

that they wish to avoid at all costs. Second, the idea of "allying" themselves with the Russians, whom the Persians fear and hate, is abhorrent to them. But there are grave objections on our part to yielding on this point. By undertaking to protect Persia's interests we and the U.S.S.R. are, in fact, her allies. The treaty, moreover, is drawn up on lines similar to those with Egypt and Iraq, with both of whom we are in alliance. Further, it would be difficult, in view of the wide publicity already given to the proposed treaty, to explain such a radical change at the last moment. Fortunately, there are now indications that, if pressed, the Persian Government may reluctantly give way on the matter. As to the supposed military commitment, we have assured the Persian authorities, much to their relief and to that of the Shah, that their army will be required solely for the purposes of internal security. Incidentally, it is also a relief to us to know that such an inefficient force will not be fighting by our side.

But there is another fear in Persian minds: the fear of Turkey. Remote as the possibility is, the Persians believe that the recent Turkish press campaign, on the subject of the Turkish-speaking minority in Azerbaijan, might lead to a military attack on Persia by Turkey *not* in association with Germany, and they wish to be safeguarded from this hypothetical danger by the insertion of a suitable formula. It is clearly impossible to meet their wishes in this way, though perhaps some other means may be found to satisfy them.

A number of other amendments have been proposed by the Persian Government and are being patiently considered by the Allies. Further, at his request, a written guarantee has been given to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Persia will be represented at any eventual peace negotiations that directly concern Persian interests. Meanwhile, time is running short. The Majlis, which must approve the treaty, is soon to be dissolved; but apart from this it is most desirable for other reasons to bring the matter to a final conclusion. If we can meet the Persian Government half-way by face-saving phraseology in order to make the treaty more palatable to Persia, so much the better; but while His Majesty's Government may be prepared to modify in certain particulars the original wording, they cannot allow the Persian Government radically to change the tenor of the treaty, or to fob us off with further factitious pretexts.

The general situation of the country shows some improvement. At Kermanshah, where Persian reinforcements are expected, the Persian General Officer Commanding intends to negotiate a settlement with the Kurds, though it is impossible to forecast the outcome. In the district of Shiraz, where Persian troops have attacked bandits with success, security is better, and traffic on the roads to Isfahan and Bushire is about half-way back to normal. Though there is still a shortage of wheat, the food situation is less critical, especially in Meshed, where the Russians are importing, and selling direct to the public, sufficient quantities of wheat and sugar.

The Axis internees, quartered near Jedda, are still a cause of embarrassment to the Saudi Arabian Government. As those who are combatants cannot be exchanged, the Amir Feisal suggested that all these gentry should be sent by sea to some neutral State. This, however, was clearly impracticable: they would refuse to embark unless their safe passage was guaranteed; and that we should force them on board, and then seize the ship when on the open sea, would hardly be consistent with our sense of fair play!

The Amir Feisal, who is convinced by these arguments, now wishes to know if we can help his Government to get rid, at any rate, of the non-combatants. These, especially the Germans among them, complain that their detention is a breach of international law, whereas the question is in fact governed by the law of Saudi Arabia. Internment or expulsion are the only alternatives; and since expulsion from Saudi Arabia in any direction means their capture by the British, which presumably they do not wish, they must accept internment.

His Majesty's Government are anxious for Ibn Saud to give official recognition to the new Syrian Government, more especially as Egypt, but not Iraq, has done so. If Ibn Saud can now give the lead, Iraq may follow suit. His proposal that his consul in Damascus should call on the President and present his congratulations hardly meets the case; and it has been suggested that a more formal procedure would be for the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs to telegraph to the Syrian Minister in Damascus, offering his congratulations. This, followed by mutual courtesy visits between the Saudi Arabian Consul and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, would be sufficient to establish formal relations between the two countries.

Iraq, like so many of her neighbours, is suffering from an increase in local prices, especially of wheat. This is exploited by anti-British agitators, who attribute the high cost of living to profiteering by the Jews with British connivance. Price control in Iraq is difficult to enforce; while rationing is quite impracticable. Fortunately, there are in the country sufficient quantities of most essential food-stuffs, either imported or from local resources, but wheat remains scarce, especially in the north, and, unless there is to be grave discontent, arrangements for importing increased quantities of wheat will be necessary.

The assassination on the 9th November of Fakhri Nashashibi in Bagdad removes a figure for long connected with Palestinian politics. As a supporter of his cousin, Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, Fakhri belonged to the moderate (anti-Mufti) party, and accompanied Ragheb Bey to London in 1939. He was not, however, accepted as a member of the Arab delegation, and attended none of the conferences. Though he would like to have been thought a party leader, in fact he was not so; even among his own partisans he cut very little ice, being credited with receiving money from the Jews, and with a moral character not above reproach.

General Catroux has prepared a draft of the Declaration of Independence for the Lebanon, more or less on the lines of that adopted for Syria. It has been revised by General de Gaulle, whose amendments, taken as a whole, tend to emphasise the French, and belittle the British, connexion with Syria. Counter-amendments have been made by the British authorities, and, pending the final discussion of the draft by His Majesty's Government and the Free French, the announcement by General Catroux of the proclamation has been postponed for a few days.

His Majesty's Government have been for long concerned with the shortage of cereals in Egypt, and are determined to prevent a similar shortage next year. The Egyptian landowners, who can think only in terms of cotton production, fear, or pretend to fear, that with the reduction of the cotton area there will be an over-production of wheat; and in order to allay such suspicions, which are in fact unfounded, His Majesty's Government have announced their intention to buy Egyptian wheat up to any amount surplus to internal requirements. They have at the same time announced that, if they are again requested by the Egyptian Government to assist in the disposal of next year's cotton crop, they will refuse to take into account anything over a total production of 5 million cantars from that crop.

Supplies and cost of living remain the problem of the day; and the measures proposed by the Egyptian Government to meet it are either ineffective or not yet operative. The Wafd, whose anti-British campaign still makes little progress, seem at last to realise that King Farouk's support of Sirri Pasha proves that he does not really favour the Wafd, while his recent flirtation with them was merely designed to upset Anglo-Wafd relations, thus making it more difficult for the British to help the Wafd's return to power.

THE FAR EAST.

While the Japanese army proceeds with preparations for an attack on the Burma Road, Japan's diplomats are believed to be making one last effort in Washington for a peaceable understanding which would enable Japan, at least for the time being, to keep out of the World War.

Harried by the extremists, General Tojo is having, it would seem, to bring matters to an early issue, and there is reason to suppose that he has formulated, and obtained the Emperor's approval of, irreducible terms upon which Japan would negotiate an agreement with the United States. Proposals are said to have gone already to Washington, where the special Japanese emissary, Mr. Kurusu, is due to arrive at the end of the present week. General Tojo is understood to be anxious to be able to present a clear-cut national policy at the special session of the Diet, which opens on the 15th of this month.

In spite of recent reports that the masses in Japan are showing a strong repugnance to being plunged into fresh war, it will certainly be surprising if Japan's "last word," when it comes to be uttered, is found to contain the germs of mutual agreement. The China issue alone looks like a hopeless stumbling-block. President Roosevelt, in his broadcast message to the I.L.O. Conference on the 6th November, reaffirmed unequivocally America's intention to give full support to China, which country he coupled throughout his speech with Great Britain and Russia. Chiang Kai-shek, so long as he gets this help, is not going

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