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Radical Nationalists:

Moroccan Jewish Communists 1925-1975

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

Alma Rachel Heckman

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Radical Nationalists:  
Moroccan Jewish Communists 1925-1975

by

Alma Rachel Heckman

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Chair

From the outset of the French protectorate of Morocco in 1912 through independence in 1956, a variety of ideologies coalesced into pro-independence political movements. This dissertation explores Jewish involvement in the Moroccan Communist Party (PCM) between 1925-1975. Opening up this 1925-1975 moment recovers ways in which Jews and Muslims conceptualized Jews fitting into newly independent nation-states. Leftist groups, originating in Europe, flourished in Morocco beginning in the mid-1920s. By 1936 the socialist leaning Moroccan Union of Muslims and Jews had been founded, a sign of the growing importance of leftist organizations in the Moroccan political spectrum. When France fell to Germany in 1940, the French Communist Party (PCF) chose solidarity with France over its internationalist obligations,

requiring the Maghribi Communist parties to fight for the common cause against Fascism and put independence ambitions on hold. Vichy rule brought anti-Semitic legislation to the majority of North African Jews, inspiring many in the immediate post-war generation to reject France's vision of republican assimilation. The national liberation parties of the Maghrib, in practice, if not on paper, often espoused an Arab nationalist platform informed by Islam. Betrayed by French republicanism and unconvinced by Zionism, many Maghribi Jews expressed their patriotism through Communism. The 1950s through the early 1970s were the apex of Communist Jewish political participation in the Maghrib and the height of migration to Israel or France. Emanating from Moscow and refracted through the PCF to Morocco and beyond, this project not only looks at ideologies and populations in transit, but also their transformation in new national and international contexts.

The dissertation of Alma Rachel Heckman is approved.

James L. Gelvin

David N. Myers

Susan Slyomovics

Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Lynne Carol Pettler and James Joseph Heckman, who (perhaps unwittingly) ushered me into the family business. I am grateful for years of editing help, criticism, and a life begun surrounded by books.

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## Acknowledgments

In a sense, this project has been in the making since I took my first French class at the age of eight. Without that French class, I would not have learned about the Francophone world, the world of French empire. Without that, I most likely would not have studied Arabic, which in turn developed my interest in Hebrew. It seems fitting, then, to begin by thanking my language teachers, for they have given me the most essential tools in order, as the sociologist Abdelkébir Khatibi put it, to engage in a “pensée autre” – another mode of thinking, another means of engaging in texts, narratives, and discourses.<sup>1</sup> In rough chronological order, I thank my most influential language teachers, starting with my French teachers: Mme Vicki Schneider-Ehsan; M. Charles R. Fowler and M. Steven Farver of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. At Wellesley College, I was fortunate enough to study Modern Standard Arabic and literatures of the Maghrib with Professor Rachid Aadnani – he formed a loyal Moroccanist cadre. At UCLA, I continued my Hebrew studies with Professor Yona Sabar.

The tools of language permit a kind of bathing, plunging in literature and the worlds contained therein. The earliest form of this project was an undergraduate dissertation I wrote at Wellesley College and submitted in 2009, under the direction of Professor Anjali Prabhu of the French and Francophone Studies department. That thesis, entitled “Le thème de l’exil dans la pensée maghrébine de 1948 à nos jours: perspectives comparatives arabes et juives de l’exil dans la littérature francophone de l’Afrique du Nord,” was an early opening into the research questions addressed in this dissertation, concerning exile, alienation, and the wonderful problematic of Arab Jewish trajectories. I thank Professor Prabhu for her patience with me, encouragement, and

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<sup>1</sup> Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Maghreb Pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1983).

for introducing me to a wealth of Francophone texts (novels, theory, films), including Abdelkébir Khatibi's notion of a "pensée autre." Those discussions, questions and texts form the foundations of this dissertation's architecture.

Albert Memmi's semi-autobiographical memoir *La Statue de sel* ("The Pillar of Salt") was the lynchpin for my transition from the literature discipline to that of history.<sup>2</sup> I am deeply indebted to Professor Frances Malino of Wellesley College's history department for introducing me to Memmi and to the wide and fascinating world of Jewish life in North Africa and the Middle East. Her continued collaboration, mentorship and encouragement have been vital to this project. Professor Malino guided my research questions during my Fulbright year in Morocco (AY 2009-2010) and put me in touch with the Diarna geo-museum and digital heritage mapping project directors Jesse Sage and Jason Guberman-Pfeffer. I am thankful to them for suggesting sites for me to document for the project, notably the Vichy camps along Morocco's eastern border with Algeria, as well as putting me in touch with Zhor Rehilil of the Moroccan Jewish Heritage Foundation and many others. I am grateful to Zhor and of course the late Simon Lévy for allowing me access to the museum's archives and introducing me to the vibrancy of ongoing Moroccan efforts to preserve the country's Jewish heritage.

