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THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT FORMING AROUND THE SULTAN (1946—1952)

There were several similarities in the two North-African French protectorates concerning the political situation after the Second World War but some significant differences can be observed as well. Political human rights were more restricted in Morocco than in Tunisia. Political parties may not be legally formed here, either, but they were tolerated to a certain extent. However, their press was strictly controlled; more numbers were suppressed than issued. Moroccans could not either found trade unions.

Their interests were represented and protected by CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail). In 1946, when it became the General Union of Moroccan Trade Unions /Union Générale Des Syndicats Confédérés Marocains — UGSCM/, keeping close relations with the French trade union centre, it had 40 thousand European and 20 thousand Moroccan members.¹ Parties were the least developed here among the three Maghreb countries from the aspect of organisation, as they had hardly any historical and military experiences and they could hardly declare their formation towards the end of the Second World War, they were proclaimed already, thus their structural establishment did not even have the relatively favourable possibilities provided by the restricted legality. The weakness of the parties also contributed to the fact that the ruler, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf could become the integrating factor and leader of the trends and organisations of the national movement. His authority was reinforced by the facts that he had met Roosevelt in 1943 and he had been received with distinguished attention by de Gaulle in 1945, who had rewarded him with the order of resistance. America exerted the most profound and most conspicuous influence exactly here among the three North-African French colonies; the military bases established after the disembarkation of 1942 were henceforward maintained, in fact, their number increased. This is the country where the nationalist movement — more precisely the Istiqlal Party — first chose the United States of America as its international confederate and this was the first country to recognise the significance of the U.N. in the anti-colonialist struggles.

It was the Istiqlal among the existing three parties that influenced significantly each social layer; neither the Communist Party nor the Democratic Party of Independence /Parti Démocratique de l'Indépendance — PDI/ could take real and deep roots in Moroccan society; their influence reached only the fragments of certain layers. The views of the three parties, although communists were really far from the two nationalist parties from ideological aspect, were identical on some basic political questions. None of them was satisfied with the existing reforms improving the political system of the protectorate. This

¹ OVED, GEORGES: *La gauche française et le nationalisme marocain 1905—1955*. Vol. II. p. 228. Paris, 1984.

fact was expressed, the most explicitly, by the Istiqlal Party when refusing the reforms of the summer of 1947, it declared: „The first real reform will be the abolition of the protectorate” („La première réforme véritable c'est l'abolition du Protectorat.”)²

Each of the three parties approved the territorial integrity of the country (including the Spanish Sahara as well) and the re-establishment of the unity of the dismembered Morocco. Each of them regarded the Sultan as the symbol of Moroccan unity and they agreed on the plan to keep close relations between the independent Morocco and France.

In spite of the reprisal of January 1944 the Istiqlal remained the most significant party of the country, although it operated rather as a movement than a party, similarly to the Neo-Dustur Party, but in a less organized way. It was still based, first of all, on the bazar, that is, the merchant-bourgeoisie of the cities, mainly Fez and Rabat, while its influence in Casablanca that became the economic and commercial centre of the colony was rapidly increasing both on the layer of Moroccan entrepreneurs attracted there by the fast economic growth and on the circle of the marginalized half-proletarian mass of the suburbs.³

The Istiqlal did not have any opportunity to organize mass-actions after the war — the memory of January 1944 made it precautious, too — thus it made efforts to obtain its purpose by using legal frameworks and bombarded the colonial authorities (resident general, foreign minister) with petitions and memoranda. This is the way it wanted to enforce negotiations with the French government. Its program for 1947 was basically unchanged, more precise in certain aspects. According to this, only the profound revision, practically the invalidation of the contract of the protectorate could be the basis of the normal French—Moroccan relations and the starting point of the negotiations in the future. It declared explicitly that constitutional monarchy would be the political system of the independent Morocco, where Islam was the state religion but also persons of other religions could take state positions. It did not mention social questions, similarly to the program of the nationalist Maghreb-parties.⁴ The Istiqlal sent a memorandum to the U.N. already at the end of 1947, which detailed the historical, political, economic and cultural position of the country. According to its basic conclusion, the Moroccan nation was „a coherent political system” („une constitution politique cohérente”), which had already existed before the arrival of the French and this fact made the institution of the protectorate completely illegal. That is why it could be regarded as a sovereign nation by the U.N. and the world's public opinion.⁵

It acknowledged the ruler's directing role in the national movement only gradually, exactly the way how Muhammad Ibn Yusuf bound himself more and more consistently to defend national interests in the political struggles.

