

MOROCCO—MONARCHY AND REVOLUTION

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THE order which reigns in Morocco, under the guardianship of a king acclaimed by the crowds and with an appearance of wealth in the great cities if not in the small towns or the country, cannot altogether be an illusion. The Moroccan monarchy has recently given astonishing proof of its vitality by the passing of the throne from Mohammed V to Hassan II, without any of the feverish disturbances which were so widely expected; but it has so far revealed only a short term vigour. The applause which greets the young king is much more an invitation to act than an expression of sightless confidence. It is to the degree that he will reply to this appeal from the masses, so much more pressing than under the reign of his father, that the new Moroccan king will save, in the coming two years, his throne. The problems facing the kingdom—political, economic, social—are of extreme urgency and cannot be hidden or muffled by demonstrations of prestige or demagogic talents.

The Moroccan throne, together with the ruling groups and personalities to which it is linked, is approaching its moment of truth. If Hassan II refuses to remain the hostage of the dominant big city bourgeoisie, he can save both his power and his throne together. His personality is sufficiently complex, his intelligence sufficiently sharp, his resilience sufficiently strong to make this a possibility, particularly since the monarchy has cards to play which might not only secure the throne but benefit Morocco. It has to achieve, after the national political unity established by Mohammed V, a social unification that has hardly been begun. For this, however, it has little time at its disposal.

It has often been said that there are two Moroccos, that of the city and that of the village. An enormous disparity exists between these two different socio-political worlds—that of the politically conscious urbanised intellectuals and industrial masses on the one hand, and that of the underemployed peasants and the forgotten mountain dwellers on the other—and it is this disparity which lies at the basis of Moroccan inquietudes. Certainly such an interpretation is less false than that which

canvasses the alleged antagonism between Arab and Berber, of which the events of 1953-55 demonstrate the inanity or at least the absence of any political significance. The superficial differences between city and country do not, however, reflect the roots of the Moroccan revolution.

That which today strikes a visitor to the working-class suburbs of Casablanca and Rabat is the mutual permeability of the two worlds, urban and rural, in contemporary Morocco. For a long time Casablanca has been known as the capital of 'Berber Morocco', in the sense that entire tribes have come from the mountains to swell the greatest concentration of humanity in the land. Less noticeable is the ebb and flow between the cities and the country, and the extent of the circulation between the two so vastly different areas. Socially and psychologically the movement of these 'tides' is of extreme importance, concentrating in itself the essential social history of Morocco today.

It is significant on the political level too, for these profound currents of men and of ideas, of customs and techniques, promote a rapid 'politicisation' of the villages. Most important amongst the agents, those who carry the germs of this change, are the grocers in the urban centres, nearly all of whom come from Sous, the great province of the mountainous south. From Sous streams over the country that part of the population most eager for work, most ambitious of gain, most absorbent of political concepts. The region has once before been the passageway for the spiritual formation of Morocco; it was from there that arose Ibn Toumert and the founders of the Almohade dynasty, perhaps the greatest in the history of the Maghreb.

Until recently, the Soussi was the provincial immigrant from a poor and over-populated region, come to earn, in mines and in city, enough for himself and for the family left behind him at home. He was a little like the Algerian in France, the Puerto Rican in New York. But he quickly opened his shop, usually for groceries, to prosper in business, to become, on the urban ground where he took root, like the Syrian in West Africa, the Indian in East Africa, the Jew a little everywhere, worker, accountant, bold in his enterprise. It is he who is most vigorously a member of the national community, his eyes on the political struggle. At the same time as he is a grocer, he is almost always a newsagent. And if he is a sufficiently good businessman not to refuse to sell anything, most of the time it is the organs of a particular opinion that he distributes.

The Soussis are, as one says in France, 'the heart of the left'. One should not generalise too far, obviously; but in four out of five cases, the Soussi grocer, an essential element in the economic life of village or suburb, belongs to the movements of the left. And if he reads a newspaper in the evening, in front of his shop, it is most of the time that of the National Union of Popular Forces—the party of Ben Barka and Bouabid, closely allied to the trade unions of the Union of Moroccan Workers (U.M.T.)—rather than that of the bourgeois Istiqlal or of the independents. His is perhaps the response of a mountainous people, for long disdained by those in power, who at the same time have politically evolved far enough to be aware of and to resent their frustration.

