

and known for their friendliness to His Majesty's Government, who would study the best means of serving the common interest of the Arabs. At all costs they must avoid risk of disruption among the Arab peoples, and equally avoid any action that might cause misunderstanding between the Arabs and His Majesty's Government.

Nuri did not respond very sympathetically to these proposals. He evidently agreed that the most important question to be settled was that of Syria and Palestine, but he wished to see them united into one strong and independent nation. Nor did he attach particular importance to the character or personality of the representatives of the different States as suggested by Ibn Saud, since they would only be the mouthpiece of their respective Governments. Nuri also believed that a general Arab conference to promote unity could only be held after the question of Syria and Palestine had been successfully settled.

To this Ibn Saud replied that he had nothing to add to what he had already said about Syria and Palestine, but that he considered it the duty of all Arabs to strive for the independence of those two countries. This, however, should be done quietly, without publicity, and only in full agreement with Great Britain and the United States. He agreed that the time was not ripe for a general Arab conference, but saw no reason why discreet preparations for such a conference should not begin.

As elsewhere in the Middle East, the fall of Tunis and Bizerta has been greeted in the Levant States with widespread satisfaction, and many messages of congratulation have been received at His Majesty's Legation from local notables. The general economic situation is causing serious anxiety. On the 12th May gold was quoted at 60 Syrian pounds to the sovereign, the highest price yet recorded, while textiles and other essential commodities have again increased in price.

His Highness the Amir Abdullah has sent his congratulations on our victory in Tunisia to the Prime Minister personally and to His Majesty's Government. "The Arab world in particular," says the Amir, "rejoices at this result, which will save many of the sons of their race in Africa from the disasters and calamities of war, and bring the Allies nearer to peace and victory."

Relations between the Palestine Government and the Jewish Agency have become somewhat strained owing to the attitude adopted by the Agency over Jewish recruiting. Some months ago it was learnt that the Jewish Agency was resorting to methods of intimidation on the pretext of facilitating the recruitment of Jews for the forces, whereupon the Palestine Government issued certain Defence Regulations designed to protect the population against such illegal methods. The Jewish Agency took the strongest exception to these regulations, and has not ceased to press for their withdrawal. Nor has the Agency dropped its objectionable methods, which have recently given rise to two incidents. First, an unauthorised Jewish civilian and his clerk who were attached by the Agency to a recruiting unit, apparently to ensure Jewish enlistment, were ordered to leave the premises by the G.O.C.; next, as a consequence of an attack by six Jewish soldiers on a Jewish civilian at Tel Aviv, the recruiting office in that town was searched by the police. Mr. Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, took great offence at our action on both occasions, and has informed the Palestine Government that the Agency recruiting office will henceforth discontinue its activities. While regretting the Agency's decision, the Palestine Government clearly cannot allow the Agency, or any other body, to set up what is tantamount to an alternative system of government in Palestine; nor does there seem any chance of real co-operation between the Government and the Agency over recruiting so long as such a challenge to the authority of the Government continues.

The Soviet-Polish dispute has given rise to much discussion in the coffee-houses of Iraq, where there seems to be little sympathy for the Poles, who are not popular locally. The widespread and general satisfaction over the news from North Africa continues. But in its comments on the Axis defeat the Iraqi press has gone further than usual and has begun to speculate on the future of the Arab territories of North Africa. Editorials have appeared asking why the terms of the Atlantic Charter have not yet been applied to that part of the world, and why the Arab inhabitants in those regions should not be granted the right of self-determination. One editorial demands that the Allies shall establish "constitutional democracy" in the Arab countries of North Africa, declaring that these territories "are part of the greater Arab homeland," and that "African Arabs should accept nothing in place of independence, liberty and democracy."

It appears probable that these articles are officially inspired, and that Nuri Pasha, disappointed with the results in Iraq of his efforts to promote Arab unity and with the failure of his emissary, Jamil Madfai, to achieve anything noteworthy during his recent visits to neighbouring States, hopes to use the defeat of the Axis in North Africa for his own prestige by advocating Arab independence there. The Arabs of North Africa may be flattered by these Iraqi attentions for their future, while those who dream of uniting the Arabs of the western and of the eastern world may well regard such an appeal with interest and sympathy.

The Shah has sent a telegram to The King congratulating him on the victory in Tunisia; and Mr. Eden has received a similar message from the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The victory has been given prominence in the Persian press, and has had a favourable effect on public opinion. The food situation having slightly improved, there is less dissatisfaction with the Allies and with the Persian Government. On the 11th May nine wagon-loads of wheat from Russia arrived in Tehran, and on the 14th thirty military truck-loads were also due to reach the capital. If deliveries of wheat from Russia continue to arrive at the promised rate of 7,500 tons a month, it should be possible, though not as yet certain, for Tehran to subsist without further help from us until the harvest. A reserve of some 4,500 tons of cereals has already been accumulated by us in Tehran, and our best policy may be to add to this reserve from the balance of wheat still due to be delivered by us. If adequate supplies for Tehran can be assured for the period between now and the next harvest, it will greatly help to stabilise the political situation and, moreover, it will serve to discourage speculation and hoarding when the new harvest is gathered.

THE FAR EAST.

While conjecture reigns as to what is portended by the assembling in Washington, at the same time as the Prime Minister's visit, of British and American high military personalities from the Far East, there is a widespread revival of activity in the actual theatre of war. In China we have seen the launching of the fresh Japanese campaigns referred to in the last two issues of the *Summary*; in the South-West Pacific area an intensified air offensive by both sides; in the Northern Pacific an American advance in the Aleutians for the recapture of Attu, the westernmost island of the chain; in Burma a movement unhappily in the contrary direction, our troops retiring from the Mayu Peninsula towards the frontier of India. Japanese submarines have been unusually active in attacks on Allied communications in the Pacific. The Germans, interpreting these as "preparatory" signs, are spurring Japan on to a full offensive and flaunting the great opportunity which Germany has given to Japan by holding the Allies in Tunisia. Their optimism has been fed by reports from Schulze, the leading newspaper correspondent in Tokyo, who has been laying stress in his despatches on the recuperation of the Japanese fighting services since the end of their forward advance in the spring of 1942. He says that all material and manpower losses have now been made good, and the called-up reservists trained to the level of picked troops, so that the expeditionary army is stronger and better than at the start of the war, that the air force, too, is stronger than ever, also the navy, helped by Japan's shipyards, of the capacity of which he makes the surprising assertion that it is now not much below that of British and American yards.

In their appraisals of the Greater East Asia experiment, Japanese speakers and writers show a curious mixture of rosy optimism and cautious reserve. A sample of the former was given in Aoki's press interview last week at Manila, where he was finishing up his grand tour of his ministerial demesne. He said that the Greater East Asia bloc was on the way to becoming the greatest thing of the sort that the world had seen, that all the prerequisites of success were present—natural resources, scientific knowledge and man-power—and that the prospects were very bright. A far soberer estimate was that of a South Seas "expert" quoted in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, who complained of the harm done by the exaggerated reports brought home by visitors to the region and advised his countrymen to abandon the notion that the development of the Southern Region is easy. The handicaps to progress which Japanese writers most commonly mention are shipping shortage, paucity of trained officials, and the laziness and unco-operativeness of native populations which cannot be weaned from Western-inculcated ideas. The interconnexion between the two last is brought out in a *Mainichi* article deploring the lack of efficient Japanese officials capable of working a new administrative system to replace the British, American and Dutch.

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