² *Egalité*, 18 July 1947.

³ MARAIS, ECTAVE: *La classe dirigeante au Maroc*. *Revue française de sciences politiques* 1964 no. 4., p. 716.

⁴ *Egalité*, 23 May 1947.

⁵ *Egalité*, 21 November and 5 December 1947.

The other party, the PDI (led by Wazzani), whose roots go back to the division of 1937, mainly collected Francophile intellectuals and was closest to the Algerian UDMA. According to their program, they were struggling for the absolute independence of the country, which was, however, „not a simple ideal, but the sine que non of Moroccan national development” („non seulement un marocaine”)⁶ for them. In contrast to the Istiqlal, it wanted to establish „a political and social democracy” („une démocratie politique et sociale”). Consequently it considered the Left to be its confederate: „the PDI is a national liberal party explicitly oriented to the Left” („le PDI est un parti national libéral nettement orienté vers la gauche”).⁷ It kept very good relations with the Socialists.

The Moroccan Communist Party (MCP) passed through the same way as its Algerian and Tunisian sister parties. Also the turning point in the political directives of the party took place in the summer of 1946. On 4 August, at the meeting of the Central Committee the party rejected its former strategical purpose and approved of national independence, the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of the country and the formation of a national assembly created by general and secret ballot. „in order to establish a free and independent Morocco against every imperialism, a parliament and a Moroccan government, responsible for the matters of the country, must be formed immediately” („Pour établir un Maroc libre et indépendant à l'égard de tout impérialisme, il faut créer immédiatement une assemblée et un gouvernement marocains gérant toutes les affaires du Maroc.”)⁸ Still in the same month, the ruler received his representatives in audience and declared after the meeting that „the class of workers belongs to the nation as well and the time of democracy has arrived for everyone...” („...la classe des travailleurs s'appartient aussi un peuple et les temps de la démocratie sont venus pour tous.”)⁹ The party suggested to the Nationalists establishing a National Front. The Istiqlal rejected this suggestion as it did not regard the MCP as a national party and the communion would have restricted its freedom of action. „As a matter of fact, there is no Moroccan Communist Party. There is a communist party whose secretary-general is a French person who was born in Algeria¹⁰ and which has many French and only a few Moroccan members... It suggested to us forming a national front. We have not done anything in this matter so far. We would rather preserve our liberty towards each party.” („Il n'y a pas à proprement parler de Parti Communiste Marocain. Il y a un Parti Communiste dont le secrétaire général est un Algérien naturalisé Français et qui a comme membres beaucoup de Français et quelques rares Marocains... Il nous a proposé alors la constitution d'un Front national. Nous n'avons

⁶ *Egalité*, 30 January 1947.

⁷ *Egalité*, 10 April 1947.

⁸ Quoted by: AYACHE, ALBERT: *Le Maroc*. Paris, 1956. p. 351.

⁹ *Bulletin d'informations du Maroc* 8 September 1946.

¹⁰ The parents of the secretary-general of the MCP, Ali Jata were from Kabyle and moved to Tanger at the end of World War I. Ali Jata was born here in 1920. He joined the nationalist scouting movement early and became a member of the MCP in 1944. He applied for Moroccan citizenship several times but did not get it during the period of the protectorate because it was easier to convict him and expel him from the country. *Liberté*, 15 March 1951., p. 22.

rien fait dans ce sens jusqu'à présent. Nous préférons conserver notre liberté d'action vis-à-vis de tous les partis.")¹¹

