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Putin Dresses Down The Group of Eight

Below is a translation from As-Safir, a Lebanese newspaper, July 6, 2013, by Arabic-English translator Eric Mueller. As the translator was not present at the Group of Eight meeting, he cannot vouch for the accuracy of the report, only for the accuracy of the translation. The report by Dawud Rimal does reflect Putin's no-nonsense manner of speaking. The report from As-Safir contrasts with the US coverage.

Diplomatic sources: Putin tells G8 "You want Asad to resign. Look at the leaders you've made in the Middle East."

By Dawud Rimal

Beirut: A diplomatic source has reported that the West has been discussing for some time the issue of the escalating role of Islamists in Lebanon and the Arab countries. The source reports that this discussion might wind up concluding that there is a need to rein in the role of the Islamists. It is along this line of thinking that the West has been encouraging the Lebanese regular army since the 'Abra Battle. [A two-day battle between Lebanese regular army forces and the gang of a Sunni Salafi Shaykh Ahmad al-Asir 'Abra near the southern Lebanese city of Sidon in late June 2013. Translator's note.]

The diplomatic source reports that the changes underway in Egypt were expected by the Western countries and that the leaders of the G8 discussed the matter of Islamists coming to power in a number of Arab countries, including Egypt, in their recent meeting in Northern Ireland. [The Group of Eight or "G8" (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA, and Russia) met in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, on 17-18 June 2013. Translator's note.]

The diplomatic source reports that during that G8 meeting, Russian President Putin delivered a long intervention on that subject.

The prominent European diplomatic source reports that in his statement, the Russian President addressed the leaders participating in the G8 meeting, saying:

"You want President Bashshar al-Asad to step down? Look at the leaders you've made in the Middle East in the course of what you have dubbed the "Arab Spring." Now the peoples of the region are rejecting those leaders. The revolution against Muhammad Mursi in Egypt continues and anybody who knows the character of Egyptian society is aware of the fact that it is a deeply rooted secular society of varied cultures and civilizations with a history of advanced political activity. It will never accept attempts to impose things upon it by force. As to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [in Turkey], the street is moving against him and his star is beginning to wane. In Tunisia the Muslim Brotherhood-Salafi rule that you formed there is no longer stable and the fate of Tunisia won't be very far from the army seizing power, because Europe will never accept chaos on its borders and Tunisia is an entry way to Europe." (Putin said this before the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Tunisia resigned to declare his candidacy for president of the republic. Note by as-Safir.)

Putin went on: "You have spread anarchy in Libya after Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi. Nobody can put together an authority capable of working to rebuild the state there. Yemen after the departure of 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih lacks stability in government and there is no peace in the streets. Military and security unrest continues to prevail in all the regions of the country. As to the Persian Gulf, the whole area from Bahrain to the rest of the states there is sitting atop a volcano," Putin said.

The diplomatic source reported the Russian President as saying: "You want Russia to abandon Asad and his regime and go along with an Opposition whose leaders don't know anything except issuing fatwas declaring people heretics, and whose members – who come from a bunch of different countries and have multiple orientations – don't know anything except how to slaughter people and eat human flesh. You use double standards and approach the crisis in Syria using summer and winter styles under one roof. You lie to your own peoples so as to further your interests. This is none of our business. But it is impermissible for you to lie to us and to the countries and peoples of the world, because the international stage is no longer yours alone. Your ability to monopolize it the way you did two decades ago is now gone for good."

Putin continued: "In Syria all of you are standing on the side of the forces that for the last 10 years you have claimed to be fighting against under the rubric of 'fighting terror.' Now today you are with them, helping them to take power across the region. You declare that you're going to arm them and work to facilitate sending their fighters to Syria to bring it down, weaken it, and break it up." Putin asked, "In God's name what kind of democracy are you talking about? You want a democratic regime in Syria to take the place of the Asad regime, but are Turkey and the countries you're allied with in the region blessed with democracy?"

Putin addressed US President Obama specifically, saying: "Your country sent its army to Afghanistan in the year 2001 on the excuse that you are fighting the Taliban and the al-Qa'idah Organization and other fundamentalist terrorists whom your government accused of carrying out the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington. And here you are today making an alliance with them in Syria. And you and your allies are declaring your desire to send them weapons. And here you have Qatar in which you [the US] have your biggest base in the region and in the territory of that country the Taliban are opening a representative office."

Putin turned to the President of France [François Hollande] to ask, "How can you send your army to Mali to fight fundamentalist terrorists on the one hand, while on the other you are making an alliance with them and supporting them in Syria, and you want to send them heavy weapons to fight the regime there?"

British Prime Minister David Cameron came in for some of Putin's sharpest remarks, when the Russian President told him: "You are loudly demanding that the terrorists in Syria be armed and yet these are the same people two of whom slaughtered a British soldier on a street in London in broad daylight in front of passers by, not caring about your state or your authority. And they have also committed a similar crime against a French soldier in the streets of Paris."

The diplomatic report indicates that the leaders gathered at the summit were surprised then when German Chancellor Angela Merkel supported every word that Putin said in his address. She declared her rejection of any solution in Syria other than a peaceful one, saying "because the military solution will lead Syria and the whole region into the unknown." She strongly opposed arming the Syrian Opposition, "so that these weapons don't get into the hands of the terrorists who plan to use them in attacks against cities in the European Union." She also indicated that she did not want to see some of her European partners getting involved in military and political adventures that would only serve to further deepen their financial and economic deficits, "because Germany is no longer able to serve as a financial and economic rescue line for those countries in order to help cover up their mistakes."

As-Safir newspaper, No 12522, Saturday, 6 July 2013.

<http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleId=654&EditionId=2506&ChannelId=60427> ^[1]

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