

course officially published in a Royal Decree of the 2nd June. At the audience Nahas referred to the incident at the Turkish Legation (see *Summary* No. 187), and told the King that the reports His Majesty had received were, doubtless, distorted. The King affected to attach little importance to it, however, and said that he regarded the incident as past and over.

During a political visit of the Opposition leaders to the province of Menafia on the 1st June certain of them, including Ahmad Maher Pasha, who so far has acted as a restraining influence, indulged in violent speeches, lauding King Farouk as the champion of Egyptian independence and vilifying the British. We were accused of maintaining in power a corrupt "quisling" Government in return for the services it had rendered to us. His Majesty's Ambassador at once warned Hassanein of the danger of this sort of attack. It looked, he said, as if the Opposition leaders did not realise that the King, on his own initiative, had decided to keep the present Government in office; and it seemed, moreover, that they did not appreciate the immense importance of maintaining the stability of our military base in Egypt. Hassanein, in reply, said that he deplored any attempt to increase the King's popularity by decrying the British, and offered to warn seriously those guilty of such foolishness.

The Egyptian press has commented favourably on the recent decision to establish diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R.; but the general public shows some hesitation between the imaginary advantages of increased cotton exports to Russia, and such danger as there may be from Communist propaganda in Egypt.

Some progress has been made in the arrangements for the forthcoming elections in Syria and the Lebanon. Provisional lists of electors have been published in Damascus, and, if the electoral colleges are convoked, as is hoped, by the 20th June, the primary election should be held by the end of this month, and the secondary by the end of July. As a result of pressure brought to bear upon him by M. Helleu on General Catroux's instructions, Dr. Tabet, the Head of the Lebanon State, has agreed, though with some reluctance, to make an announcement on the 25th June that election in the Lebanon will be held about the 10th July. M. Helleu has now succeeded General Catroux as French Delegate-General. He has made a statement to the press promising his interest in the national aspirations of his Syrian and Lebanese friends. They well knew, he said, that the temporary defeat of France would not prevent her from "maintaining her historic position" in the Levant States.

There is no evidence from Iraq to support Ibn Saud's allegation about an Iraqi plot to stir up the Shammar tribe against his régime (see *Summary* No. 191). Not the faintest rumour of the alleged intrigue has reached His Majesty's Embassy at Bagdad; nor did the Regent, in a conversation with Sir K. Cornwallis on the 2nd June, show any knowledge of the existence of unrest in the neighbourhood of Hail. Unless he was dissembling with remarkable skill, His Highness clearly knew nothing of the matter. Not even in the Southern Desert area of Iraq, where, if anywhere, rumours of restlessness among the tribes would be rife, has there been any talk of intrigue against Ibn Saud. It is true that raiding often occurs in the spring, when some of the Shammar migrate to Najd for grazing, but there have been no reports of excessive lawlessness. It looks, therefore, as if Ibn Saud's suspicions are unfounded.

An account of the interview given by Ibn Saud to an American journalist in April last (see *Summary* No. 184), appeared in the issue of *Life* published on the 31st May, under the title of "King of Arabia—Ibn Saud." The article, which describes the foundation of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom and gives a graphic description of the life of Ibn Saud, also contains a statement from him on the problem of Palestine. Ibn Saud now proposes to publish his own version in the Mecca newspaper, and possibly in other Arabic journals. Meanwhile he has refused to grant an interview to a representative of the Associated Press, on the grounds that mid-summer is not the best time for a journey to Najd, and that in any case it is difficult to provide transport for the interviewer.