It is a fact that the MCP did not have many Moroccan members but it did have a strong influence on the circle of secular intellectuals and — through the trade unions — on wage labourers. In fact, it could win even Fellah people over in certain regions. The actual reason for rejecting co-operation was of an ideological nature. Similarly to the Neo-Dustur Party, the Istiqlal was a strictly anti-communist party. The ideological contrast became even wider later because of the orientation of foreign affairs of the nationalists. On the other hand, the Istiqlal regarded, to a certain extent, the communists as a rival party and tried to do everything to suppress its influence. Allal al Fassi wrote a few years later that his party had succeeded in eliminating communist influence on peasants living in the neighbourhood of Tadla. „It was thanks to our Tadla branch that this influence was counteracted. (i.e. the communist influence — L.J.N)... to us and to the Islamic principles which are our guide."¹² The relation of communists to nationalists was the worst in Morocco among the three Maghreb-countries. The Istiqlal wanted to obtain absolute power within the national movement; although it accepted PDI but assigned a subordinate role to them. Colonial power, on the other hand, accepted only the Sultan as a negotiating partner, who stepped on the political arena in 1947 with, so to say, great spectacle and causing almost traumatic effects.

In April he travelled to Tanger through the Spanish Zone where he was greeted with reverence due to rulers. No Moroccan ruler had visited the city since 1889. Muhammed Ibn Yusuf wanted to demonstrate the unity of Morocco with his visit. The resident general permitted this visit only with difficulty and with the final intervention of the American consul in Tanger. The ruler was received by a huge crowd demanding independence in this city of international status. Abdelhalek Torres, disappointed with Franco, greeted him as a ruler „who increases our hope in independence."¹³ In his speech of 9 April the Sultan expressed his regret for the backwardness of the country and encouraged his compatriots to improve the results of modern techniques. He expressed his confidence not only in the ability of Moroccan people „to learn" technical civilization but also in his hope that they would become conscious politically. „The people will awake finally and will be conscious of their rights and they will follow the most effective way of regaining their position among nations... the legitimate rights of the Moroccan people cannot get lost and will not get lost ever." („Le peuple se réveille enfin, il prend conscience de ses droits et il va suivre la voie efficace pour retrouver sa place parmi les peuples... Aussi les droits légitimes du peuple marocain ne peuvent — ils se perdre et ne se perdront jamais.")¹⁴ The representatives of colonial power present were astonished already by the statements encouraging national consciousness, just like by the fact that the

¹¹ Conférence de presse donnée par la délégation du Parti de l'Istiqlal à Paris le 30 août 1946. Bureau de documentation et d'information du Parti. Paris, 1946. 13.

¹² AL-FASSI, ALLAL: *What is Istiqlal?* The Islamic Review, 1951. no. 5., p. 39.

¹³ *Egalité*, 17 April 1947.

¹⁴ *Bulletin d'informations du Maroc*. 18 April 1947.

Sultan, in contrast to the practice, did not say a word about the results of the „civilizing mission” of the French, but even more by those statements that had not been included in the original text given to the press for publication before. Muhammed Ibn Yusuf praised the Arabian League which enabled Arab leaders to unite their voices and march together towards moral development, the powerful Islam and the glory of Arabians.¹⁵ The ruler declared his statements to the press when he was travelling from Tanger to Rabat and expressed his desire that the links between Morocco and the Near-East would become continually closer, especially after the fact that the Arabian League became an institution and played an important role in international politics. At the same time he declared that Tanger was a Moroccan city and that „Morocco is united and the throne is the symbol of this unity” („Maroc est une entité dont le symbole est le trône.”)¹⁶

The Tanger speech was an event of great significance, it can be regarded as a milestone in the history of the Moroccan national movement; the Sultan declared explicitly that he joined the forces struggling for national development and freedom; what is more, he would become their mediator. The speech was the starting point of the unity of the nationalist movement and the throne.

