

### Levantine Arabic transcript:

ياسر: ممكن الواحد يقول انو من اقدم الأحزاب السورية هو الحزب الشيوعي السوري إلي بلش تقريبا بال 1926 تقريبا بهاي الفترة. وترأسوا بجداش لفترة طويلة. الأحزاب الثانية الأساسية والكبيره هويّ طبعا الأخوان المسلمين، محمد البناء، إلي كان بسوريا وهرب بعد ما تمت ملاحقته. حزب البعث إلي بلش ب1946 بعد تقريبا عشرين سنة من الحزب الشيوعي وإلي بلشوا ميشيل علق والحيتار بالسنة واربعين (1946) وطبعا أمتد لبلدان كتيره الى جانب سوريا..سوريا، العراق، جزء من فلسطين، لبنان، المغرب العربي والخليج أيضا، ولكن مركز نفوذه هو سوريا والعراق..آه. هاي الفترة تعتبر فترة سياسيا مضطربة لأنو صار في عدة انقلابات خلال هاي الفترة، اولاً..طبعا يعني خلال السنة الواحدة كان يصير عدة انقلابات، شي شكلي استلم السلطة بعد ال..بعد.. الاستقلال بالسنة واربعين..آه.. وحل الاحزاب بالاثنتين وخمسين، وصار وحده بين سوريا ومصر بالثمانية وخمسين استمرت فترة بسيطة نوعا ما للثنتين وستين لانو كانت هيمنة مصر..دخلت على السياسة المحلية والنخبة السياسية رفضت هذا النوع من الضغط فهذا الشيء ادى الى فصل سوريا عن مصر. خلال هاي الفترة نمت أحزاب أقل أهميه..آه..بس بشكل اساسي حزب البعث هو إلي كان مسيطر. وبالسنة وستين تقريبا استلم السلطة حزب البعث بسوريا..يعني ثلاثة وستين لافتره الاولى وستة وستين..سبعة وستين (1966/1967) بالفترة الثانية، بالثلاثة وسبعين حافظ الأسد سيطر كليا على النظام بسوريا بعد ما كان عملوا انقلاب هو ورفاقه، وقضى على القيادات الثانية، البعض هرب، الجزء آخر فات على السجن، واستفرد هوي يعني بالسلطة. آه..طبعا صار في قمع لعدة قيادات، جميع الأحزاب طوردت أو منعت وقياداتها فانتت على السجن. بعد هاي فترة يعني نوعا ما التاريخ الحديث لسوريا كان مهيمن عليه شخص حافظ الأسد.. بالثنتين وثمانين حصل مظاهرات اساسيه والنظام قمعها بشكل دموي..يعني الحادثة الاساسية إلي الواحد بيذكرها هوي القمع الي تم بمدينة حماه للأخوان المسلمين والأحزاب الاسلامية عموما. وبعد هاي الفترة طبعا يعني القيادات أما النقابية أو الحزبية تراجعت لحد كبير. بسنة الالفين مضى حافظ الأسد واستلم ابنو..آه..لكن فترة كانت مضطربة جدا لانو القيادات الحزبية انتفضت على الاسلوب الديكتاتوري او القمعي أو التسلطي للحزب الواحد-حزب البعث. وصار، انشئ ما يسمى بالمجتمع المدني السوري، و عدة احزاب يعني تجمعت وبلشت محاضرات ولسنة تظاهرات. نوعا ما كان الها مفعول ايجابي لانو السلطة بلشت نوعا ما تعطي حيز اكبر للمجتمع المدني لهيئة القيادات والنخب والمثقفين. بالالفين وثلاثة هذا الجو قمع كليا لانو السلطة حست بنوع من المنافسة وحست انو في امكانية لانو تستبدل أو يحل محلها قوى منافسه. فمن الفين وثلاثة لحد هلا الفين وستة في مثل اخذ يعني الاحزاب السياسية احيانا بتحاول أنو تلتف على الحزام القمعي أو على بعض الاساليب القمعية للسلطة بعدة طرق من خلال محاضرات، من خلال افلام، من خلال اساليب مختلفة فنية أو ثقافية، والاسلوب السياسي المباشر تراجع عموما يعني من هاي الفترة.

### English translation:

Yasser: One can say that one of the oldest parties in Syria is the Syrian Communist Party, which was founded in 1926, roughly during that time. It was headed by Bakdash<sup>1</sup> for a long time. The other main and big parties, of course, are, of course, [the] Muslim Brotherhood -- Mohammad el-Banna, who was in Syria and escaped after he was pursued -- the Ba'ath Party, which started in 1946, almost 20 years after the Communist Party ...ah... and [the ones] who founded it were Michel Aflaq and [Salah] al-Bitar in 1946. Of course it spread to other countries besides Syria -- Syria, Iraq ... ah ... part of Palestine, Lebanon and [the] Maghreb<sup>2</sup> and Gulf States also. But the center of its power is in Syria and Iraq.

<sup>1</sup> Khalid Bakdash (1912-1995), longtime Secretary-general of the Party.

<sup>2</sup> Maghreb. "The place of sunset"; the west. The term refers to northwestern Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Mauritania.

... ah ... that period is considered politically disturbed because several coups happened during that time. First, certainly within one year, several coups happened, which assumed [whose leaders assumed] power temporarily, after ... ah ... after independence in 1946 ... ah ... and abolishing parties ... ah .... Unity between Syrian and Egypt happened in 1958. It lasted for a short time, until 1962, because the control of Egypt put pressure on the domestic politics, and the ... ah ... the Syrian political elite rejected this kind of pressure. This thing led to the separation of Syria and Egypt.

Umm, during that time, less important parties emerged, but mainly it was the Ba'ath Party that was in power. And in 1966, the Ba'ath Party assumed power in Syria; I mean in 1963, it was the first period, and in 1966 or 1967 was the second period. In 1973, Hafez al-Assad ... ah ... completely assumed the ... ah .... power in Syria after he accomplished a coup along with his comrades in 1970 ... ah ... and he ended ... other leaders. Some escaped, others were sent to prison. And ... ah ... he governed the country in an autocracy ... ah .... Of course suppression happened against several leaders. All parties were exiled or banned ... ah .... and their leaders were sent to prison. ... umm. After that period, I mean, sort of, [the] modern history of Syria was controlled by Hafez al-Assad. In 1982, big demonstrations happened and the regime suppressed them in a bloody way. I mean, the main event that one remembers is the oppression in the city of Hama<sup>3</sup> against the Muslim Brotherhood and Muslim parties in general ... ah .... After that period, of course, I mean, the leaderships, either union or party, backed down to a large extent. In the year 2000, Hafez al-Assad died, and his son became president. However, that period was very disturbed, because the partisan leaderships protested the dictator or the oppressive system of the Ba'ath Party. And what's called "The Syrian Civilian Society" was formed and ... ah ... several parties congregated and started to give lectures and a series of demonstrations ... ah ... that had a somewhat positive influence, because the government started, sort of, giving more freedom to the civilian society and to those leaderships and the elite and intellectuals.

In 2003 ... ah ... this atmosphere [he means feeling] was completely suppressed because the government felt a kind of competition, and it felt the possibility of its being replaced, replaced by rival leaders. So from 2003 to 2006 ... ah ... there was ... ah ... like ... ah ... I mean the political parties ... ah ... sometimes try to avoid the oppressive perimeter or some of the despotic methods of the regime in different ways, through lectures, through films -- through different ways, either artistic or cultural, and the direct political method has been curtailed in general, I mean, at this time.

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<sup>3</sup> Hama was the site of a massacre in February, 1982.

Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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