The dissolution of the Comintern is said to have given a severe shock to the extremists of the Iraqi Left party, who in recent days have been more zealous in attacking what they term the "imperialism" of the Anglo-American alliance than in supporting the war effort to overcome Nazi tyranny. The moderates, on the other hand, are inclined to believe that the Comintern had achieved its purpose by establishing Communist groups in many countries of the world, and that it called for no real sacrifice on the part of M. Stalin to make a gesture likely to impress Conservative and Catholic interests in Great Britain and the United States. Reactions in Iraq to the decision of the Egyptian Government to

establish relations with the U.S.S.R. are not yet definitely known, but when Nuri Pasha heard the news he observed that the position of Iraq differed materially from that of Egypt, both in a political and in a geographical sense. There are, indeed, indications that the Iraqi Government is becoming increasingly sensitive on the possibility of Russian activities in Iraq, especially with regard to Communist propaganda; and it seems likely that any approach from the Soviet Government for representation in Iraq would be received with great reserve.

The Iraqi press has continued to comment on the future of the North African territories and their nationalist claims. Certain papers seem to think that the establishment of the French Committee, to be used apparently by Generals Giraud and de Gaulle for the administration of the French Empire, does not accord with the spirit of Mr. Eden's statement of the 24th February on the subject of Arab unity. After referring to the application of the Atlantic Charter to all Arab peoples, one article states that such a committee is "contrary to the new outlook of the free world"; and, moreover, that "the new world will not tolerate, after the defeat of Fascism, the rise of new empires administered as colonies."

In Persia the dissolution of the Comintern is believed to be of service to Allied unity, and equally to be a blow to Axis propaganda. But public attention has been chiefly centred on the new income-tax Bill sponsored by Dr. Millspaugh. This Bill introduces a new system of graduated income-tax, with reliefs of various kinds on the British model, the general effect of which will be to ease the lot of the smaller tax-payer at the expense of the well to do. While generally welcomed by the public, the Bill has been severely criticised by those who represent vested interests and who are doing all they can to incite people against its enactment.

A good deal of interest is also being shown in the forthcoming elections, which will probably be held between the end of August and the first days of October. Reports that the present Deputies are spending money freely so as to ensure their return to the Majlis tend to reduce confidence in a free election, and, fearing that the new Majlis will differ little from the present one, people are as sceptical as ever of any real reform being effected in the near future. On the other hand, an attempt is being made by Mustafa Fateh, leader of the (Liberal) Hamrahan party, to organise a "popular front," in which his own party would combine with the Tudeh (extreme left) and the Mellat (Liberal). Though it appears that the Tudeh party prefers for the moment to maintain its independence, Mustafa Fateh is trying to bring pressure to bear, and hopes that some thirty-five members representative of the three groups will be returned to the new Majlis.

The Minister of State has again drawn attention to the continuing process of inflation in the Middle East. All countries in the area are affected, but the situation is particularly serious in Syria and Lebanon and in Persia, where the cost-of-living index has risen by one-third in a single month. Prices are rising at a rate which not only endangers internal stability but also imposes, through military purchases and contracts, a growing burden on the British Exchequer. The Minister points out that the measures taken against inflation in more highly developed economic systems, such as internal loans, higher direct taxation and price-fixing, cannot be effectively applied in the Middle East owing to the resistance of the interests represented in the local Governments, and to the lack of adequate machinery for their enforcement. He recommends the import and sale of substantial quantities of gold as a means of absorbing currency and so checking the rise of prices.

THE FAR EAST.

It was officially announced in Washington on the 5th June that Japanese dead found on Attu numbered 1,791, and that 11 prisoners had been taken. Organised resistance was at an end, but a few snipers still remained to be mopped up. United States casualties up to midnight of the 1st June were given as 342 dead, 1,135 wounded and 58 missing. These figures roughly agree with the Tokyo assertion that the Japanese garrison on Attu, numbering about 2,000, had fought to the last, and that wounded men had killed themselves rather than surrender. The fullest publicity was given to the Attu fighting in Japan, and one broadcaster wept at the microphone in describing the garrison's last stand. The propaganda version showed a natural tendency to compensate for a territorial loss by dwelling on the heroism of the defenders, but the emphasis on their refusal to be taken prisoner has a further significance, for a great part of Japanese strategy depends for its success on the willingness of Japanese

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