

tion of the international and local dynamics of the crisis.

First, there was the long and tense stage of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, which culminated in the second Sinai disengagement agreement in September 1975. Both America and Israel achieved immediate tangible results; by concentrating on Egypt, Israel's largest and most powerful military neighbour, they would avert the prospects of much tougher and more protracted bargaining stemming from a co-ordinated Arab political effort against Israel. The political gains of the agreement for President Sadat were negligible. However, he hoped to win favour for his policy of economic liberalization at home by demonstrating to potential American and European investors that their capital could play a decisive role in building a new Egypt. Some Egyptian observers admit privately that Egypt, in return for the illusory hope of rapid economic development, has, in fact, abandoned its traditional role in the arena of inter-Arab politics and chosen the road of isolationism.

Secondly, the Egyptian retreat into isolationism in effect tacitly supported the American and Israeli aims of similarly attempting to isolate and weaken the Palestinians so they would cease to be an obstacle to a general settlement in the area. Since the Palestinian expulsion from Jordan in September 1970, their last major base of operations has been Lebanon; yet direct confrontation between the government and the commandos was judged unfeasible. Nevertheless, certain forces in the country, feeling the time to be ripe, were prepared to exploit the Palestinian presence for quite another primary objective, which, if achieved, would contribute as well to the destruction of the commandos as a viable force.

Thirdly, this primary objective, conceived by some Maronite political and military leaders to be the only means of ensuring their community's security in the greatly-altered circumstances in Lebanon, was nothing short of partition of the country and the creation of a Maronite state — the "Republic of the Cedars".

Thus, by the coincidence of favourable circumstances, local and international interests found a common ground for their separate goals: the partition of Lebanon (a) to satisfy the narrow parochial Maronite ends and (b) to achieve the permanent security of Israel's northern frontier. For the Moslem and the smaller Christian minorities, like the Greek Orthodox, the Maronite determination to drag the coun-

try into chaos has turned the future into a Kafkaesque nightmare.

Space does not permit a broad exposition of the international aspects of the crisis. The course of recent events in Lebanon, however, is quite consistent with the "partition thesis", as the following paragraphs attempt to demonstrate.

Prelude to war

The prelude to civil war was an incident called the "Protéine Affair" in February 1975. A private company was being formed that would monopolize the rights of independent fishermen along the Lebanese coast. The company's chairman was Pierre Chamoun. The fishermen, mostly Moslem, reacted vigorously by demonstrating in the southern port of Sidon. The Government quelled the disturbances with the army and there were several casualties, including a prominent politician and former parliamentary deputy from Sidon.

The Protéine Affair brought to the fore grievances against the system in Lebanon and Prime Minister Rashid Suleiman's Government came under heated attack. Two main points were at issue. Moslem interests were grossly under-represented in the Government and the army was heavily dominated by the Maronites. In March, 16 Moslem leaders reiterated the appeal for structural changes in the National Charter to curb the power of the President and create an intercommunal command council to share leadership with the Maronite Commandant-in-Chief. The leader of the right-wing Phalanges (*al-Kata'ib*) Party, Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun opposed these proposals and countered by accusing the Palestinian commandos of interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs by siding with the fishermen against the army. Gemayel called for the termination of the 1969 agreement by which the Lebanese Government authorized the Palestinians to establish commando camps on its territory.

By this manoeuvre the Maronite leaders sought to sidestep the problem of changing the National Charter by bringing forward the Palestinian presence as the main question facing the country. Next, the Phalanges tried to escalate tensions into full-scale conflict. In April, Phalangist militiamen ambushed a bus returning to the Tell Zaatar refugee camp in a quarter of Beirut and killed 27 of the Palestinian occupants. In the ensuing street fighting in the city (other battles took place in the towns of Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre), over 300 people were reported killed.

*Sadat's aims
not political
but economic*

*Maronite leaders
see partition
as only hope
of community*