



Our Gamble in Morocco

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PARIS
 "SOMEHOW we always seem to get ourselves into the damndest mix-ups in Africa."

This unofficial but heartfelt outburst summed up the reaction among American diplomats here when it was revealed at the end of April that Morocco, by special agreement with the U.S. government, had started using the powerful Voice of America short-wave transmitter in Tangier to broadcast its own foreign propaganda programs. The French government bitterly resents our radio accord with Morocco, but its impact on Franco-American relations—which inspired my friend's anguished generalization—is only one, and perhaps not the gravest, of its far-reaching implications. The new arrangement gives the United States the right to continue relaying voa broadcasts to Africa and the Middle East from its own transmitter in Tangier until the end of 1963. In return, overriding formal French protest, it obliges us to make voa technical services and installations in Morocco available to the Moroccans eighty hours a week for any broadcasting use they want to make of them. We thereby furnish the Moroccan nationalist leadership with the most advanced modern instruments for projecting its doctrines, ambitions, and prejudices thousands of miles beyond Morocco's borders into Africa. To anyone who has recently observed at first hand the mounting political

turmoil in Morocco or who has studied the peculiar contradictions and complexes of Moroccan nationalism, this situation has a number of disquieting features.

Transmitting Confusion

To start with, there are the obvious international complications. One of the Moroccan programs carried by the voa transmitter is called the Voice of Algeria and it is beamed there in Arabic twice a week. In French eyes these broadcasts are "straight F.L.N. war propaganda"—as a government spokesman in Paris put it to me. "We do not feel that your radio agreement with Morocco is promoting peace in Africa," the French spokesman commented dryly.

Another Moroccan program called the Voice of the Sahara is beamed south from Tangier over the voa transmitter. It reflects, and seeks to further, what the French consider the "fantastic dreams of territorial expansion" of Moroccan nationalism. Morocco's desert frontiers have never been exactly surveyed and it is possible that some Moroccan territorial claims have a reasonable historic or ethnic basis. As voiced, however, by Mohammed Allal el Fassi, the veteran leader of the Istiqlal Party, and other extreme nationalists, Moroccan irredentist objectives include huge chunks of the Spanish and French Sahara, bites out of the Federation of Mali in the Senegal basin, and the whole of the Repub-

lic of Mauretania, which by what seems to have been a free vote of its population is a member of the French Community.

Official expressions of Morocco's intentions about Mauretania were given and—thanks to voa transmitter—extensively disseminated during the visit to Morocco early in May of Indonesia's President Sukarno, a doughty irredentist in his own part of the world. "The two chiefs of state affirm the Moroccan character of Mauretania," said the communiqué that closed Mr. Sukarno's stay in Rabat, "and they grant their support to the Mauretanians in their struggle for liberation and in their freely expressed desire to rejoin the Moroccan community."

Our radio pact with Morocco is a risky gamble right now because at almost any time domestic upheavals might sweep into power extremist Moroccan leaders who would put our equipment to still more harmful uses. I have visited Morocco three times in the last four years—most recently in February and March of this year—and each time I have been impressed by the steady deterioration of the economic and political situation.

"The visionaries of the Left have proved just as demagogic and tyrannical as the fanatics of the Right," a prosperous Moroccan businessman remarked to me early in March. "Between them they have ruined this country."

THERE HAS BEEN a latent political crisis in Morocco since the beginning of 1959, when the largest and most important nationalist party, the Istiqlal, split apart. Toward the end of April a new and particularly explosive element was injected by a clique of senior army officers, civil servants, and police officials, allied with conservative business and landowning interests; they hoped to exploit the present public weariness with partisan strife to throw out the left-wing nationalist government of Abdallah Ibrahim and set up a more authoritarian, ostensibly apolitical régime. The real if not the nominal head of the proposed régime, modeled largely on that of Jordan's King Hussein, would be the chief of staff of the Moroccan Army—ambitious, energetic, intelligent young Crown

Prince Moulay Hassan. To some degree, this has already happened. The king has dismissed Premier Ibrahim, and on May 23 he announced that he himself would take over the administrative power of the government, exercising it through his son.

SOME French students of Moroccan affairs believe that the municipal and rural elections held on May 29—the first in Morocco's history as an independent nation—may prompt King Mohammed V to go even further in setting up the kind of government his son desires. Inauguration of such a régime may put VOA in the slightly embarrassing position of lending its transmitters to make Africa safe for palace rule, but it would have many advantages. Prince Moulay Hassan and his military supporters believe in a policy of co-operation with France and the West generally. By enforcing such a policy they would doubtless draw back some of the French and other foreign investment capital for lack of which the Moroccan economy is steadily declining.

