

Middle East

LEBANON: A TIME FOR TALKING

15 [The heavy fighting that broke out on 2 May
16 between the Lebanese Army and the fedayeen
17 tapered off this week, and a cease-fire appears to
have taken hold. The question now is the extent
of the controls that will be put upon the fedayeen, and talks on this nagging problem are getting under way]

15 [At present, President Franjiah is trying to
16 enlist broad support for his tough bargaining
17 stance with the guerrillas in the negotiations that
began on 15 May. At a minimum, he wants all but
light weapons removed from Palestinian refugee
camps, he wants army access to the camps for
inspection and control, and he wants fedayeen
movement outside the camps to be closely
regulated.]

15 [Franjiah's desire to curb the Palestinians
16 has the support of the Christian community and
17 the army. An important segment of the Muslim
community is sympathetic to the Palestinians,
however, and Franjiah has not had much luck in
bringing Muslim political and religious leaders
around to his point of view. If the pressure on the
fedayeen increases, the confessional split in
Lebanon could worsen and lead to civil strife.]

15 [In view of various pressures on him, Fran-
16 jiah will probably be forced to accept fewer
17 restrictions than he would like. The important
business community is eager for a resumption of

normal commercial activity. The army performed
effectively against the fedayeen, but it wants to
avoid an all-out confrontation. The 14,000-man
army is not adequate to sustain a prolonged,
country-wide campaign which would be necessary
to crush the estimated 6,000 guerrillas supple-
18 mented by 10,000 lightly armed militia from the
refugee camps.]

15 [The fedayeen are on the defensive. They are
aware that they cannot regain the considerable
freedom of action which they had before the
fighting. They will probably work toward a for-
mula which allows them some freedom of move-
ment in the countryside and leaves them in con-
trol of the refugee camps. In any case, their loss
of the Jordan base in 1970 severely narrowed
their operating options against Israel, and they are
now intent on preserving a measure of operational
capability in Lebanon. If Franjiah can impose
more rigorous controls on them, they may be
forced to rely even more on foreign terrorism.]

15 [Other Arab states, particularly Egypt, played
16 a useful role in arranging the cease-fire and dis-
17 suading Syria from open interference. The Arab
states are likely to argue against the imposition
of tighter controls. Syria has permitted a modest
number of fedayeen to infiltrate into Lebanon,
but might open the gates if a harsh settlement
were imposed. The Syrians, fearing Israeli retaliation,
would even in this case probably stop short
of sending in regular troops. [redacted]

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Left to Right:

Mediation Meeting in Lebanon

Egyptian Envoy Al Khuli, Saiqah Leader Muhsin, Yasir Arafat, Socialist Leader Jumblatt, Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam

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