Meeting Simon Lévy (1934 – 2011) in the fall of 2009 was the first time I met a Moroccan Jewish Communist, someone whose Moroccan and Jewish identities were mutually constitutive. His anecdotes, personal papers and perspective on the Moroccan Jewish past perfuse this dissertation. His wife, Encarnacion Lévy, and their two children, Jean and Jacques Lévy, were extraordinarily generous in granting me access to their personal archives, photographs and

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<sup>2</sup> Albert Memmi, *La Statue de sel* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966).

memories. While writing this dissertation, I regret to say that Encarnacion Lévy passed away. In editing, I realized I had written about her in the first chapter in the present tense; by the final chapter, she was, as is said in French, *éteint* (“extinguished,” as a flame). I spent two months with her in Casablanca between December 2013 and January 2014, perusing her husband’s library, personal archives, newspapers and political ephemera. We spent hours discussing her life, her perspective on the events that so often only record the deeds of famous men. As with so many women in history, her name does not appear in the archives. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to hear her stories first hand, and to perpetuate that voice in this research.

None of this would have been written without my advisor and committee chair Professor Sarah Abrevaya Stein. She has been the most thorough, supportive and inspiring of mentors. Over the past five years she has helped mold every question, every angle of this project, most importantly its trans-national emplotment and perspective on citizenship. I am eternally grateful for her many edits of this dissertation, of the conference papers and grant applications that enabled it, and all of the conversations that framed my fundamental research questions and focused them in a productive direction. I am similarly indebted to my committee members, in alphabetical order: Professors James L. Gelvin, Susan Gilson Miller, David N. Myers, and Susan Slyomovics. Whether from the angle of Modern Middle Eastern history, Modern Jewish history, Modern Maghribi history, anthropology, intellectual history, oral history, or cultural history, each has been incredibly generous with their time, mental catalogue, and most importantly, questions and criticism. I look forward to continuing the conversation.

I thank the following organizations for their financial support of this project, in chronological order: the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grant through UCLA's Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES); the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) Roter and Ralph and Sarah Monkarsh fellowships; the Takiff Family Foundation at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies; the American Academy for Jewish Research; the UCLA CJS Bluma Appel Fellowship; the UCLA International Institute International Fieldwork Fellowship and the Posen Society of Fellows. I am thankful to the directors and staff members of each of these institutions. At a time when funding for academic research in nearly every discipline is limited, I am highly aware of and grateful for such generosity and commitment to intellectual projects.

Similarly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the directors, researchers and staff members of the following archives in order of country. France: CADN -- Centre des Archives Politiques de Nantes (in particular Sandrine Mansour-Mérien); ANOM -- Archives nationales d'outre mer, Aix en Provence; PCF Archives -- Les archives départementales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris (in particular Pierre Boichu); the Archives de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle (in particular Rose Lévyne); and the Police Archives -- Les Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris. In Morocco: Archives du Maroc (in particular Professor Jamaâ Baïda); the Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc (in particular Myriem Khrouz). In Israel: CZA – Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (in particular Rochelle Rubinstein); JDC – Joint Distribution Archives, Jerusalem (in particular Beer Shachar); and CAHJP – Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem (in particular Yochai Ben-Ghedalia). In the United States of America: USHMM – Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC (in particular Leah

Wolfson, Emil Kerenji, Steven Feldman and Ronald Coleman); and NARA – National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

I am deeply thankful to the directors and staff members of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (MACECE), notably James Miller, for their help during and after my Fulbright year. Hadley Porter and Eboni Shaw in the history department of UCLA provided unquantifiable support and tolerated repeat emails over questions they had probably already answered. In addition to more formal, institutionalized lines of support, this project has benefited from the advice, archival contributions, recommendations and questions from the following scholars, researchers and activists (in alphabetical order): Ismaïl Alaoui; Sion Assidon; André Azoulay; Anis Balafrej; Ralph Benarosh; Orit Bashkin; Samir Ben-Layachi; David Biale; Yigal Bin-Nun; Aomar Boum; Lia Brozgal; Paris Papamichos Chronakis; Michelle Hungtingford Craig; Mohamed Dellal; Emily Benichou Gottreich; Olivia Harrison; Mohammed Hatimi; Ethan Katz; Mohammed Kenbib; Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani; Jessica Maya Marglin; Tony Michels; Aviad Moreno; Vanessa Paloma; Kendra Salois; Joshua Schreier; Daniel Schroeter; Simon Skira; David Stenner; Lior Sternfeld; Kathy Wazana; Fahd Yata; and Orit Yekutieli. In this vein, I am grateful to the Ph.D. students in Jewish history at UCLA whose trajectories have intersected with my own: Michael Casper; Rachel Deblinger; Talia Graff; Liora Halperin; Lindsay King; Nadav Molchadsky; Anat Mooreville; Jason Lustig; and Chris Silver.

