

Affairs in Kurdistan are causing us some concern. The Turkish Government is most suspicious of any action by the Allies that can be construed into encouraging Kurdish independence. With regard to Russia, there may be some grounds for this suspicion. The Soviet authorities, for instance, recently conveyed a number of leading Kurds on a propaganda visit to Baku, and though the visit was, according to the Russian Ambassador at Tehran, "purely cultural," the latter admitted that it was arranged by the commissars concerned without his knowledge. The murder at Tabriz of a local Turkish subject, formerly a notable of Baku, has added to Turkish mistrust. The Turkish Consul asserts that the murder of this man (who was, as it turns out, an agent of probably worthless character) was carried out by order of the Russian "Ogpu," though the story is denied by the Soviet authorities.

The Turkish Secretary-General recently expressed to His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora his anxiety at the lack of control shown by the Persian authorities over their Kurdish subjects, who were, according to him, able to buy arms from the Persian soldiery; compared with these Persian Kurds, the Secretary-General added, their own Kurds were "almost pathetically loyal." A further statement from the Turkish Foreign Office to His Majesty's Ambassador describes the Kurdish movement as virtually an insurrection against the Persian Government; and charges the Soviet authorities with favouring a Communist régime in North-Western Persia, or even its annexation. While this is no doubt exaggerated, it is certainly true that Soviet policy in the Russian zone of occupation is under an organisation with which the Soviet Ambassador has little or no influence, and that, as their armed forces in Persia are depleted, the power of the Soviet civilian authorities grows.

The seriousness of the Kurdish movement is borne out by a report from His Majesty's Consul in Kermanshah, who states that 3,000 Kurds recently sent an ultimatum to the Persian garrison at Divan Darreh, about 100 miles north-east of Sulaimaniya, demanding its evacuation; and that the Persians expect a Kurdish advance on Sanandaj. North of that town a British patrol was ambushed on the 11th December by an armed band, whose identity is not yet established, but who are said to be Kurds. Though no encouragement whatever has been given by us to the Kurdish leaders, either in this or in any previous subversive action, the Turkish Government, which is not well informed on Kurdish affairs since the death of their ambassador in Tehran last August, is suspicious of Soviet or British interference. His Majesty's Minister at Tehran, however, hopes that, with the recent arrival of a new Turkish Ambassador, who has already proved helpful, it will be possible to sift the information on Kurdish affairs before it is sent to Angora, and also to ensure closer collaboration between his Turkish and Soviet colleagues and himself.

The trial of Rashid Ali and his supporters, which has been proceeding quietly in Iraq, is expected to end about the 20th December. According to Nuri Pasha, evidence has been given freely, and there has been no intimidation either of witnesses or judges. No mention of the trial has been made in the press, and it seems that the public is largely ignorant of its being held. In the judgment of His Majesty's Ambassador, such excessive secrecy seems undesirable, especially if public opinion is to be prepared before the sentences are given. Nuri Pasha, however, who is himself responsible for keeping the trial dark, believes that when announced the sentences will meet with approval. Meanwhile, the chief accused, Rashid Ali himself, has disappeared from Istanbul. The Turkish police confess that they have lost touch with him, and, according to the German wireless, he has in fact reached Bulgaria *en route* for Germany.

Ibn Saud is being informed of the report that certain Moslems, under Axis influence, might make use of the pilgrimage to hatch some anti-British plot. While Ibn Saud has never allowed the pilgrimage to be used for political purposes, it is thought that he might wish to take special precautions in view of this report, more especially as he himself will not this year attend the pilgrimage. It is believed, however, by the Saudi Arabian authorities that, in spite of his absence, no one can indulge in intrigue without his knowledge; and that, as the pilgrimage is not expected to be large, it will be possible to keep a watch on all those who attend.

An agreement regarding Syria has been reached between General Catroux and the Minister of State. On all questions affecting security, General Catroux

has agreed to consult the British Commander-in-Chief; and British political officers, though not holding executive powers, are to have direct access to local officials and to the population. General Catroux has further undertaken that an *Etat de Siège* will be proclaimed in the event of an emergency arising; the actual power to proclaim it being delegated, after consultation with the General Officer Commanding, to the local British commander. Mr. Lyttelton has, moreover, convinced General Catroux that it is wiser to postpone treaty negotiations, which the Free French previously advocated, with Syria and Lebanon.

The Amir Abdullah has intimated to a newspaper correspondent, who recently met him in Transjordan, that he would like to visit Turkey, in order, as he says, to explain to the Turkish Government the Arab point of view. The Amir believes that, by making clear to the Turkish authorities that all Arab leaders are on the side of the Allies, he will be able to disabuse them of any misconception on this score. At the back of his mind, no doubt, remain also the question of Arab federation and his ambitions for the Syrian throne.

It is clear to His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora, to whom the correspondent in question reported the interview, that such a visit if undertaken would be fraught with difficulties. Not only have the Turkish authorities no regard for the political opinions of the Amir, whom they look upon as a servant of the British, and who is not in their view in a position to speak for other Arab leaders, especially Ibn Saud; but it is felt that the Turks would resent (as showing our lack of confidence in them) any hint that the Amir might drop, which he well might, about his disbelief in their being pro-Axis at heart.

Moreover, the Free French, who are doubtless aware of the Amir's ambitions in Syria, might object to his travelling through that country, as he must do *en route* to Turkey; while a further difficulty might be caused in Turkey itself by his discussing there the future of Syria—a subject exceptionally delicate at the moment, bound up as it is with the question of the Turco-Syrian frontier. (See *South-Eastern Europe*.)

The reaction of Egypt to Japan's entry into the war is described as "parochial." The Pacific is too remote from Egypt for that country, immersed as always in her own concerns, to be deeply moved by Japanese intervention. She is, on the other hand, favourably impressed by the participation in the war of America; though fears are at the same time expressed of a long war with Japan, and of the decrease of supplies from America for the civil population of Egypt. The slow progress in Libya, contrary to early hopes, coupled with the reduced *tempo* of the war in Russia, has aroused some apprehensions of German reinforcements reaching North Africa, and so possibly turning the scale against us.

Objection has been raised in the Chamber to the internment without trial of Egyptians by the Military Governor, and though the Prime Minister upholds the Military Governor's action, there is frequent pressure on the Government to release certain of the internees. The sudden death of Youssef-el-Gindi, who led the moderate element in the Wafdist party, and was the real leader of reform in the Senate, may strengthen the position of Makram Obeid, whose extremist views were opposed by Youssef-el-Gindi.

THE FAR EAST.

On the same day—December 11th—on which Germany and Italy became at war with the United States, Japan concluded a full military alliance with the two Axis Powers, the parties mutually agreeing to carry on war with all their available means till victory, to refrain from any separate conclusion of peace, and after victory to work together to realise their respective New Orders. The lining up of the principal combatants in the new phase of the world war is now complete with one major and one minor exception, the latter being that the three Axis Powers, refusing to recognise Chungking as a national Government, have ignored its formal declaration of war, thus maintaining the fiction that the China war is technically an "incident."

The far more important exception is that Japan and the Soviet Union are still formally at peace in spite of M. Litvinov's description of Japan as a "common enemy." The Japanese are now too deeply committed in the south to be at all likely to take the initiative in altering this state of affairs—unless,

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