The only flaw in this rosy picture is that the doctrinaire leftists of the principal labor organization, the Union des Travailleurs Marocains (UMT), and in Mehdi ben Barka's National Union of Popular Forces, along with some elements of the conservative Istiqlal itself, distrust the crown prince and consider the kind of régime he favors equivalent to fascism. Their hostility increased last February when the national police—apparently on direct orders from the palace without the knowledge of the leftist ministers—arrested a number of left-wing resistance leaders, including ben Barka's chief lieutenant, and charged them with plotting to assassinate Moulay Hassan.

Armed insurrection flared briefly during March and April in the mountains of central Morocco when a senior local official affiliated with ben Barka's movement and suspected of complicity in the alleged assassination plot murdered the political inspector sent to investigate him and fled with a couple of hundred followers to try to stir up the mountain tribes. The chief of police of Marrakech with some supporters made an attempt to join the rebels but was shot down, and the Royal Army

eventually quashed the rebellion by capturing the fugitive official.

The Left showed its teeth more effectively in a one-day nation-wide general strike. It then threw down a defiant challenge to the king himself by denouncing the scheduled municipal elections as politically meaningless and clamored for immediate national elections to choose a constituent assembly. The job of the proposed assembly, declared ben Barka's National Union with the solid backing of the UMT, should be "to draft a democratic and liberal constitution recognizing the people as the source of all power." Morocco today is an absolute monarchy with theocratic overtones, but King Mohammed V, a prudent and tolerant statesman, has hitherto conducted himself like a western constitutional ruler, delegating fairly substantial authority to his ministers and choosing them from the parties or ideological movements that seem to enjoy the most public support. He has in the past indicated willingness to see Morocco evolve into a democratic constitutional monarchy, but has stressed the need for moving in this direction by gradual stages. The National Union's truculent demand for immediate constituent elections was a direct slap at Mohammed V which shattered the post-independence tradition of the throne as a sacrosanct national institution above



partisanship and transformed the simmering political crisis into a crisis of the régime itself.

This conflict between the Left and the throne may fester for years—or it could erupt into revolution and chaos tomorrow. A constructive and bloodless solution is not impossible either, but the possibility of a successful leftist coup along the lines of the one that brought General Kassem to power in Iraq cannot be completely ruled out.

The Moroccans are a proud, gifted and attractive people, but the unhappy last three decades of the protectorate, when the French, scrapping the enlightened colonialism of General Louis Lyautey's day, fought nascent Moroccan nationalism with every weapon from murder to Marxism, have badly warped their national outlook. Contemporary Moroccan nationalism, particularly as interpreted by the country's left-wing intellectuals, suffers in an aggravated form from most of the tensions, delusions, and confusions that afflict undeveloped, newly liberated colonial territories anywhere.

A Taste for Bifteck

One of the most lucid and objective foreign observers I met during my last trip said: "The strains are not merely between political parties and factions. They are inside factions and groups. In fact, they are inside each Moroccan, at the very core of his personality."

Like some other close students of Moroccan society, my informant thought that much of the public strife in the country can be traced back to the intimate conflicts engendered by its unusually rapid transition from medieval traditionalism to twentieth-century patterns of personal and national life. The doctrinaire rigidity of the French educational system, which has been Morocco's main doorway to the twentieth century, has doubtless aggravated inevitable strains by sending home from Paris several generations of Moroccan students haunted by the sterile abstractions of the French intellectual Left and so obsessively westernized in their taste that they are reluctant to marry within their own community, the girls, as a French writer puts it, usually not having learned to appreciate Mozart and *bifteck*.

The deepest alienation is not, perhaps, between doctrine and doctrine or even individual and individual in Morocco, but between word and fact. "Moroccans allow themselves to be carried away by words and forget the need to come to grips with their real problems," the expert continued. Not only do Moroccans often become almost literally intoxicated with the sound of their own words, he maintained, but rival demagogues

trying to capture or hold public attention paint ever brighter images of pie in the sky or ever darker ones of imminent peril on earth, with the result that their listeners become more and more divorced from reality. When reality somehow manages to force itself on them, the shock is traumatic.

