

by a foreign aid agency in 1977, indicated that Moslems compose 56% of the population, Christians 44%.) On this point of protecting the Maronites' supremacy, Suleiman Franjeh defected from the National Salvation Front and joined the position of his old Lebanese Front allies.

As a result of this impasse, the conference deferred the reform issue which it had been convened to discuss. The six-point final statement reflected agreement on forming a commission to lay down a new constitutional proposal for the future of Lebanon, consisting of 32 members chosen by the President in consultation with the members of the conference; the proposal is to be presented within six months. The other content of this statement concerned the

ceasefire and security plan. Here the nationalist forces gained a victory on one point: the army should return to the barracks, leaving the Internal Security Forces responsible for domestic security.

The old school politicians and the radicalized masses

After almost a decade of civil war, the fascist leadership knows that the 1943 pact is no longer viable. At that time, the Maronite bourgeoisie secured its supremacy through a deal with the Sunni bourgeoisie, at the expense of the Shiite majority. Today, the latter community has asserted itself via Amal's confrontation of the Lebanese Army, and the southern masses' uprising

against the Zionist occupation. The fascist Maronite leaders had hoped to strike a deal with traditional Shiite leaders in seeking a new formula for preserving their power, but the reality of mass radicalization precludes such a deal. On the contrary, Kamal Assad, the speaker of the parliament, with whom the fascists prefer to deal, has been marginalized. Nabih Berri, who speaks for the dispossessed masses who have actually faced the Lebanese Army and Zionist occupation, has become the dominant voice of the Shiite community. Thus, Abdel Osseiran, who was previously amenable to compromise with Amin Gemayel's regime, moved closer to Berri's positions so as not to lose touch with his constituency. Also Saab Salem has historically sought a modus vivendi with the

THE CONFEREES - WHO'S WHO

Amin Gemayel : Maronite; President of Lebanon; Politbureau member of the Phalangist Party.



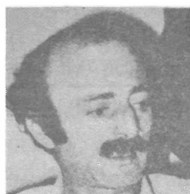
Pierre Gemayel : Maronite; leader of the Phalangist Party, the main component of the Lebanese Front and the Lebanese Forces militias.



Camille Chamoun : Maronite; President of the National Liberal Party and the Lebanese Front; President of Lebanon during the 1958 civil war, when he called in the Marines



Suleiman Franjeh : Maronite; President of Lebanon in the 1975-76 civil war; member of the Lebanese Front until 1978; entered the conference as a leading member of the National Salvation Front.



Walid Jumblatt : Druze; head of the Progressive Socialist Party and leading member of the National Salvation Front.



Nabih Berri : Shiite; leader of the Amal movement.



Abdel Osseiran : Shiite; former speaker of the Lebanese parliament.



Saab Salam : Sunni; leading member of the Islamic Grouping; former Prime Minister.



Rashed Karami : Sunni; leading member of the National Salvation Front; former Prime Minister.