This political engagement of the Soussis, who have themselves drawn so many others into such engagement, is a striking example of the economic and political exchange between city and village, of the interpenetration that has so altered the Moroccan people. The grocers sell their products and newspapers, returning after a long stay in the city to their mountain village, bringing there new ideas and the knowledge of new techniques and then departing again for the cities with a brother or a son. This psychological disturbance is echoed in political tremors throughout the country, shaking the foundations of conformity.

Politics in Morocco have ceased to be the game of urban intellectuals and have become the pursuit of all, in capital and village alike, and it is this which prevents a stable monopoly of power. The sole relatively free elections which have taken place in the country—in May 1960, for municipal councils—revealed that the forces of the left were above all established in the cities of the West, in modern industrial Morocco, while the traditionalist ranks showed their strength in the rural areas and those towns where handicraft had not yet given place to industry. But for how long is this division likely to persist?

It was perhaps to freeze this evolution, or at least halt the party quarrels which are the foam on these political depths, that Mohammed V and his son set up on the eve of these elections—as though to enfeeble their predictable results—direct royal rule, a sort of presidential régime within the framework of the monarchy. This régime was preserved by Hassan II on succeeding his father to the throne last February. For his predecessor, it was only to be a temporary régime, before a final

opening of the gates, at the end of 1962, to a constitutional government in direct contradiction to the existing vigorous theocracy.

The new king, however, less deferential than his father to formal democracy, is unquestionably going to try and prolong beyond the end of 1962 a régime in which royal authority acts without real counterpoise. Hassan II has little time for the political and worker organisations of his country. In his view, Morocco needs for many years more a "responsible leader", surrounded by "a small team of competent and devoted men" who will establish a régime of direct contact—free of the "intermediaries" so joyfully denounced by General de Gaulle—with a trusting and submissive people. The problem remains of precisely how to gain and preserve the crucial "confidence of the people".

It is interesting to compare the three régimes and the three concepts of power prevailing at Paris and those two capitals which, despite all conflicts, look so often towards France—Tunis and Rabat. 'Bourguibism' certainly preceded 'neo-Gaullism.' But in all three cities today there reigns a paternalism, slightly shaded in Tunis by the existence of a political party, domestic in power but constituting a still influential intermediary.

In his anxiety to maintain that which he calls "social democracy" and to bar the road to "formal democracy", Hassan II promulgated in June 1961 what he called—in line with the French terminology which he has adopted—a "fundamental law". For want of a constitution, the Moroccans might have contented themselves with this if the text had not also been richly coloured with conservative Islam. It is strange to see this brilliant young prince, so modern in his own conduct, reflect, ever since he began enjoying power, the conservatism of his religion. Since the death of Mohammed V, pious and wrapped in tradition as he himself had been, it seems as though the royal régime has been encouraging not an emancipation, but rather a return to tradition. Since it has had as its king a former student of French universities, a sportsman, a modern jurist, official Morocco has recommenced to wear the 'djellaba', the long traditional dress. . . .

It is not, however, by playing the card of the past that the young sovereign will secure his throne, beyond those few months of reprieve with which the elders can provide him. It is by

stirring up the country, by dressing it in the new clothes which so attract it. To be so young carries for Hassan II certain risks. But it also carries advantages. The youth, the bulk of whom are sympathetic to the movements of the left, but whom the tragic death of King Mohammed had left strangely disengaged, uncertain, helpless, waiting, waits still for bold initiatives from the new young king.

To mobilise labour for vast works, especially in the rural areas, as Hassan II wishes to do, may be a good thing, on condition that those called up do not have the feeling that they are before all else to be indoctrinated, trained by the military on 'apolitical' principles away from all temptations of the organised left. To launch a huge programme of school building, to speak of constructing two thousand schools in three months, is admirable enough, but only if those interested do not gain the impression that they are having dust thrown in their eyes, are being served up, in all the bustle, with education on the cheap. To abolish the agricultural tax, the 'tertib'—unpopular as any tax, but one which had acquired an especially evil reputation under the French Protectorate, because the Administration had sometimes exempted the 'colons' on the pretext of promoting the modernisation of agriculture—is clever and bold, on condition that the government does not off-set the inevitable deficit in the budget by taxes far more unjust (and indirect taxes can be the most unjust of all).

