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Middle East

RIISING TENSIONS (NO Sources)

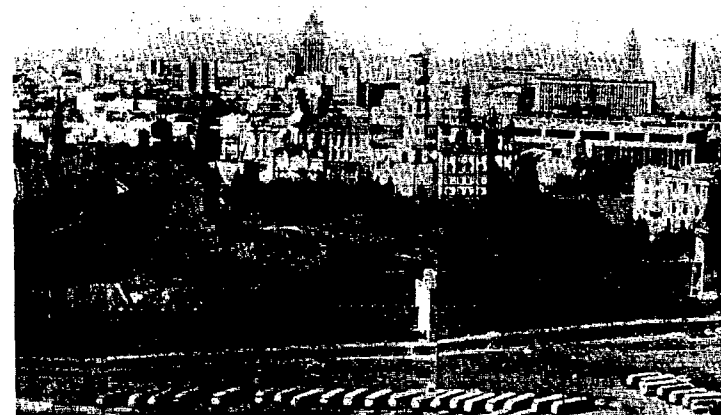
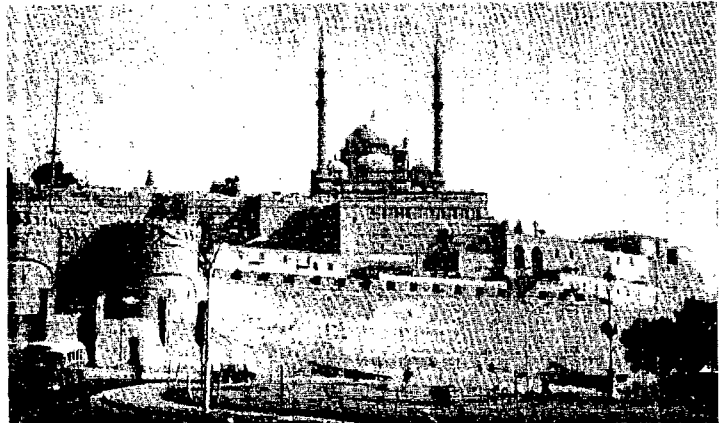
In the past several weeks, Egypt and other Arab states have taken a number of measures that could be interpreted as preparation for hostilities against Israel. These actions could also be taken as part of an effort to arouse international concern and stimulate new pressures on the US to force Israel to be more accommodating on a peace settlement.

There is no conclusive evidence that Sadat has made a decision to attack. Both Sadat and his advisers are aware that their military prospects are poor at best; a fresh disaster might well sweep away Sadat and his regime. His military preparations are not, in any case, complete, and he has not exhausted his political options. The UN session on the Middle East, now set for late May, and the US-USSR summit will be critical factors.

Military moves by other Arab governments seem in harmony with Sadat's purpose. The major gap in the Arab line-up—one to which the Arabs are accustomed—is the refusal of the Jordanian Government to place its forces at the disposal of the "eastern front."

The Lebanese flare-up illustrates the danger that military moves might develop a momentum that Cairo would not be able to control. The events of 1967 argue that most Arab governments are not able to resist giving the situation a shove once it has started rolling. Sadat has said so often that he is now dead serious that it will be progressively more difficult to find excuses for inaction, particularly when other Arab leaders have fulfilled their commitments to his cause.

Israel professes to see no serious threat of war, although Tel Aviv may be less relaxed than it has indicated. The Israelis are watching most particularly for any signs that the Egyptians or other Arabs are developing a serious capability to damage Israel itself. Such a development would lead the Israelis to consider a pre-emptive strike. 7



Top to bottom: Cairo, Beirut, Moscow

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A TOUCHY SITUATION



Lebanese Children with Abandoned Tank

12 [After a week of fitful fighting with the fedayeen, the Lebanese Army appears to have gained the upper hand.] The Lebanese are cautiously optimistic that the army's forceful tactics and the broad popular support for President Franjyah's tough stand place them in a strong position vis-a-vis the guerrillas]

11 [The air strikes and artillery fire against fedayeen positions in Beirut and the Arqub-Fatah-land—in the southeast appear to have had a sobering effect. The army's liberal use of its firepower has inflicted heavy losses.]

11 [There are still incidents of terrorism staged by extremist fedayeen bent on shattering the truce. Fedayeen-army joint committees have begun enforcing the cease-fire in Beirut, but they will have trouble reining in the extremists.]

[Redacted]

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[Communal differences have not been a factor in the conflict so far.]

15 [Beirut sees Damascus' limited involvement as no more than might be expected in light of Syria's generally hostile attitude toward Lebanon and pressures from within the Syrian power elite for support of the fedayeen.] Since the fighting began, the Syrians have allowed an estimated 1,000-2,000 fedayeen to infiltrate into Lebanon, but have not committed Syrian regulars.

[Redacted]

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The uproar in Lebanon is an embarrassment to Egypt and the other Arabs because it distracts international attention from what they see as the broader aspects of the Middle East conflict.

11 [The Israelis are keeping a close watch on their border with Lebanon. The prime question for Tel Aviv is how far Syria will go in support of the fedayeen in Lebanon.] Israeli Defense Minister Dayan on 9 May indicated that Israel had no intention of acting as a "policeman in an inter-Arab quarrel." At the same time, he issued a public warning to Damascus that Israel would take action if Syrian regular forces entered Lebanon and took up positions on Israel's borders.

[Redacted]

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