

An interesting development in Iraqi-Egyptian cultural relations is to be found in the series of scientific lectures to be given in Bagdad by Egyptian *savants* under the auspices of the Iraqi Ministry of Education. The first lecture, on the "Birth of Arab Science in Iraq," given by a Professor of the Egyptian University on the 1st December, was attended by the Regent.

The Declaration of Lebanese Independence, made by General Catroux at Beirut on the 26th November, did not have a very favourable reception. There was complete lack of enthusiasm both during and after the ceremony. Most of the notables and Christian religious leaders were absent; particularly noticeable was the absence of all Maronites and of all but a few Moslems. Contrary to custom on such occasions, Beirut was not beflagged and there were no demonstrations. Public opinion, in fact, received the Declaration either with cynical apathy or with active disapproval.

There is grave disappointment in Lebanon over the terms. Hopes of real independence, which had been encouraged by Mr. Churchill's speech of the 9th September, and by the terms of the Declaration to Syria, have been dashed by references to the Treaty of 1936 and to France's "Mission séculaire." The average Lebanese citizen, in fact, sees in the Declaration nothing but a continuance of the inefficient and corrupt administration of the French.

The State Department has issued a statement to the effect that the Government of the United States and the American people have always sympathised with the natural and legitimate aspirations of Syria and Lebanon, and the American Government welcomes any steps towards their realisation, the chief of which is the enjoyment of sovereign independence. The statement goes on to say that the convention between the United States and France signed at Paris in 1924, and the provisions of the mandate for Syria and Lebanon included therein, clearly embodied the idea of Syrian and Lebanese independence. The United States Government continued to support these provisions, and was hopeful that, as soon as international conditions permitted, negotiations might be undertaken enabling them to extend formal recognition to Syria and Lebanon.

Auni Bey Abdul Hadi, a former close collaborator with the Mufti and a well-known Palestinian die-hard, who recently returned to Palestine from Egypt, is said to be optimistic about the future of the Arab cause in Palestine. Though he knew that Zionists in England and America were trying to obtain assurances regarding Jewish aims in Palestine, Auni Bey, nevertheless felt reassured, from his talks with Arab leaders in Egypt and elsewhere, as to Arab prospects there. He also expressed satisfaction over the political measures taken in Syria, and he felt that British policy in Iraq clearly showed her good intentions towards the Arabs generally.

The British offensive in Libya naturally eclipses all other war news in Egypt. The first news issued provoked too much elation over the opening phase and an expectation of easy results; this has now given way to a feeling of more temperate optimism.

THE FAR EAST.

The crisis has lasted into another week with the issue still hanging in the balance.

As regards the diplomatic front, the conversations in Washington have continued to be bilateral, that is to say between the Japanese plenipotentiaries and Mr. Cordell Hull and President Roosevelt. The United States Government, while keeping the British and the other interested Governments *au fait* with the main facts of the situation, have enjoined absolute secrecy; the record of the last week's developments must, therefore, be given by reference to public statements and the information disclosed on the wireless and in the press.

Of the offers contained in the Japanese proposal of the 22nd November mentioned in last week's *Summary*, the only one of a concrete nature was, as has now become known, the removal of reinforcements recently sent into Southern Indo-China; the Japanese required in return that the economic noose round Japan should immediately be slackened. This offer was patently insufficient as a guarantee against fresh Japanese aggression. At the same time, the Chinese showed serious apprehension of a possible Japanese-American agreement, which some of the Chungking newspapers have described as a "second Munich." Though it is plain that China's most pressing danger, namely, the Japanese threat to Yunnan and the Burma Road, would be much reduced if Japan were to agree to a sufficient reduction of her forces in Indo-China, this has failed to

weigh against the profound distaste which Chiang Kai-shek and his colleagues have for any arrangement which provides economic relief for Japan while leaving China outside the scope of the agreement. The Generalissimo is understood to have sent a message to Mr. Roosevelt making this clear, and emphasising the disastrous effect of such an agreement upon Chinese morale, while the Chungking official spokesman is quoted as having said that China would rather support a fresh Japanese attack than be witness to an understanding between Japan and the Democracies.

The ground being thus thoroughly unfavourable for concrete counter-proposals, the United States Government contented themselves by restating, in a note to the Japanese Embassy of the 26th November, the broad principles which they regard as the only possible basis of any general Far Eastern settlement; these include the renunciation of aggression; respect for law, order and justice; recourse to peaceful methods of deciding disputes and equal commercial opportunity. After considering the American note, the Japanese Government announced on the 1st December its decision to continue negotiations.

In this way the ball has been kept rolling, and the Japanese representatives in Washington have continued their meetings with the President and Mr. Hull. In the course of these they have been called upon to state their Government's reasons and intentions in sending into Indo-China forces in excess of the number agreed upon between Japan and the Vichy Government for the "joint defence" of the colony. This embarrassing test-question brings the talks back from the region of generalities to the concrete facts of the present critical situation, seeing that the forces in Indo-China are the spear-head of any further Japanese advance in the south. As to American action if such an advance takes place, the signs point increasingly to a general readiness to accept the idea of war with Japan in the event of fresh acts of aggression, such as a Japanese march into Thailand (see also under "United States").

The anomalous action of the Japanese Government leaders, who, simultaneously with the "peace talks," have been delivering a spate of defiant and violently anti-American speeches, can be taken as a symptom of the difficulties of a Government trapped between the desire to avoid an immediate clash with the "encircling Powers," and the need to placate their own extremists.

Meanwhile, in the sphere of action Japan has made a mockery of the peace talks, as an American broadcaster has put it, following up with the corollary that his countrymen are nothing but "innocent saps" if they go on talking with Japan while looking the other way so as not to notice the Japanese troops on the march. This refers to reports of the persistent influx of Japanese forces into Southern Indo-China and of ominous naval movements in neighbouring waters, as well as to widely circulating rumours of Japan's intention to launch an immediate invasion of Thailand.

The Thai Government still apprehend an attack, but they expect it early next year rather than at the present moment. Their Prime Minister is reported by His Majesty's Minister in Bangkok to have recovered somewhat from the agitation into which he was thrown by the British reply to his statement of his war material requirements, though he frankly impresses on Sir J. Crosby his fear of Thailand "becoming a Norway or a Greece." In the last few days he has at all events had the heartening spectacle of the British and American forces in the Pacific being placed on an emergency footing ready to meet any eventuality. He has also had the Japanese Ambassador's assurance, for whatever he may deem it worth, that Japan will never invade Thailand or use it as a passage-way for armies invading Malaya. A parallel diplomatic undertaking has, according to the Saigon radio, been given to the French by Mr. Yoshizawa, who is represented as having said that Japan will temporarily suspend the reinforcement of her troops in Indo-China and will not launch an attack over the frontier against the Burma Road.

It has, of course, to be borne in mind that, even supposing such declarations to be in any way sincere, the integration of diplomatic and military action in the case of Japan to-day is certainly very loose, and that at any moment the control of the situation may be reft out of the diplomats' hands. In any case the outlook is supremely critical and there are strong reasons to expect that now at any moment Japan may put her armed forces in motion. This is felt so strongly in Washington that Mr. Cordell Hull at his press conference to-day abandoned his

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