The youth and Moroccan peasantry are not opposed root-and-branch to the power of the new king. They are still waiting for him to prove the virtues of his "social democracy", with its suppression of intermediaries. But they would be better disposed to him if he would not gather about him only his personal friends and the old politicians with their exhausted prestige.

Every political experience is conditioned by the circumstances in which it unrolls. A further month of the severe winter in 1917 might perhaps have toppled the power of the Soviets; a more difficult sale of cotton abroad might have shaken the Nasser régime in 1957. In Morocco today the sun is not royalist, and several days of rain in April would have served Hassan II better than any ovation by the workers of Casablanca.

Official statistics permit no doubt of the severe food crisis threatening Morocco in 1962 as well as 1961; the shortage of cereals poses the problem of seed for the coming year. It must not be forgotten that 75% of all Moroccans live from the land,

and that most of the others remain in close contact with the world of the soil. It is for this reason that every ordeal for the peasantry is a national drama.

If one refers to the estimates of the Comité National Marocain, eight weeks of continuous drought, in February and March, have completely destroyed hopes of a normal harvest this year. 600,000 to 650,000 tons of cereal this year, when an average harvest runs from 1,300,000 to 1,400,000—more than double—constitutes the worst result registered in Morocco since 1945, a year when famine is said to have caused tens of thousands of deaths and typhus to have killed more than two hundred thousand. How will a Moroccan above the age of three feed himself this winter? This is something that the authorities in Rabat do not yet know, although gifts from outside, amongst others from the United States and France, allow hope that the worst will be escaped and that the problem of seed will not mortgage too far the sowing of 1962.

This bad harvest represents a loss, it has been estimated, of about 50,000,000,000 old francs or £45,000,000, a tenth of Morocco's national annual revenue. This must provoke profound disturbances, not only in the ordinary life of the peasant, who is going to endure a period of acute hardship, but in the whole economic life of the country. The internal market, which must still be the basic support of Morocco's young and fragile industries, is going to find itself drained dry. Textiles have been hurt first. But the fall in the activity of most enterprises has already been marked by the sales figures for electricity, an index that never deceives.

Another mark of the crisis that hangs over Morocco is the decline in exports, notably by the food industry—20.2% less than in 1960. If mining production remains stable, with a small rise in phosphates and a small drop in lead, most manufacturing industries have undergone difficulties that the extraordinary shyness of investment cannot help them to surmount. Although private deposits amount to nearly £200,000,000, their holders seem increasingly reluctant to invest them in industry. This paralysis of a capital already modest enough is one of the infant illnesses of Moroccan independence.

One must add to these disquieting factors the increased deficit in the balance of payments, largely due to the necessary import of more and more products for current consumption. This deficit, some £4,000,000 for the first quarter of 1960, is

some £10,500,000 for the same period in 1961, and this has further increased during the second quarter. It seems likely to increase much more with the food shortage resulting from the bad harvest, for it is due above all to the purchase from abroad of various foodstuffs.

A crisis in Morocco does not pass unperceived by Moroccan eyes. One may certainly say that in many ways the government at Rabat is feudal and theocratic in form. But one must then add that there is probably no country in the 'uncommitted world' where the press enjoys greater liberty. To be sure, the principal opposition paper in Arabic, '*Al-Tahrir*', is sometimes seized, on actions brought against it; its two leading directors have been put out of action for eight months already. But in what country of Asia or Africa might an opposition paper launch with impunity an attack against the government like the one published on 5 August by the French-language trade union journal, '*L'Avant-garde*'? Under the title 'Bankruptcy On All Fronts', the journal denounced "the exploitation of the people by foreigners and their lackeys . . . by a clique thirsting for dictatorship and lettres de cachet . . ."

At the same time, a student congress at Azrou passed a series of resolutions which roundly condemned the "personal power" and diplomacy of the king, demanded greater solidarity with African and Arab States, and severely censured the economic policies of the régime.

Between this vigorous opposition, where students and trade unionists rival each other in daring, and a royal power propped up by a rural party, the conservatives and the forces of the State, a trial of strength seems inevitable. It is probably not in Morocco itself, however, that the future of Morocco will be altogether decided. Everything suggests that the fate of the country will largely depend on the Algeria of tomorrow that it will find on its frontiers.

Translated from the French

