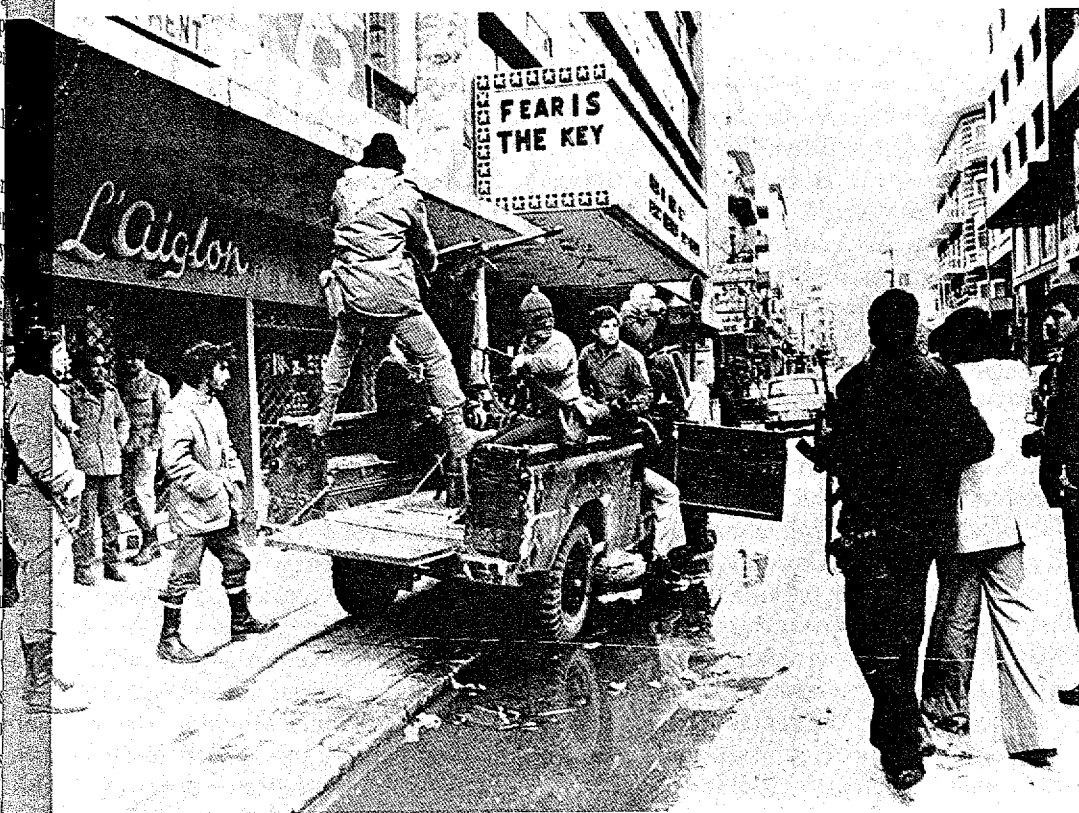


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Christmas Eve 1975 — the main street in Beirut gave evidence that the world had not yet entered an era of peace. The title on the marquee was a more appropriate slogan for the times. As this issue of International Perspectives goes to press, an uneasy truce prevails in Lebanon, but whether it is a prelude to a political settlement or merely an interlude in the civil war is not clear.

al socio-economic and political problems were brought into the open once again. Moreover, Beirut had become the intellectual emporium of a wide range of radical critiques not only of the Palestine problem but of Lebanese and Arab society in general. The schools and universities were frequently the breeding-grounds for these ideas and radical movements. Strikes and demonstrations, particularly at the American and Lebanese universities in Beirut, were the expression of a younger generation's political consciousness and dissatisfaction with an ossified political system. Their repression at the American University in 1974 by an administration collaborating with the Lebanese Special Security Forces created great bitterness but also won approval from conservative right-wing groups in Lebanon and other Arab capitals.

Deeper frustrations

from the vantage-point of the largest sectarian communities, the Palestine question only cloaked deeper frustrations and

fears. The Shia, demanding protection from Israeli attacks, challenged the viability of a system which regarded indifferently their economic welfare as well as their physical fate. The Sunni Moslems, especially the wealthy business elements, viewed their interests as linked largely to the status quo, while others acknowledged the need for some basic political reforms. For their part, the Maronites viewed any hint of change in the provisions of the National Charter as the thin edge of the wedge leading to their ultimate subordination to the Moslem community. And yet each community — Christian and Moslem — implicitly recognized that yesterday's political arrangements were irrelevant to today's realities. Where they differed, as we shall see, was in their respective options for the future.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the efforts to bring about, step by step, a general Middle East peace in the wake of the October 1973 war have contributed directly to the eruption of civil war in Lebanon. The following is a brief descrip-

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