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## When "they" correct "our" history



**"Why do you keep talking about the 16th and 19th centuries? What about today?", My colleague asked.  
I do not think we are ready yet. But let us see...**

The letter of Bani Shu'aib<sup>(1)</sup> raised nostalgic feelings among the descendants of foreign envoys who played an important role in the history of the region, including Lebanon.

Their statements reflect true stories they heard from their parents or found in family documents. They all had mixed feelings towards Lebanon. They remember sweet stories about the "beautiful country" and its "hospitable people" who received their ancestors warmly when the latter were powerful and victorious. On the other hand, they hold bitter memories of these "welcoming" zu'ama turning on their guests like ravenous wolves when defeated.

These descendants are surprised at the ability of Lebanon's "ruling families" to appear highly "cultured" and "modern" and to simultaneously act like voracious beasts. It seems that History to them does not matter, because stories, fictive or real, will depict them as great Zu'ama, heroes definitely, and "martyrs" if needs be.

The descendants of these envoys, however, have another version of Lebanon's history. Let us see what they say.

**The descendant of Jamal Pasha (1872-1922)**

"Old documents, which belonged to my great-grandfather, prove that those who were called 'revolutionists' and 'reformists' and stood against the Turks, were in fact Jamal's followers turning against him when Turkey was defeated by the Allies. They then replaced him by France and Britain. As for those who displayed patriotic fever they most probably did that to spite a neighbor or a cousin," he said.

"My grandfather told me once: "The Arabs have a weakness in their character that is jealousy of their countrymen who become important," and he literally told me that "if those zu'ama forge alliances with France and Britain against Turkey in World War I (1914), the Arab nation will be defeated forever... and those who pretend to know nothing about foreign schemes are either short-sighted or have decided to sell their conscience and dignity."

Jamal Pasha's descendant concluded his letter, saying: "Those who called my great-grandfather the 'Butcher' used to kiss his..."<sup>(2)</sup>

**The Descendant of Damien de Martel (1878-1940)**

"My great-grandfather was not as bad as you think. He had a good sense of humor and loved women. He fell in love with a woman who was revered by all your zu'ama.

It is true that he used the game of money in the 1934 parliamentary elections, but he said: "I am doing a humanitarian job as there are no other means for Abboud Abdel-Razak, Emile Tabet and other candidates to help the poor voters and penniless journalists..."

It is also true that he meddled with the 1936 presidential elections but your Zu'ama were more than willing, since he wrote to his girlfriend: "You have always told me that our relationship should make of you a millionairess... I will not allow the candidates (Emile Eddeh and Beshara al-Khoury) to win the elections unless they lose their minds or money or both together..."

The descendant concludes the letter: "Yes, they waited in queue at his door and when the French government decided to transfer him, they abandoned him."<sup>(3)</sup>

**The Descendant of General Edward Spears (1886-1974)**

The great-granddaughter of General Spears begins the letter saying that Britney is not a relative, stating that she was very angry that the singer had a wider popularity than Edward.

She says that her grandfather was the main contributor to Lebanon's independence. "He was the one who threatened French High Commissioner Jean Helleu and expelled him from Lebanon after the latter detained your "heroes" of Independence. He deployed many efforts for the election of your first President<sup>(4)</sup>. In the mid-1960s, I met one of your zu'ama who told me that my "late" grandfather was a hero. I told him that he was still alive and that he would be very happy to receive him again or any of the Lebanese zu'ama. He declined, saying he was overwhelmed with work."

She continues: "You left my grandfather to die alone and I will never forget that."

**Skimming through old documents and dispatches, we stopped at the beginning of the civil war in 1975.**

**"Please let us go back to the time of Fakhreddine I (fictive or real), as I am still confident that Fakhreddine II is the founder of modern Lebanon... and please do not try to change my convictions," my colleague said.**

(1) See *The Monthly* issue no.65 of December 2007

(2) *Memoirs of Jamal Pasha, translated from Turkish into Arabic by Ali Ahmad Shukri*

(4) "Lebanese Presidents as I knew them", Iskandar Riashi, title translated from Arabic.

(3) *Fulfillment of a Mission (1941-1944), Edward Spears*

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