

November 19, 1949 Untitled report on the activities of the Lebanese Communist Party

Citation:

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Summary:

History of the Lebanese Communist Party and a description of major events which took place during 1945.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Youmna and Tony Asseily

Original Language:

Arabic

Contents:

Original Scan
Translation - English

Origin / Scan Center Digital اربهم رسوي عي دي عا حد ند ليا م ورا وها عمر عمر العام لا عمر التدر دسم معلی با معلی با معرف می است 今年上の一大は山水一日 からいっといっといい entre constant muse super sur a 2 3 lare as we mig as a we

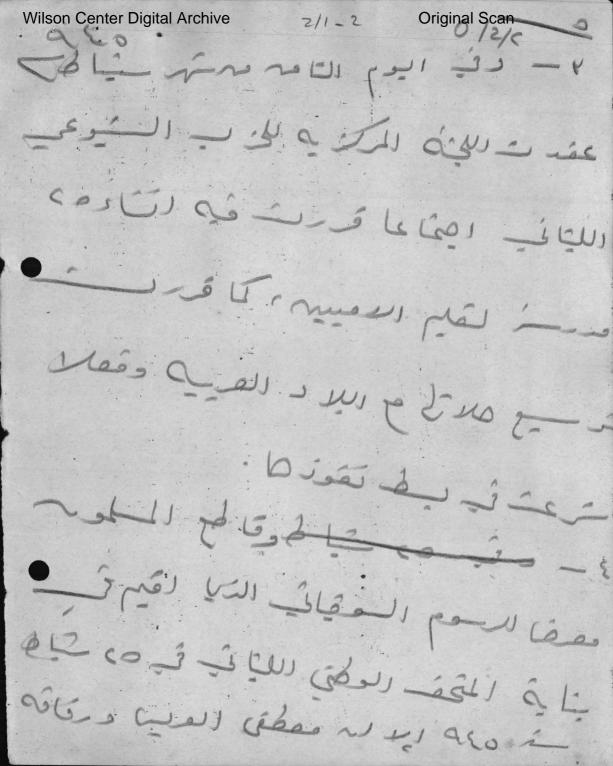
Wilson Center Digital Archive

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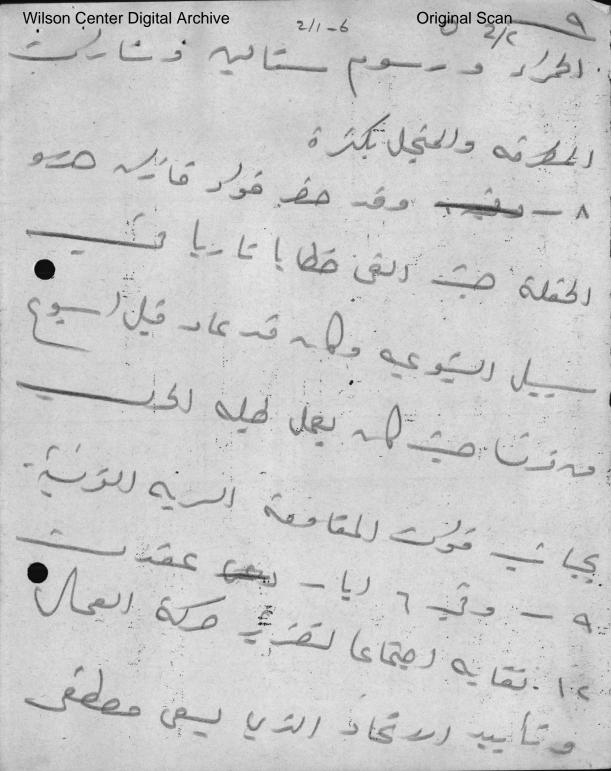
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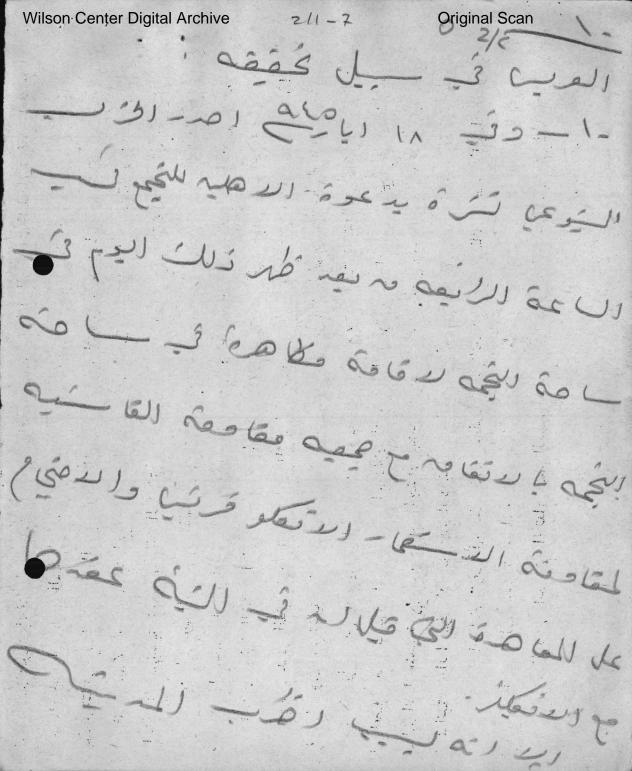