Paris responded to the Tanger speech by summoning the resident general; he was blamed for the things that happened. General Alphonse Juin was appointed to his post, who was a staunch adherent of the maintenance of the empire and behaved as a „feudal baron” opposing even the occasional flexible attitude of the French government during his four-year „proconsular” activity in Morocco.¹⁷ He rejected real negotiations and judged the reforms initiated up to that time to be satisfactory. He continued restricting the activity of the nationalists, enforced their leaders to leave the country. They tried to organize international support in the Maghreb office in Cairo, at the U.N. and in the United States, where in New York, the Moroccan Informational Bureau was opened at the end of 1947. The communists made efforts to connect the struggle for national independence with the aims of the peace movement. However, they could not achieve even those results in this respect as Tunisian communists did, although the peace movement — as there were American military bases in the country — could have been the most effective here. Yet the Istiqlal and the ruler, as he detailed it to the American consul during his visit to Tanger, did not oppose military bases because „the American presence lessens a little the French pressure on us.” („la présence américaine ici, nous considérons qu'elle allégeait un petit peu la pression française sur nous.”)¹⁸

The political situation was relatively calm in Morocco between 1947 and 1950, but social conflicts were rather intense. The social struggle guided by the UGSCM had several results: they achieved wage increases and in fact, the trade union membership of Moroccan

¹⁵ *Le Monde*, 12 April 1947.

¹⁶ *Le Monde*, 15 April 1947.

¹⁷ JULIEN, CHARLES-ANDRÉ: *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes*. Paris, 1986., p. 214.

¹⁸ BENJELLOUN, ABDELMAJID: *Les relations entre le mouvement nationaliste marocain de la zone Nord et les Américains de 1945 à 1956*. In: BENJELLOUN, ABDELMAJID: *Approches du colonialisme*. Editions ODAD Rabat, 1988.

people became acknowledged theoretically in 1948 and also Moroccan wage-workers got child bounty with certain restrictions. Having recognised this fact, the Istiqlal became interested in the trade unionist movement through Ferhat Hased and under the pressure of the CISL. The party acknowledged the role of the movement in the struggle for national liberation and wanted to establish „a free and independent trade union”¹⁹ As it did not succeed in causing a split in the UGSCM, it suggested to its members joining the union. Thus the Istiqlal, even if enforcedly, took notice of co-operation in this respect with the communists who did want to „Moroccanize” the trade union. The UGSCM was guided by a French and a Moroccan secretary from 1946 and by a Moroccan from 1951. However, it did not bind itself to participate in political struggles, therefore the UGSCM will break up when the country becomes independent and a new national trade union will be established under the guidance of the nationalists.

The ruler realized his theoretical Statements in 1950. In the summer he decided to travel to Paris and initiate negotiations with the French government. Although the effectiveness of his mission was endangered by the North-African conference held in August in Paris (the conference held on 12 August, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister René Pleven, the governor of the three North-African colonies. With respect to the international situation caused by the war in Korea, they decided to slow down reforms in the three countries)²⁰ he still travelled to the capital of France in October. One day after his arrival, on the 11th he set a memorandum to the President of the Republic, Vincent Auriol, in which he demanded fundamental structural reforms stating that „the Moroccan problem emerged today is not the matter of the partial reforms of the present administration and superficial personal changes any longer but the problem of a nation which demands changes extending to the basis and the details and this is what the actual circumstances demand, too.” („le problème marocain qui se pose aujourd’hui n’est plus une affaire de réformes fragmentaires ou de remaniements superficiels des rouages de l’administrations portant sur le fond et les détails, ainsi que la nécessite la conjuncture actuelle.”)²¹

Beside the actual demands including details as well (e.g. the acknowledgement of the right of Moroccans to form trade unions) he urged, first of all, the construction of an agreement which determines „*the basis of the future and the ultimate purposes*”. The French response of the 31st caused absolute disappointment because it did not respond to any of the demands in essentials. The ruler travelled home without any French—Moroccan common statement signed. Debates and struggles continued at home in the political institutions of the protectorate characterized by a rather restricted sphere of jurisdiction. At the beginning of December the Istiqlal members criticized sharply the system of the protectorate when resident general Juin removed them from the hall. However, they were received by the Sultan who demonstrated his approval this way. This is the point when the resident general decided to destroy, at any cost, the alliance between the ruler and the

¹⁹ Statement by Bouabid, member of the governing body of the Istiqlal: *Algérie libre*, 15 April 1949.

