

A cease-fire was effected and fighting stopped but the life of Premier Solh's government had run its course. In his resignation speech in mid-May, Solh blamed the Phalanges for initiating the violence, and he repeated the earlier call for a greater Moslem share in the army's affairs and an entirely non-sectarian administration. He also stated bluntly that "g-standing Moslem residents (i.e., mainly Palestinians) should be granted Lebanese citizenship.

The Phalanges recognized clearly that the pressures for change would increase. The longer ties of co-operation hold, the more feudal interests of the ruling élite men, whether, since changes would result in the by elimination of Maronite political parathens within the confessional system. Hence, the Phalanges concluded, the existing confessional system must be destroyed — not by replacing it with a unitary democratic state but by preserving the very essence of confessional relations within the bosom of a single factional entity.

Military government

President Franjeh's answer to the crisis was to appoint a military government, at the same time the Phalanges led to embroil the Palestinians in another round of fighting. The military government collapsed under a hail of missiles from the Moslems after only three days in power. Meanwhile, Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, warned the Phalanges that while the Palestinians did not want to enter a purely Lebanese political crisis, the Syrian would not permit a second "Jordanian" being opened against them.

President Franjeh next instructed Gen-times-Prime-Minister Rahid Karame to form a government of reconciliation. Four weeks later, on July 1, he successfully succeeded in putting together a 10-man emergency cabinet.

Throughout the summer, residents of many mountain resorts in Lebanon could hear the constant crackle of gun-fire as private militia groups trained in preparation for a resumption of the fighting. Pierre Gemayel's Phalanges were the fiercest and best organized and disciplined militia, which also had gained combat experience in the 1958 civil war. Kamal Blat, leader of the Druze community, a man not given to making rash statements, publicly charged the President with channeling weapons and ammunition from army stores into the hands of the Phalanges. That the President is deeply involved in the Maronite cause is scarcely contested, since his own

son, Tony, leads another militia group called the Zgharta Liberation Front. Camille Chamoun, too, possesses a strong militia, while many Maronite army officers have been given their "annual vacations" to train the various militia groups.

On the Moslem side, two main groups bore the brunt of the early fighting, though they were smaller and not as well equipped as their Phalanges opponents. One militia group, al-Murabitun, is headed by Ibrahim Alaylat, a young man with a shady past who has become a hero of the Moslem streets. A second group, founded by the Shia religious leader Imam Musa Sadr, has been employed mainly in defence of the poorer Shia quarters, which have been heavily attacked by the Phalanges.

According to a survey conducted by the Beirut newspaper *al-Anwar*, fighting in Lebanon between mid-April and early July had taken a toll of 2,300 dead and over 16,000 wounded. Some say these figures are exaggerated, but no one is prepared to say by how much. In any event, it was merely a preview of the violence to come, which erupted in mid-September.

Escalation

In the latest round, the scale of fighting has escalated beyond all expectations; mortars, machine guns, rocket-launchers and recoilless rifles comprise the armoury of the best-equipped militia. Moreover, millions of dollars are available in the country with which to purchase arms, mainly of Russian make. One of the most remarkable features of the civil war has been the continuing strength of the Lebanese pound against other foreign currencies, indicating a tremendous inflow of funds from the outside.

According to what a former adviser to Pierre Gemayel reported to this writer, the Phalanges plan in this round was to achieve the *de facto* partition of Beirut by military force. Moslems living in predominantly Maronite areas like Ashrifiyya were driven out and their homes destroyed. Commercial quarters where Moslem shopkeepers rented from Christian landowners were also destroyed; such was the fate of Suk Sursuck and Suk al-Khadra. The Phalanges objective was to divide the city by a line running from the port eastward to Mount Lebanon, whence they could secure the northern areas of the country, where the majority of Maronites live. With this accomplished, the creation of a Maronite state might become a reality. The Phalanges have, however, encountered much stiffer resistance than anticipated and have consequently suffered heavy

*April violence
a prelude
to September
eruption*