

neither State is public opinion favourable to the French; and though we recognise that, in return for granting independence to Syria and the Lebanon, the French can reasonably claim that their special position in these countries shall be safeguarded by treaties analogous to our treaties with Egypt and Iraq, we feel that it might be dangerous if the Free French were to try to push through such treaties now, irrespective of popular sentiment. In any case, it seems clear that any arrangements now reached must, for practical and formal reasons alike, be of a provisional nature and valid only for the duration of the war.

Three leading agitators, who were recently interned by the Egyptian Government at the suggestion of His Majesty's Ambassador, have been released by Sirri Pasha, without notifying the British Embassy, on the alleged ground that otherwise there would have been a "religious revolution." This is, to say the least, a gross exaggeration. The real reason behind the move is the fear lest the youthful followers of these hotheads would join the Wafd students in an anti-British demonstration on the 15th November, the anniversary of the death of an Egyptian student in a demonstration in 1935. Sirri Pasha's excuse for this weak and unwise decision is that the men were released on condition that they would take no further part in politics, and that they would be reinterned if they agitated again. The Egyptian Prime Minister is being informed that the Secretary of State has learnt of his decision with regret and that he will be held to this assurance.

The new session of Parliament was opened in Cairo by King Farouk on the 15th November. The speech from the throne, read by Sirri Pasha, referred to the recent measures to limit cotton acreage and to increase the production of cereals; and to the Government's intention to organise the defence of the country, and to develop industries to meet the situation after the war. The speech also paid tribute to Great Britain for her gift of £1 million for the promotion of A.R.P. services, and expressed the King's gratification at the spirit of sincere co-operation between the Egyptian Government and "our great ally." "Not only does this co-operation," the speech concluded, "become closer every day, but its manifestations are being multiplied and give the happiest results."

On the 13th November, the anniversary of National Independence, Mme. Zaghloul Pasha received a delegation headed by Ahmad Maher Pasha. In referring to the casualties caused in the Fayum by bombs from enemy aircraft, she expressed the hope that all Egyptians would now unite not only with one another, but also with those who had formerly been their enemies, thereby presumably implying the British.

THE FAR EAST.

The Japanese want it believed that their latest proposals in Washington are their very last bid for a peaceful settlement, and that rejection will mean war, or at all events resort to force by Japan.

The threat may be genuine, or bluff, or something between the two, *i.e.*, the rulers of Japan may be shirking the fateful choice so long as they can, and may not yet have decided on their immediate action if the proposals fail, as there is every chance of their doing. A plausible explanation of the Japanese Government's purpose in sending Mr. Kurusu to Washington is that they want to get a second opinion on America's readiness to fight in the Pacific before finally making up their minds (see also under *United States*).

If the Japanese have been hoping to make capital out of the fact that Great Britain has so far been left out of the Washington conversations, their hopes will have been damped both by the Prime Minister's Mansion House speech (see last week's *Summary*) and by explanations which have been given to the Japanese Foreign Minister when he recently threw out a hint that it would help the chances of peace if His Majesty's Government were to insist on playing a part in what he professes to regard as regular negotiations. He was told the plain facts of the situation, namely, that His Majesty's Government are willingly standing by while the American and Japanese diplomats try to establish principles as the basis for detailed examination, but will be very ready to collaborate when, if ever, this stage is reached and when the United States Government invite them, as promised, to join the circle of discussion.

As to the prospect of reaching this point, there is nothing to add to the statement in previous *Summaries* that apart from the other issues under discussion the freeing of China from the presence of Japanese troops appears an insuperable obstacle to agreement. There have been no signs of Japan preparing to yield on any essential point in return for the lifting of the economic blockade. The Prime Minister in his Diet speech on the 17th November summarised under three heads the concessions which his Government expect from the Democratic Powers: they were (1) the non-obstruction of the "successful conclusion of the China affair which Japan has in view"—implying, presumably, that the Powers should not go to the aid of China to defend the Burma Road if invaded through Yunnan; (2) the lifting of the economic blockade (which he described as almost as hostile a measure as armed warfare); and (3) the exertion of every effort to limit the world war and prevent the spread of disturbances into East Asia. There was no word of what Japan offers on her side. The Foreign Minister followed up with a speech on conventional lines with emphasis on the crisis created by "encirclement," and the limits of Japan's conciliatoriness and patience. Allusions to the Axis connexion were non-committal and mainly retrospective, and references to Russia were noticeably free from bellicosity. Subsequently the House of Representatives resolved to give full support to the Government in carrying out the established national policy; the resolution contained a strong attack on the United States, and a prediction that Japan will have to "fight this battle through."

Meanwhile war-like preparations continue apace in Japan; a large supplementary war budget, involving greatly increased taxation, has been introduced, the military service regulations are being revised so as to rope in conscripts from the lower medical categories and certain classes of Japanese residents in China, and reports indicate that the fleet is fully mobilised for action.

It may well be true, as Japanese spokesmen have been declaring, that the Far Eastern crisis is at its acme. Whether it resolves into war depends obviously on Japan. Such hope as there is that she may, in spite of her threats, still abstain from any vital act of aggression if the Washington talks break down rests chiefly on three things, the natural preference of her military leaders to delay shooting their bolt until they can see more clearly what will happen in Russia, the accumulating signs of Anglo-American military co-operation and preparedness in the Pacific (such as the revision of the Neutrality Act, the movement of British capital ships to the Pacific, the landing of a Canadian contingent last week in Hong Kong and the constant reinforcement of the Command at Singapore), and, finally, the undoubted reluctance of a not inconsiderable element in Japan to take the irretrievable plunge. For the moment it appears that Mr. Togo, with the Prime Minister's support, is holding the fort for compromise with the United States and Great Britain against the extreme militarists.

Chiang Kai-shek, whom General Tojo in his speech to the Diet represented as nearing military bankruptcy if deprived of outside support, is in high fettle, though it is to be hoped that he is not pitching his hopes too high in regard to British and American help which, in spite of all willingness, has its practical limits. In an address to the People's Political Council, which is now in session in Chungking, he called on the Democracies to use the coming winter to smash Japan, "hemmed in on all sides and facing imminent ruin." His terms for a Sino-Japanese settlement showed not the least abatement—abandonment of the policy of aggression, the withdrawal of all Japanese forces from Chinese soil, including Manchuria, and from Indo-China, and cutting loose of Japan from the Axis. In regard to the nature and extent of the assistance which could be offered to the Chinese Generalissimo, if the threatened invasion of Yunnan should materialise, final conclusions are in process of being worked out.

The situation in Thailand continues to be precarious owing mainly to the unstable mentality of Luang Pibul, the Prime Minister, who is proving a susceptible subject for the Japanese war of nerves. For the time being, however, he is putting Thailand on to a war footing, and has revived the system which was adopted in the recent war with the French of a Supreme High Command under his own orders. There have been Government broadcasts of a thinly-veiled anti-Japanese character calling for public co-operation in civil defence to prepare for meeting "the enemy" and, in particular, for the destruction of Fifth Columnists known to be aiming at the seizure of vital centres. There seems to be no doubt

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