Coffee shop writing support, archive solidarity, editing help, travel companionship, and untold casual discussions have informed this project. In alphabetical order I would like to thank: Ceren Abi; Samuel Anderson; Vanessa Arslanian; Reem Bailony; Roi Ball; Constance Pâris de

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A brief note on translations and transliterations: transliterations of Arabic follow the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) guidelines. I use the Library of Congress system for transliterating Hebrew. I have left names and many Moroccan place names transliterated according to the French military transliteration standards as they were recorded in the archives. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

## Alma Rachel Heckman

### EDUCATION

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA): MA June 2012; CPhil December 2012.

Awards: Chancellor's Prize to support summer research 2011 and 2012, FLAS grant to study Hebrew summer 2011, UCLA Center for Jewish Studies Roter Research Travel Grant summer 2012, Takiff Family Foundation Fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum fall 2013, American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) travel fellowship summer 2013, Ralph and Sarah Monkarsch Graduate Fellowship travel grant summer 2013, UCLA Center for Jewish Studies Bluma Appel Fellowship for AY 2013-2014, UCLA International Institute International Fieldwork Fellowship for AY 2013-2014, Posen Society of Fellows award for 2014-2016.

Dissertation Title: "Radical Nationalists: Moroccan Jewish Communists 1925-1975"

Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA: B.A., Magna Cum Laude, June 2009. Middle Eastern Studies and French.

Awards: Fulbright Fellowship to Morocco 2009-2010, Critical Language Enhancement Award 2009-2010, Jacqueline Krieger Klein Fellowship in Jewish Studies 2010, Rhodes Scholarship Finalist, Nathalie Buchet-Ritchev Scholarship, Center for Work and Service Volunteering Grant, First-Year Distinction.

Undergraduate Honors Thesis: "Le thème de l'exil dans la pensée maghrébine de 1948 à nos jours: perspectives comparatives arabes et juives de l'exil dans la littérature francophone de l'Afrique du Nord"

### PUBLICATIONS

"Packed in Twelve Cases: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair" with Frances Malino in *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture Society* 19, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 53-69.

"Edmond El Maleh". The Literary Encyclopedia. 18 April 2013.  
[<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=13227>]

Several translations from French to English in Julia Phillips Cohen and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, eds., *Sephardi Lives: A Documentary History of the Ottoman Judeo-Spanish World & Its Diaspora, 1700-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

## SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

“Un parcours immobile? La participation politique des juifs du Maroc au seuil de l’indépendance,” presented at the annual Séminaire des doctorants / Histoire des Juifs en Europe après 1945, presented at SciencesPo’s Centre d’histoire in Paris, France, May 2015.

“Beneficiaries and Benefactors: the Refugee Crises and Moroccan Safe Haven,” presented at the 46<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) in Baltimore, MD, December 2014.

“Vichy Rule as Catalyst: Moroccan Jewish Political Participation and the Development of the Moroccan Communist Party,” presented at the 48<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Washington, DC, November 2014. Also panel organizer.

“Edmond Amran El Maleh: Jewish Nationalists and the Moroccan Communist Party,” presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in New Orleans, LA, October 2013. Also panel organizer.

“Radical (Inter)Nationalists: Spanish Civil War, French Colonialism and Moroccan Jewish Communists,” presented at “Historical Geographies of Internationalism (1900s-1960s)” the Royal Geographic Society – Institute of British Geographers annual conference, London, United Kingdom, August 2013.

“Morocco 1940-1942: Vichy Rule as Catalyst for Jewish Political Participation,” presented at the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), Chicago, IL, December 2012.

“Palimpsests and Pariahs: Unexplored Interactions between the Moroccan Communist Party and the Black Panther Party in Algeria,” presented at “1962, a World” CRASC-CEMA, Oran, Algeria, October 2012.

“Exile as Process: Moroccan Jewish Political Possibilities Before Independence,” presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century French & Francophone Studies International Colloquium: Crossings, Frictions, Fusions, Long Beach, CA, February 2012.

## TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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2011-2013

## LANGUAGES

FRENCH: Fluent; MODERN STANDARD ARABIC: Advanced; HEBREW: Advanced;  
SPANISH: Advanced; LADINO: Intermediate; LATIN: Advanced



Introduction:  
Three Conscious Pariahs

In his first novel, Edmond Amran El Maleh buried the last Moroccan Jew. Elsewhere he quipped: “writing is literally death itself.”<sup>3</sup> In the Ben M’Sik cemetery of Casablanca, two more Jews are buried – Simon Lévy (1934-2011) and Abraham Serfaty (1926-2010) – both former militants in the Moroccan Communist Party (PCM). El Maleh (1917-2010), too, had been a leading figure in the PCM; he is buried in Essaouira, the city he called home on Morocco’s southern Atlantic coast. It is unclear what El Maleh meant exactly when he wrote that “writing is literally death itself” – perhaps he wondered if his work, so much of which commemorates the Moroccan Jewish past, was in effect a communal epitaph.

These three men represent a neglected Moroccan, regional and trans-national story in modern Jewish history: they were Moroccan Jews who fought for the national liberation of their country from France. They flatly rejected Zionism as a form of imperialism, and placed their Moroccan identities and allegiances above their Jewish backgrounds. The main national liberation party, *Istiqlal* (“Independence” in Arabic) was predicated on Islam as a credo for Moroccan independence (achieved in 1956). The Moroccan Communist Party was the most potent, viable means of political activism for Moroccan Jews interested in the national liberation struggle from France. The interwar period witnessed an efflorescence of political affiliations and ideologies available to Moroccan Jews.

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<sup>3</sup>Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit* (Paris: Maspero, 1983), p. 16.

When the Second World War broke out and France capitulated to Germany in 1940, the anti-Semitic Vichy regime and its attendant legislation was applied not only in France but also in France's colonies, Morocco included. This experience, during which Moroccan Jews often lost their property, homes, jobs and educational opportunities, served to galvanize the Moroccan Jewish community into political action. In the post-war period, the wide variety of political options available to Jews began to narrow as the mainstream national liberation movement, predicated on Islam, gained ground and the modern state of Israel was established in 1948.

In the broadest strokes, Moroccan Jews faced an increasingly stark political choice: depart or remain, Zionism, Communism or Gallicization/Assimilation in France. In either trajectory, Jews were the active architects of their political destinies. In the struggle for national liberation from France, achieved in 1956, Moroccan Jews were generally attracted to the Moroccan Communist Party as it welcomed religious and ethnic minorities in a more inclusive, universalist understanding of the potential independent Moroccan nation. After independence, the decades that followed were ones of intense political repression of any opposition party, and co-optation of others, in the context of two failed coups d'état and numerous uprisings. Meanwhile, Moroccan Jews left the country in record numbers, primarily for Israel, as anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism were increasingly conflated on the street, if not in the press. Events in Israel, notably the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1967 war and the 1973 war, all exacerbated tensions for the Moroccan Jewish community in a regional context of Nasserism and pan-Arabism.

As tensions mounted within the left, leading to fracture and rancor, Jews on the left in Morocco no longer represented a united front. Some, such as Simon Lévy, remained in the intermittently legal form of the Communist Party; others such as Abraham Serfaty, divorced from what they saw as a sclerotic, co-opted party and formed far leftist groups like Ila al-Amam (“Forward” in Arabic); others still, such as El Maleh, quietly left Morocco and leftist politics altogether. Each of these stories across the 1920s-1970s amounts to a composite image of another, possible, Morocco and its Jewish community.

This is the story of a minority of a minority – of politically motivated Moroccan Jews in a party outside the Moroccan mainstream. Their voices speak loudly, however, and disrupt common understandings of the modern history of North Africa and the Middle East as well as modern Jewish history. Scholars of the Middle East and North Africa have only relatively recently begun looking at minority stories in the region; scholars of modern Jewish history have only within the last thirty years or so begun to include North African and Middle Eastern Jewries in what has typically been a European enterprise. This work sits at the crossroads of several fields and contributes differently to all of them. Several historical planes intersect within each chapter of this study and are mutually constitutive: one can have neither a full history of Morocco without Jews nor Jewish history without examining Jewish patriotism in North Africa and the Middle East. Very few Jews remain in Morocco (generous estimates hover between 2,000 and 5,000), and the Communist Party, while legal in the form of the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS), is largely ineffectual in Morocco’s political spectrum. However, these minority, universalist and deeply Moroccan Jewish voices illuminate a great deal from the margins.