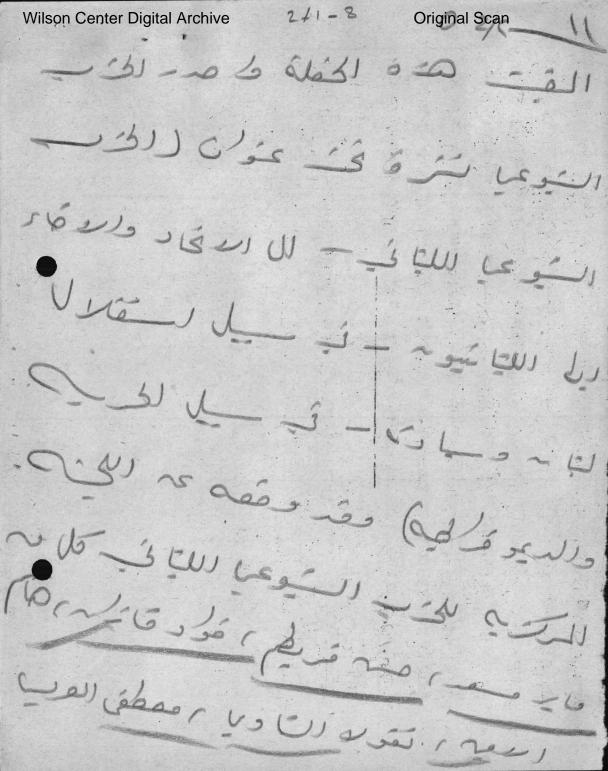
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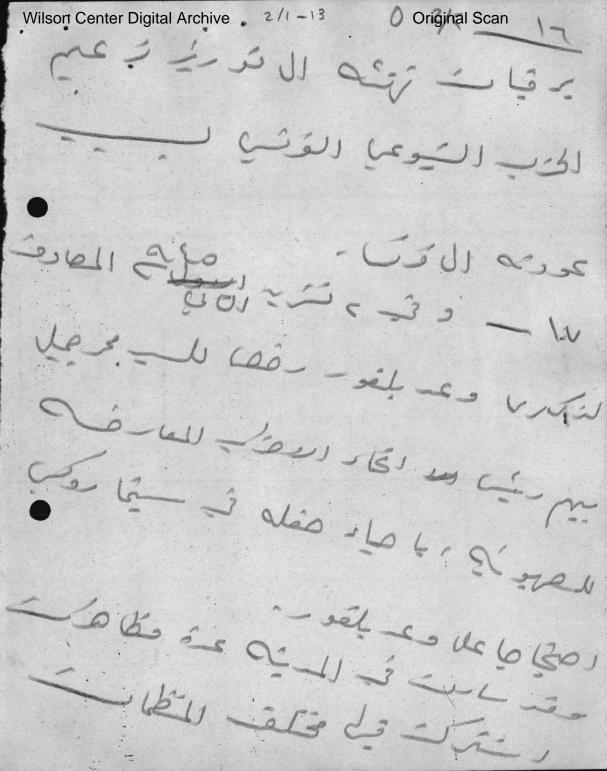


