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along religious lines and directed a denominational quota system in the public service and the national assembly. This arrangement not only reinforces religious affiliation as the first criterion in determining political allegiance but also gives permanence to a distribution of power based on a demographic situation that is no longer representative and favours the Christians at the expense of the Moslems. During the civil war, the break-up of the few remaining national institutions, such as the army, the collapse of essential services and the disintegration of the economy provided the finishing touch to an already existing fragmentation resulting from a constitutional order most citizens considered to be illegitimate.

In the postwar period, the renewed growth of sectarianism and the weakness of the state ultimately reinforced the power of some of the traditional leaders. This was paradoxical, since during the war the power of these same leaders had been eroded as it passed to the leaders of the countless new fighting groups. Thus, although the politicians were unable to end the anarchy of the war, some of them have succeeded in obtaining recognition in peace-time – under the shadow of the Syrian shields. From this point of view, the biggest winner in the civil war is Camille Chamoun; his key role and his intransigence throughout the war assure him today of a personal prestige among Christians in Lebanon exceeding that of Pierre Gemayel, who has a more numerous, better organized and better armed following but is considered a moderate.

On the other hand, Rachid Karamé, who was Prime Minister all through the war, has lost control of his base in Tripoli, while Saeb Salam only regained his control in Beirut by coming to terms with one of his former lieutenants, Ibrahim Koleilat, who is the new leader of the *Morabitoun* (independent Nasserites).

Whatever the relative power today of the various traditional leaders, it is certain that the political weight of the current President, Elias Sarkis, and of the Prime Minister, Selim Hoss, is minimal. These two technocrats, who are well intentioned and competent but lack any sort of political base, represent only the will of the Syrians and they suffer the humiliation of seeing their protector deal directly with the heads of the traditional factions. Furthermore, there is no indication that time is on the side of the country's constitutional authorities. Even if the traditional leaders are almost all octogenarians, each of them has one or more sons ready to succeed him and followers who are willing to recognize the authority of these sons. No, the state of Lebanon is defi-

nately dead. The question that remains to be answered is what is going to replace it.

Palestinian presence

Concerning the future of Lebanon, it is the Palestinian shadow that dominates any discussion. There is no need to accept a Christian interpretation of the civil war which admits only a conflict between Lebanese and Palestinians, in order to recognize the fact that the war began with an attempt to liquidate the Palestinian resistance. Furthermore, as the war continued, there was an increased preponderance of Palestinians within the Moslem progressive alliance. It is sufficient to recall what a destabilizing effect the Palestinian presence had on the fragile sectarian balance. It was a catalyst for popular aspirations, a source of tension among the Arab regimes and a means of justifying the brutal Israeli interventions. Since the Six-Day War in 1967, and despite the patching-up in 1974 of the Cairo Agreements, which were supposed to regulate the status of the Palestinian resistance on Lebanese soil, the Palestinian question has been an international political problem in Lebanon.

Since the civil war, the status of the Palestinian resistance can only be evaluated in dichotomic terms. Although the international presence of the resistance has been stronger than ever since Yasir Arafat spoke at the United Nations in 1974, in Lebanon the prestige of the resistance is irreparably compromised. Although the "Rejection Front" has stepped back in Beirut and rallied behind the policies dictated by Arafat and the majority wing of al-Fatah, the resistance has, on the whole, very little room to manoeuvre.

In fact, those who see the civil war as an imperialist plot against the Palestinians – an oversimplified theory extremely difficult to refute – and who therefore feared the total annihilation of the resistance can be thankful that, largely because of the submission of its leaders, the resistance has survived this test. However, in its relationship with Lebanon, the resistance has suffered considerable political and moral loss. On the Christian side, a policy of threats and ultimatums has come to replace the pretence of conciliation that prevailed before the war. The Christian leaders insist that they will be unable to wait for a possible Geneva conference to resolve the Palestinian problem. Consequently, they are demanding the immediate eviction of the Palestinians which, according to various estimates, number between 200,000 and 400,000. Furthermore, it is significant that even a moderate Christian leader like Raymond Eddé is trying to discredit Camille Chamoun on the occasion