

THE MIDDLE EAST.

The strain between King Farouk and the Government is increasing, and has overshadowed the past week in Egypt. On the 5th May, the day preceding the King's Accession Day, delegations of the Opposition visited the Palace to express their loyalty to the King. On the Accession Day itself, students and others were to have marched in procession before the Palace for the same purpose; but as the King would not allow a body of workers under the auspices of the Wafd to come, in order to acclaim both the King and Nahas, the Prime Minister forbade the other procession. Fortunately no untoward incident occurred on either day, though the Opposition delegates were reported to have raised a cry inside the Palace precincts: "Long live the King; Nahas Pasha is dead."

Most of the allegations made in the *Black Book* have now been answered in the Egyptian Parliament by the Prime Minister and the Ministers concerned. Both the allegations and the replies have been examined by the Legal Counsellor to His Majesty's Embassy, who believes that in general the charges are exaggerated or inaccurate, and that the book as a whole is weakened by its prolixity and inclusion of unimportant matter. Nevertheless, some of the more serious allegations are based on matters which have been for long the source of common gossip, and many of which are true. The charges of abuse of power by Nahas for his personal advantage seem to have been answered satisfactorily, while those dealing with the enrichment of his wife's relatives have not been fully answered, though we know from other sources that he has undoubtedly favoured her relatives and friends. There is certainly a widespread belief in the country that much wealth has accrued to Mme. Nahas's family since the advent to power of the present Government; but it must be remembered that in Egypt the desire to please the Prime Minister is common form, and that one method of doing so is to please his wife. As to the charges of nepotism, it is difficult to gauge their accuracy. There has probably been a good deal of favouritism shown, but on the other hand there can be little doubt that relatives of prominent Wafdists suffered severely when serving under previous régimes, and this is merely one method of the Wafd getting their own back.

Even if most of the charges are eventually "non proven," the best and most logical course would be to shift the issue from the plane of corruption to that of democratic principle, and to prove by a general election whether or not the present Government has the support of the nation behind it. But it is essential that, if an election is to take place, it should be conducted on impartial lines. Nahas himself says that he is willing to go to the country on the veracity or otherwise of the *Black Book*, and to give guarantees to conduct the election fairly.

Nahas believes that the discussions in Parliament will last for another ten days or so. When the time comes for an election campaign, in spite of the strained relations between himself and the King, he is anxious to keep the King's name out of party polemics. He was not unnaturally incensed to learn that the Palace had asked His Majesty's Ambassador to intervene with him to cancel the Government tea party on the King's Accession Day, when no Royal representative would attend, unless Nahas gave an acceptable explanation of his behaviour at the Turkish Legation (see *Summary* No. 187). Sir Miles Lampson, of course, had refused to interfere, and the party was duly held. No one from the Palace seems to have attended, however, and Nahas expressed to His Majesty's Ambassador the opinion that Hassanein Pasha was the nigger in the woodpile, and that his influence with the King was pernicious. He even regretted our insistence some months ago on the removal of Abdul Wahab Talaat, who, whatever his faults, had acted in Nahas's view as a brake on Hassanein. The Prime Minister referred bitterly to the King's acts of "folly" in the past, and said more than once that all this was "very bad for the reign." This hint on Nahas's part at some possible action against the King may be significant.

His Majesty's Government have replied to Ibn Saud's query as to the attitude he should adopt on the question of Arab unity. They have informed him that, while viewing with sympathy any movement among the Arab countries to promote unity, they consider that the initiative should come from the Arabs themselves; and they have no objection to the Arab Governments and leaders discussing plans to achieve that object. They believe, however, that a conference is not the best way of approaching the problem, and that much preparatory spade-work is essential, which can best be done by confidential discussions between accredited representatives of the Governments concerned. As to Ibn Saud taking part in such discussions, they believe that his participation would be in the interests of His Majesty's Government no less than of the Arabs themselves.

Meanwhile, Ibn Saud has informed us that he has written a letter to President Roosevelt on the subject of Palestine, referring to the growth of Zionist propaganda in the United States of America, and to the ignorance in America of the Arab point of view. He refutes the Zionist arguments, based on historical, religious and economic grounds, favouring Palestine as the National Home, and urges that the crowding out of Palestinian Arabs by Jewish immigrants is contrary to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Such a policy, Ibn Saud maintains, would result in alienating Arab sympathies for the Allied cause. He therefore asks President Roosevelt to do what he can to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine by persuading the United Nations to provide alternative areas of settlement in other parts of the world.

The extreme Zionist point of view, on the other hand, is illustrated in a recent report from Palestine. At a meeting of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency called on the 23rd March to consider the reconstruction proposals of the Palestine Government (see *Summary* No. 186), Mr. Ben Gurion is said to have declared that the Jews alone were responsible for the economic future of Palestine, and that they did not welcome British interference. He added that as the British would not remain in Palestine after the war, they could have no real interest in the future of the country. "God save us from our friends," said Mr. Ben Gurion, "and we will save ourselves from our enemies."

In the Levant States there has been no change in the political situation. The wheat question is giving rise to less anxiety, and, though in the remoter areas the position is still precarious, in the urban districts there is now much less danger of disturbance from this cause. Cost of living, however, is still high and is the source of serious concern.

The news of the fall of Tunis and Bizerta has been received with enthusiasm by our friends in Iraq. Nuri Pasha was the first to express his heartfelt satisfaction, and the British Embassy was later snowed under with messages of congratulation, many of them from tribal chiefs. In Basra and Mosul the reactions have also been excellent. The Governor of Mosul proclaimed a public holiday in honour of the occasion, when His Majesty's Consul received the homage of local schoolchildren marching to the consulate in procession. In Iraq, as elsewhere, nothing succeeds like success.

In Persia one more weekly journal has been suppressed, but three new papers have appeared. The local press has given full publicity to the rupture of Soviet-Polish relations, journalistic comment taking the line that the Sikorski Government does not represent Poland, and that it should resign in order to end the dispute with Russia. Public opinion still shows anxiety over the rise in cost of living, but expresses a hope, tempered with scepticism, that Dr. Millspaugh may succeed in checking it.

The Bill granting full financial powers to Dr. Millspaugh passed the Majlis on the 4th May. This is most welcome news, and His Majesty's Minister has been authorised to inform Dr. Millspaugh how gratified we are to learn that he now has authority to put into effect his important work on behalf of Persia and the war effort of the United Nations.

Talk of changes in the Government continues, and various names of possible successors to Soheili have been put forward. But Soheili of course may be able to carry on. His success over the Millspaugh Powers Bill is certainly a surprising achievement. It is due in part to the temporary truce between himself and the Majlis, the Deputies lending him their support in the hope that he will secure their re-election. This truce may have certain advantages, of which the passing of the Bill in question is an example; but it may make it more difficult to get rid of Soheili.

THE FAR EAST.

To help her allies in their distress, Japan is raising the scare of an imminent offensive by her forces in the Far East. Australia is designated as the target, but there is also talk of an attack brewing in the Northern Pacific, where the Japanese outposts in the Aleutians are stated to have been reinforced. Tojo is reported to have declared that Japan is getting ready to deal the Allies a *coup de grâce*, but without saying in what quarter. The Germans explain these seemingly gratuitous warnings on the ground that Japan's preparations have gone so far that there is no further need for discretion. The disclosure of strategic intentions by people so "close" as the Japanese certainly needs

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