AN EXAMPLE of the synthetic nightmares that demagoguery creates in the Moroccan public mind was called to my attention just after the Agadir earthquake during my recent trip. The chief pro-government daily, ben Barka's *Ar Rai Al Am*, quoting from the Rabat correspondent of the *Ghana Times*, reported that unnamed Moroccan officials had information that the earthquake was caused by a secret French atom bomb exploded underground. (A few days later a more lurid version of the same story bounced back from Cairo.) In the shock-dazed condition of Moroccan public opinion at the time, the rumor could well have touched off an outbreak of mob fury against the French colony in Morocco, and the editors of *Ar Rai Al Am* knew this full well.

The incident underscores a particularly tricky aspect of voa's agreement with the Moroccan radio. Despite the low rate of literacy, in Morocco as in many other undeveloped countries public opinion reacts almost as rapidly to the stimuli that reach it via radio, mobile loudspeakers, and illustrated handbills as it does in industrialized nations with a high literacy rate. But decades of exposure to such stimuli, combined with a measure of general education, have developed in even the most suggestible of western audiences a minimum of critical judgment in evaluating rumors or slogans that is rarely encountered in Africa—certainly not in Morocco. This dangerous lag between the development of mass communications and the maturity of public opinion is matched by a lag between technical craftsmanship and standards of journalistic—or merely civic—responsibility on the part of the manipulators of mass media.

According to Jean and Simone Lacouture, whose *Le Maroc à l'Epreuve* is both the most authoritative and the most fair-minded French

study of contemporary Morocco, the weakness of Moroccan publicists for playing with fire was a significant factor in the ghastly massacre of European settlers at Meknes in Octo-

"Work for the Jobless Resulting from the Evacuation."

The *mystique* of anti-colonialism is, of course, one of the major factors that distort the thought patterns



ber, 1956. "One can imagine," the authors remark, "what would be unleashed in this country if the all-powerful radio, instead of playing an educational role, became the mouthpiece of *Jihad* [religious war]."

Split-Level Thinking

Even those Moroccan journalists who are most conscious of their responsibilities are handicapped by the tendency they share with other members of the Moroccan elites toward a kind of split-level thinking that seems to blind them to even the most flagrant contradictions. The articles and editorials of the Moroccan press and radio favor good relations with the West but seldom miss a chance to attack specific western interests; they fulminate against foreign interference with the internal affairs of sovereign states while simultaneously helping the F.L.N. in Algeria and calling on the Mauretanians to overthrow their government; they welcome foreign investment but employ a mixture of xenophobia and primitive economics—sometimes dressed up in crypto-Marxist terminology—to justify the grotesque restrictions that increasingly paralyze foreign enterprise. French newspapers covering the May Day parade in Casablanca organized by the UMR gleefully juxtaposed photographs of the leading floats demanding evacuation of the remaining French military forces with the doleful banner at the tail end carried by a delegation of unemployed workers from recently abandoned French bases asking

of both politicians and journalists in Morocco. Their anti-colonialism is exacerbated by their internal power struggles because accusing your adversary of being "soft" toward colonialism is one of the favorite weapons of Moroccan demagoguery, and public figures of every party and faction spur themselves to frenzied outbursts of verbal anti-colonialism to escape the accusation. There is also, particularly among left-wing intellectuals, a legalistic, doctrinaire quality to Moroccan anti-colonialism and a love of political agitation for its own sake, of filling the lungs with the intoxicating ether of indignation. All this makes them particularly vulnerable to such organs of international and institutionalized demagoguery as the Afro-Asian Peoples' Conference and the Arab League. Through its membership in the latter, Morocco has been led to espouse with synthetic but no less deadly passion the quarrel of the Middle Eastern Arabs with Israel, and to become thereby the carrier in Western and North-western Africa of a dangerous political infection.

The Jewish Question

One unhappy result of this has been to create a growing tension in the relations between Morocco's Jewish community of some two hundred thousand souls and the Moslem majority which for centuries has been free of anti-Semitism in the European sense. There is still no generalized Moslem hatred of the Jew in Morocco, and the respect which King

Mohammed V has repeatedly manifested for the Jewish faith was demonstrated anew this year when Prince Moulay Hassan attended Yom Kippur services in Rabat. In the countryside, and in some of the city slums, however, the constant press campaigns against Israel and "Zionism" are beginning to bear unhealthy fruit; in recent years more and more Jews have been crowding from the smaller villages into the ancient, stifling *mellahs* of the big cities because they no longer felt safe or comfortable among their Moslem neighbors. (Bad economic conditions have also been an important factor in the migration.)