²⁰ *Année politique*, 1950, p. 172.

²¹ Quoted by JULIEN, CHARLES-ANDRÉ: *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes*, p. 232.

Istiqlal that was gradually strengthening. First he turned to the classical dividing tactics, recalling the „Berber policy.”

Hajj T'Hami, the leader of the Glawi tribe and the pasha of Marrakesh has had a grudge against the ruler for a long period because he did not prefer religious matters but bound himself more and more in political struggles. In December 1950 he openly accused the Sultan of Istiqlal-communist friendship and brought out Berber tribes — with the resident general's knowledge — in the neighbourhood of Fes in order to exert pressure on the Sultan and to prevent the formation of an alliance between the throne and the national movement. The Istiqlal and the ulamas of Fes, however, branded the pasha of Marrakesh as antipatriotic and conservative and started to defend the Sultan, who could not be convinced even by Juin — in spite of any threat — to confine himself openly from the nationalist party. The wakening of the „Berber policy” brought about great indignation in the Arab countries. The Arabian League asked for the intervention of the United States. The American government got into an uncertain situation. It did not want to criticize its strategical confederate explicitly, especially when they were negotiating on the increasing of its military bases in Morocco. According to the agreement signed on 12 July 1951 the United States built five air bases in the country, which „are important” — according to the document — „from the point of view of the protection of North-Africa and the American superiority in the Mediterranean.”²² At the same time the American Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned Paris through the French ambassador in Washington to find a compromise with the Istiqlal supported by the two-thirds of the population and to avoid creating a situation which would, sooner or later, provoke a new Indo-Chinese war in order to achieve long-term stability.²³ Atlantic solidarity is still valid but the agreement between the interests of the United States practising global policy in the region and France, unable to part from the traditional treatment of the colonial problem, is becoming more and more difficult.

Strong — arm policy established — for the first time since 1936 — the united front of the nationalist parties of the French and Spanish Morocco, producing an effect which was exactly the opposite of the purposes. Two French Moroccan parties — the Istiqlal and the PDI — and two Spanish Moroccan parties — the Reformist Party and the Party of Moroccan Unity — signed an agreement on 9 April 1951 in Tanger, in which they declared not to enter into any negotiations before the acknowledgement of the independence of the country. They also agreed on not creating a united front with the communists.²⁴ They tried to find international confederates first of all. They attributed, invariably, great significance to the U.N. Their hopes and, to some extent, their impatience were increased by the fact that the organization could arrange the matter of the independence of Libya. The national government of the former Italian colony was established in March 1951 and it declared the independence of the country later; on 14 December. The leaders of the Istiqlal confirmed

²² *Année politique*, 1951. p. 190.

²³ Quoted by LACROIX-RIZ, ANNIE: *Les protectorats d'Afrique de Nord entre la France et Washington*. Paris, 1988. p. 102.

²⁴ *Année politique*, 1951. p. 109.

A szultán körül kialakuló marokkói nemzeti mozgalom (1946—1952)

A három észak-afrikai francia gyarmat közül Marokkóban volt a legkedvezőtlenebb a politikai légkör a nemzeti mozgalom számára. A nemzeti pártok legális tevékenységét — a világháború befejezését követő 2—3 évet kivéve — a cselekvésképtelenségig korlátozták. Így az a sajátos helyzet alakult ki, hogy a nemzeti mozgalom élére az uralkodó, Mohammed ben Juszuf állt. 1947-ben, Tangerben elmondott beszéde valóságos nacionalista programmal ér fel. Tárgyalások útján próbálta elérni Párizsban az 1912-es protektoráusi szerződés eltörlését. A francia kormány azonban hajthatatlan marad, aminek következtében a nemzeti mozgalom is radikalizálódik 1952-től: a politikai eszközök mellett megjelennek a fegyveres gerillaharc formái is.