British Jailed Egypt's New Premier During War for Alleged Aid to Italy
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He Was Dismissed by Farouk After Refusing to Fight Against the Axis—In 1945 He Called for Closer Ties to London

Aly Maher Pasha, the new Premier of Egypt, was interned by the British for thirty-one months during World War II for allegedly having turned over to the Italians a British military plan for the defense of Egypt.

But in 1945, when he returned to politics, he declared that the Arab world must have friendly relations with Britain. He said he had forgotten the past and was interested only in a plan to obtain the unity of all parties in Egypt on a basic minimum program of internal reforms.

Maher Pasha has served twice before as Egypt's Premier, once in 1936 and again from August, 1939, to June, 1940.

During the first year of World War II, when he held the dual post of Premier and Military Governor, he steadfastly refused to declare war against the Axis and finally was dismissed by King Farouk, apparently at the insistence of Sir Miles Lampson, the then British Ambassador.

The British Embassy and military authorities had reason to suspect the Premier because his father, many years before, had been removed from office as Under Secretary of War by the late Earl of Cromer, British Consul General. Lord Cromer termed the father a "bad adviser, a cause of strife and an obstacle to harmonious cooperation" between Britain and the then Khedive, Abbas II.

Maher Pasha, while refusing to involve his country in the war, nevertheless agreed to sever diplomatic relations with Germany, to confiscate all German property and to intern all Germans. When Italy's declaration of war become a serious threat to Egypt, Maher Pasha's principal argument against a retaliatory declaration was that the Egyptian Army was too small.

Shortly after the Italian action, the small town of Solum, on the Egyptian-Libyan border, was bombed and some Egyptian soldiers were killed. The Premier argued that this had been provoked by the British, who had bombed Italian positions in Libya from Egyptian bases, and that the incident could be settled through diplomatic channels.

The new Premier, who is 68 years old, is one of the wealthiest men in Egypt. He became a lawyer in 1902 and a judge in 1907. He served as Under Secretary of State for Education in 1924, as Minister of Education from 1925 to 1926, as Minister of Finance from 1928 to 1929 and as Minister of Justice from 1930 to 1932.

He was a Senator during the latter period and then, in 1935, was named Chief of the Royal Cabinet, a post in which he acted as adviser to King Farouk, then a youth. He served only three months in 1936 as Premier, taking over the Government when the country was in a disturbed condition following student riots.

Maher Pasha, who again was a Senator for a short period in the latter part of 1936 and for a full year's term in 1939, was a member of the Egyptian delegation to the Palestine Conference in London in 1939.

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