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The strongest communist organisations in the Arab world are to be found in Lebanon and it is due to that fact that until recently they were allowed to operate unopposed although their methods were not entirely legitimate. Furthermore, the nature of the citizenry, especially in Lebanon, is conducive to the development of such organisations.

Until 1932, Communist propaganda did not have an effect on the country's citizens, except maybe on the Armenian and Orthodox population.

If the secretive Printers' Union depicted the developments in the labour movement with Marxist undertones, the French dealt with it at the time with an officers' decree.

For the workers this did not come as the result of understanding and ideological conviction, but rather thanks to the material assistance provided by Russian agents, chief among whom is Girov, nicknamed Moscow's Eye.

When the Popular Front came to power in France in 1936, pressure eased a little on communists and their activities increased until 1940 when the Vichy Government put an end to all communist activities. It detained a number of their leaders, tried them in a military court, and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from three to ten years. When the National Government returned to power in 1943 the pressure eased again, not due to the growing impact of Russia in the battlefield, but in the hope of strengthening the National Union against the French.

The influence of the communists reached its peak in July 1944 when Russia, ahead of everyone else, recognised the independence of Lebanon and Syria. In that same year, communists split into two parties and amended their platform to better reflect national aspirations and encourage more people to join their ranks.

The events of 1945:

The 1945 New Year celebrations were held at the Russian Legation and Solod complained that Muslim leaders did not come to visit and express their good wishes; he, Mostapha al-'Aris, and Saadedin Momaneh, endeavoured to put this right.

Al-'Aris and Momaneh had earlier visited Muslim journalists to persuade them to attend the Russian Legation's celebrations.

8 February 1945: The Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party held a meeting during which it decided to establish 25 schools for the illiterate. It also decided to expand its contacts with Arab countries, and actually started to assert its influence.

Muslims boycotted a Soviet art exhibition held at the Lebanese National Museum on 25 February 1945. However, Mostapha al-'Aris and his comrades made a genuine effort to change the Muslims' mind about attending, and succeeded in bringing a number of young people to see the exhibition.

When the Government published the Income Tax Law, the communists seriously and publicly attempted in February to rouse the workers against paying income tax and, at the same time, to prevail upon the Government to exempt them from having to exempt them from having to pay it.

In the meantime, communist propaganda against the PPS increased, especially at educational institutions. Consequently, the Communist Party tried to instigate the

population against the PPS, which led to fights between the two parties.

By this, the Communist Party aimed at eliminating the PPS in order to consolidate the Communist Party's activities in the country.

The communists' propaganda was so driven that they distributed copies of the message they sent to the Speaker of the National Assembly about the Nationalists, printed in newsletter form.

1 May: communists held a speech rally at Casino Saadeh in the Dora neighbourhood, attended by over 5,000 people from Beirut and the neighbouring villages, during which the speakers talked at length through loudspeaker.

Worthy of note were the many red flags, pictures of Stalin, and hammer and sickle posters carried by members of the audience.

Fouad Kazan attended this rally and delivered a fiery speech extolling the virtues of communism. He returned only a week ago from France where he had worked, all during the war, with the French secret resistance forces.

6 May 12 unions held meetings with the aim of strengthening the workers' movement and lending support to the union which Mostapha al- 'Aris intends to establish.

