, but these days we seem to be living in a rollercoaster. I fought the Maronites next to “Walid Beik”<sup>13</sup> and killed scores of them. I also slaughtered those poor people when “Kamal Beik”<sup>14</sup> was assassinated. I don’t know what led us to do all this, but one thing for sure: Syria lies at the essence of the whole problem. We used to be allies with Syria, but a couple of years ago we put an end to this alliance... Is that the case today? I really don’t know...

I was afraid that the Shia’a might raid the Chouf region. Having seen MP Wael Abu Faour, from “Walid Beik’s” bloc, shaking hands with Hizbullah Minister Mohammad Fneish in Chouefat the other day, my fears subsided.

By the way, I used to be more afraid from the Sunnis and the Maronites. “Walid Beik” is keeping the situation under control while I wait...

The relationship with Syria is “not so good.” Walid Beik says that we “lost our Arab identity and Palestine.” Are we trying to recover it now? Why did all this happen? “This is not the time to discuss this,” we are told.

A former fighter with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP): I remember we fought the war against the “isolationists,” to free Palestine, and of course to set the foundations for Greater Syria.

However, the Army of the Levant, I mean the Syrian Army, entered Lebanon to save the “isolationists” from the Palestinians! I still can’t help but scream at the sight of Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad giving a warm embrace to Chamoun and Gemayel. We were told that the Syrian Army came here to “counter the Zionist threat.” I remember how divisions in the party came to light after the Syrians entered Lebanon; some of us supported the move while others aligned themselves with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Iraq, and Libya.

We have long called for having Lebanon a single electoral district with proportional

representation but soon enough we were drawn into the political meddling and started receiving orders from Major General Ghazi Kanaan<sup>15</sup> and later on from Brigadier Rustom Ghazaleh<sup>16</sup> (Imagine Antun Saadeh<sup>17</sup> doing this!).

While it’s true that during the 1975-1990 Civil War, we showed a lot less atrocity than other groups, but nonetheless, we had our share in the violence.

More recently we applauded a qada-based electoral law, and endorsed the exchange of diplomatic ties between Lebanon and Syria, the preservation of the “components of the Lebanese society,” and we also expressed unconditional support for the Resistance. Oh, I forgot to mention that we were once part of the Resistance against Israel but we were told “to leave the matter to the Shia’a,” and we were offered seats in the Cabinet instead.

I won’t touch upon our performance at the Ministry of Labor and how we crushed the Labor Union. Why on earth are the Syrian and Lebanese entities so far apart these days; even more distant than before the entry of the Syrian Army to Lebanon in 1976?

Today, we are busy exposing the dangers of the policies adopted by the Hariri and Siniora governments. In reality, we took part in almost every single one of those governments; we supported their policies, gave them a vote of confidence in Parliament, and approved all their budgets while public debt was increasing by the day.

Now, we can’t seem to remember all of this; as if I’m amnesic. “This is not the time to discuss this” we are told

A former fighter with the Lebanese Communist Party: At the time, we were still fighting imperialism and praising the Soviet Union, failing to notice Gorbachev<sup>18</sup> and Rayssa’s shopping session at Bulgari. We launched, along with the SSNP the Lebanese resistance against Israel but it was our friends of today that crushed us. Our Syrian friends offered the SSNP seats in the Cabinet and the Parliament. We didn’t mind although we hoped for similar treatment.

It’s true we have always been secular, and never persecuted people based on their

religious beliefs, but we, as well as the SSNP, fought alongside sectarian groups.

We allied ourselves with Qaddafi<sup>19</sup> totally overlooking his conspiratorial role with Jaafar al-Numairi<sup>20</sup> in killing Abdel-Khalek Mahjoub<sup>21</sup>, and thousands of our comrades in the Sudanese Communist Party. We supported Stalin in his dismantling of Lenin’s legacy and Khrushchev<sup>22</sup> in his purge of Stalinism. We also supported Gorbachev in his glasnost, that’s of course before he starred in an ad for Louis Vuitton.

We received tons of cash and lost scores of martyrs, we should all revisit our comrade Iskandar Riachi’s<sup>23</sup> writings on the art of bribery. Is this the way we live up to the memory of comrade Farjallah al-Helu<sup>24</sup>?

Did we do all this to preserve the unity of the working class? Isn’t it time for discussion? “This is not the time to discuss this,” we are told.

**A Lebanese citizen:** I did not fight or kill and I even consider myself a member of the Party of the Killed; but I know those facts:

- ⊙ 50,000 Lebanese are registered as mentally or physically challenged; there might be more. Wars are the principal cause for disabilities
- ⊙ Millions of square meters are inaccessible to the Lebanese because feuding militias sowed them with landmines
- ⊙ 54% of the Lebanese do not benefit from health insurance and rely on the Ministry of Health to cover healthcare expenses
- ⊙ 26% of Lebanese families do not own a house
- ⊙ 43 % of Lebanese families do not own a means for transportation, in a country where public transport is inexistent
- ⊙ 90% of Lebanon’s waste water is discharged in the Mediterranean Sea or leaks to underground waters.
- ⊙ 10 hours is the average electricity supply per day
- ⊙ 30, 000 Lebanese emigrate each year

And you still think you have tents? *Jawad N. Adra*

\*Note: for endnotes please refer to page 51