

# Pharoah's Minister To Washington Would Still Restrain Israelites

BY MURRAY FRANK

Mr. Murray Frank, Washington correspondent, was assigned by the Independent Jewish Press Service to interview the Egyptian Minister to the United States on problems of paramount interest to the Jews and to all who comprehend the significance of the Near East in the postwar picture.

The Editor

His Excellency Mahmoud Hassan Bey, Minister of Egypt to the United States, is short, a frail-looking man in his late fifties. For the past six years he has represented his government in Washington and, prior to that, was its representative in European capitals for about fifteen years. He is thoroughly Westernized in dress, manner, speech and general appearance—but not in thought.

The object of our interview was to ascertain the Minister's attitude on Jewish Palestine. We were aware, of course, of the declared opposition of Egypt's Prime Minister, Nahas Pasha, to a Jewish Commonwealth but we had hoped to obtain from this interview with his diplomatic representative to the United States an inkling of the thought processes of the declared foe of Jewish Palestine.

The Minister began with a flow of mellifluous language regarding Egypt's desires for peaceful relations among the peoples of this troubled world. We switched the interview to something a bit more concrete.

"In view of a reported trade agreement between Egypt and Palestine," we asked, "what are your Excellency's views of the possibilities of economic co-operation between the two countries?"

His reply was that, to his knowledge, no such agreement had been signed, but Egypt and Palestine being neighbors he believed that an exchange of products between the two countries was a natural and logical step.

## The Sore Spot

From here we turned to the crux of the problem: does the Minister feel that Jewish immigration into Palestine would affect Egypt favorably, since it would provide new markets for Egyptian products and at the

same time develop industry in Palestine to the extent where the latter could supply Egypt with necessary products that are now imported from overseas? Would it not be in the spirit of good "neighbors" mentioned a moment ago by His Excellency?

"Egypt's position on the matter is well known. We are opposed to Jewish immigration into Palestine in any form or for any purpose. Egypt produces practically the same products as does Palestine, so that the two countries could not very well complement each other's economic needs. Furthermore, Egypt has also built up industries, in recent years, and we are attempting seriously to develop our country industrially. Egypt has no need for industrial products manufactured in Palestine, and I fail to see how it can be beneficial to my country."

"Some time ago your Prime Minister proposed to mediate between the Arabs and the Jews. Does Your Excellency think that, in the event such negotiations materialize, the question of a Jewish State in Palestine would be placed on the agenda?"

## Abhors Jewish Persecutions, Etc.

"You may quote me on this directly. Egypt views with grave concern the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. Egypt makes a distinction between the Jewish question and political Zionism. We abhor the persecutions against Jews in Europe and elsewhere. Nevertheless, we think it an injustice against the people of Palestine, composed of Jews, Christians and Mohammedans, to establish a State in their land exclusively for one people. Palestine belongs to the people who live there. I do not know whether the negotiations you speak of will really materialize, and even if they do, the question of a Jewish Home in Palestine—"

The sentence remained unfinished. The answer, however, was clear from the shrug of his shoulders and the skeptical expression on his face. It was just one definite, unmistakable: "NO!"

"Would Your Excellency care to express an opinion on the

## White Paper of 1939?"

"My answer to this is brief. The Arab-speaking people look upon the White Paper as a compromise, nothing more. But let it be understood that we are not approving its contents, we are merely accepting it provisionally. That is as far as we can go."

The answers to the remaining questions were not unexpected. They were also short and snappy.

"How does Your Excellency view Jewish immigration into Palestine at the end of the present war?"

"We are opposed to it."

"What do you think of a Federation of Near Eastern States with a Jewish Palestine included as a member of such a Federation?"

"We do not for a moment admit the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine."

"Would Your Excellency like to comment on the 1936-39 riots?"

"It is better not to speak of riots when we all hope and look for peace."

"Any comments on the Mufti and his followers?"

"The Mufti is not an Egyptian. I therefore cannot discuss him."

Finally, we asked the Minister for his view of the economic and cultural contributions of the Jews in Palestine, particularly Jewish colonization, to the general welfare of the entire Near East. His answer was:

"I am not acquainted with the scope of the so-called contributions. I do not know what you mean by contributions. Besides, I have been away for so many years that I am not in a position to judge the effects on the general welfare of the near East."

The thirty minutes allotted for the interview were nearly over. As I was leaving, the Minister added:

"Let me make this clear. We distinguish between Jews and Zionists. We have no quarrel with the Jews. There are about 80,000 Jews living in Egypt today. They enjoy all liberties extended to the rest of the population. There is no discrimination against them—certainly less than in some of the western democratic countries. These Jews living in Egypt are not Zionists, because as far as I know not a single Jew left Egypt to settle in Palestine—and you know how near Egypt is to Palestine. For their own benefit, Jews should not create friction with

# LEADING ORTHODOX RABBIS BAKE MATZO SHMURAH



Rabbis in prayer just before the baking of Matzo shmurah.

NE WYORK—It is an annual custom for leading orthodox rabbis from all sections of the country to come to Jersey City before Passover, to bake their matzo shmurah at the famous Manischewitz Matzo Bakery, but this year, that traditional ceremony took on special significance when the baking of matzo shmurah culminated in a spontaneous demonstration for spiritual awakening and a call to rally to the aid of the millions of Jews in war-torn Europe. Meeting in a special assembly convened in the Manischewitz Matzo Bakery, the rabbis present, representing a cross section of the nation's orthodox spiritual leadership, climaxed the meeting by deciding to hold a special convention during the month of Sivan to plan concrete action on the question of immed-

iate aid to our brethren across the seas.

## In Summary

The Minister abhorred the Jewish persecutions in Europe, but disapproved of admitting the Jews into Palestine. Establishment of a Jewish State is to him an injustice to the people of Palestine, including the Jews residing there. Barring Jewish immigration into Palestine, as the White Paper does, is to him only a "compromise, nothing more." While he, an Egyptian, discusses Palestine freely, he cannot discuss the Mufti because "the Mufti is not an Egyptian."

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