18 May 1945; The Communist Party called upon the people to assemble, that same that same day at 4 p.m., at the Place de l'Etoile to demonstrate with the anti-fascist resistance against Anglo-French colonialism and the agreement which, according to rumours, was going to be signed with the British.

But the event was cancelled due to the strike in the city, and the Communist Party issued instead a declaration entitled 'the Lebanese Communist Party - towards the unity and brotherhood of all Lebanese - for the sake of Lebanon's independence and sovereignty - for the sake of freedom and democracy'.

19 May 1945: The declaration was signed on behalf of the Central Committee of the Lebanesese Communist Party by Mayer Mas'ad, Hassan Koreitem, Fouad Kazan, Hachem al-Amin, Nicolas al-Chaoui, Mostapha al-'Aris, and Farajallah al-Helou, and strongly attacked the agreement and its supporters.

On account of the tense situation, the conference of the General Workers' Union due to be held on 21 May was postponed indefinitely.

23 June: The Political Bureau of the Communist Party issued a declaration reviewing the political situation in Syria and Lebanon and expressing the Party's position regarding the resolution of the Syrian-Lebanese crisis. The declaration also opposed British influence in the country.

15 August 1945: A delegation from the Central Committee of the Communist Party met with Mr Solod and congratulated him, in the name of Communism, on Russia's victory in the war.

In the meantime, railway workers went on strike to protest against the 1-5 wage difference between local and French workers.

As a result of the success of this move which was championed by Mostapha al-'Aris,

the workers started taking part in politics, became radicalised, and were able to send representatives to the International Workers' Conference in Paris. The delegation was composed of Mostapha al-'Aris, Kaisar Ziyadeh, George Freiha, and Edouard 'Akra.

At the same time, the communists started printing banners calling for the total evacuation of foreign forces from the country; and on 28 September, they issued a communiqué expelling Farajallah al-Helou from the Party. Under the title 'Memorandum by the Lebanese Communist Party - to HE the Prime Minister of Lebanon - regarding the real evacuation of foreign forces and the total removal of economic restrictions', the Party responded to the British memorandum by calling for the total withdrawal of British forces from the country.

28 October 1945: The communists received the returning delegation from the Workers' Conference with a splendid celebration, and at the same time sent congratulatory telegrams to Tournier, Head of the French Communist Party, on the occasion of his return to France.

2 November 1945: Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Mr Mohammad Jamil Bayhom, President of the Union of Parties Opposed to Zionism, was granted permission to hold a celebration in Cinema Roxy to protest against the Balfour Declaration.

Several demonstrations by various organisations and national institutions walked through the city streets, with the exception of the Communist Party which refuse to join because the PPS was taking part.

When the demonstrators gathered in front of the Government's headquarters, the communists infiltrated the ranks of the PPS and one of them attempted to remove the Zaouba'a flag from a car, provoking a fight and causing the security forces to intervene in an attempt to separate the two groups. The Nationalists then withdrew to Assour Place.

Waiting for them there was a group of communists, who upon their arrival in front of the Grand Theatre Cinema, advanced carrying sticks and knives and started hitting them, causing injury to eight Nationalists. During the scuffle, one of the Nationalists fired a shot from his revolver killing the communist Edouard al-Chartouni.

When the Union of Lebanese Parties Opposed to Zionism met at Cinema Roxy and Jamil Bayhom started speaking, Mostapha al-'Aris stood up, interrupted him, announced that a member of the Communist Party had been martyred, asked everyone to stand for a minute of silence, and threatened revenge against those who attacked his comrade al-Chartouni.

The communists resumed their march to the Party's headquarters where Farajallah al-Helou addressed them lauding the achievements of the Party, attacking the Nationalists and expressing the communists' resolve to avenge their comrade al-Chartouni.

3 November: The Lebanese Communist Party issued a declaration entitled 'the Lebanese Communist Party announces to the people the martyr of a patriotic Lebanese- Edouard al-Chartouni - who died for Palestine in the struggle against Zionism - at the hands of the Syrian Nationalist gang.'