Parallel with this movement among the poorest classes of Moroccan Jews who for centuries have enjoyed separate but equal misery with the Moslem peasant or artisan, a considerable number of middle-class Jews who considered themselves Moroccan nationalists and hoped to play some public role in the new Moroccan state have in many cases begun to manifest symptoms of disaffection toward Moroccan nationalism.

While other factors play a role, the main cause of Jewish-Moslem tension in Morocco is the problem of emigration to Israel. Responsible Jewish leaders in Morocco have assured me that before independence they were given formal promises both by the leaders of the Istiqlal and by the king that freedom to emigrate—a vital economic necessity from the viewpoint of the local Jewish community—would be granted after Morocco became sovereign. At first various local reasons already mentioned blocked the implementation of these promises. Then in 1958 Morocco joined the Arab League.

This was a natural step for an Islamic country where even the Berber tribesmen proudly acknowledge their Arab cultural heritage. But the Arab League is not just a cultural grouping. It is a coalition for political and economic warfare against Israel. Just as Moroccan membership in the Afro-Asian bloc at the United Nations and in the Maghreb grouping involves the nation in an incessant artificial campaign of anti-colonialist agitation that poisons the vital relationship with France, so joining the Arab League committed it to a permanent

campaign of Pan-Arab demagoguery that could not fail to drive a wedge between the Moslem majority and the Jewish minority. It was no longer enough to forbid emigration to Israel. Lest a single fighting man slip through to bear arms against the enemies of Arabdom, administrative orders had to be issued to crack down on clandestine emigration. Businessmen with no thought of emigrating have been denied visas for trips to France or Spain for fear they might skip from there to Israel.

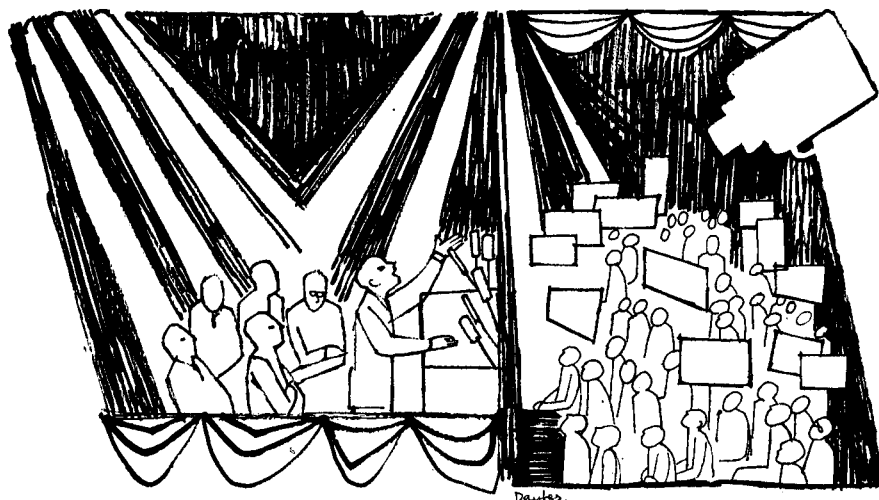
LAST SEPTEMBER, in obedience to the rules of the Arab League, Morocco broke off postal relations with Israel, thus inflicting considerable hardship on the families of the 125,000 Moroccan Jews now established there.

"Do you think it would have been politically possible for the king to

stay aloof from the Arab League?" I asked one of the more militant Jewish leaders.

"Of course it would have been," he replied. "The king simply yielded to demagoguery; by doing so he weakened his own position instead of strengthening it, and that is one reason why things are in such a mess now. But don't blame everything on the Moroccans. The worst demagogues are the great powers, constantly trying to outbid each other for the temporary favor of this or that tribal tyrant, encouraging each new manifestation of mob hysteria as the ideological bulwark against Communism or the harbinger of progress. And if you think things look bad in North Africa, wait until they really warm up in Black Africa."

In the meantime, the Voice of America is doing its share to help warm things up in Black Africa.



New Law, Old Fears

RALPH MCGILL

A COMPROMISE civil-rights bill that pleased nobody has emerged from Congress and is now law. The inevitable question is: What benefits can the Negro citizen, who for so long has been disfranchised in many areas of the South, expect from a bill that was so thoroughly mutilated and watered down by Congressional conflicts?

Negroes in rural counties where fear and intimidation have long

denied them the right to register and vote, or have granted these rights only to a token handful, are far from hopeful. An example of this disillusionment was a letter written to a newspaper by a Negro woman teacher in a rural county in Georgia that had not a single Negro on its voters' list. The letter consisted of two lines from Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body*. They were taken from the section that follows immediately after the descrip-