In her 1944 essay “The Jew as Pariah: a Hidden Tradition,” Hannah Arendt argues for the category of a “conscious pariah.”<sup>4</sup> Writing in the final years of the Second World War, Arendt, a European Jewish refugee herself, grimly reflected on the failure of the emancipation of European Jewry. Arendt utilizes a discussion of Bernard Lazare and French Jewry around the time of the Dreyfus Affair to illustrate this point. According to Lazare, if Jews were pariahs in European society, they would be better served as “conscious” pariahs of society and work against the Jewish *parvenu* – the typically bourgeois, successfully assimilated Jew – as well as oppressive social structures for an eventual “admission of Jews *as Jews* to the ranks of humanity, rather than a permit to ape the gentiles or an opportunity to play the *parvenu*.”<sup>5</sup> Further, Arendt argues, “However much the Jewish pariah might be, from the historical viewpoint, the product of an unjust dispensation [...] politically speaking, every pariah who refused to be a rebel was partly responsible for his own position and therewith for the blot on mankind which it represented.”<sup>6</sup> It is here where the notion of the conscious pariah is most clearly applicable to Jewish members of the Moroccan Communist Party.

This dissertation examines how Moroccan Jews envisioned themselves participating as citizens in a newly independent Morocco, and how Communism allowed their participation in Morocco’s national liberation struggle. It is at once a deeply Moroccan story and inherently transnational – the historical characters and ideological currents range from Brazil, Spain, France, Algeria, Senegal, Ghana, the United States, Israel, the former USSR and China. I pursue two main sets of questions. The first set of questions addresses why Jews were drawn to the Communist party,

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<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 6, no. 2 (April 1944), pp. 99-122.

<sup>5</sup> Arendt, p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> Arendt, p. 109.

and the second set questions how Jewish participation in Communist circles evolved over time. For example, what motivated Jews to join the Communist party, rather than the prevailing *Istiqlal* or Zionist movements? What happened to those radicalized Moroccan Jews who remained in Morocco, and their relationships to those who left? How did Moroccan leftist Jews negotiate between their multiple identities and communal allegiances? To what extent might the fluctuations of Moroccan Jewish political participation be mapped against the fluctuations of the PCM, and within the story of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century Morocco as a whole? These questions prompt an exploration of sources that have been largely overlooked, both broadly by historians and in conjunction with one another. The subject itself compels me to move across historical geographies, thereby interrupting often triumphalist nationalist narratives that exclude Jewish and Communist participation. The subject of Jewish involvement in the PCM and allied organizations relates not just to the local, but to the global as well. It speaks to broader questions of emancipation and citizenship on which Jewish historians have worked in many geographic and temporal contexts in addition to questions of decolonization and national liberation movements discussed in the Middle East field.

This study crosses the borders of the Second World War, the Cold War, Third Worldist and colonial histories and evokes methodologies from anthropology, cultural history and comparative literature. It eschews nationalist teleologies, rejecting a narrative of an “inevitable” Moroccan Jewish exodus while recovering a moment of Jewish nationalism through a Communist lens. I suggest that peering through this Communist lens in Morocco reveals a unique Moroccan Jewish Communist social universe, extending through the PCF, the PCM and other Moroccan leftist groups allied with the PCM. Studying Jewish radical political and social organization in

Morocco reveals the porous, transnational and vexed colonial relationships of Maghribi Jews to nationalist independence movements and the purportedly internationalist Comintern while shedding light on larger questions of Jewish visions of radical citizenship and national identity. Biography and oral history play a crucial role in lending a human voice to a subject that could otherwise be so easily abstracted. I follow specific leftists, their families and friends, their contacts, modes and places of organization as they changed from the 1920s through the early 1970s. I use these bookends for Jewish involvement in Moroccan nationalist politics for two reasons. First, the 1920s witnessed the beginning of Communist and broader nationalist political engagement in Morocco, including Jews. Second, the 1970s entailed intense political repression that resulted in the fracturing of political opposition as most Moroccan Jews left the country. These stories serve to negotiate the tensions between a particularist and universalist movement for national independence and global Communism, as well as Jewish political and social identity in a changing, charged Maghribi political atmosphere.

For Arendt's pariahs and parvenus, the main threats were "destruction" either by way of the assimilated (albeit always precariously) *parvenu* or the neglected pariah. For the Jewish members of the Moroccan Communist Party the threats were largely Zionism and Alliancism – after the French education and acculturation offered by the Alliance Israélite Universelle school network – both of which served to divorce Moroccan Jews from Moroccan Muslims, and thwarted integration into a common Moroccan nation. There are striking similarities between the motivations of leftist Jews in this North African context and that of European Jewry a few decades earlier. In both cases, socialist movements invoked rhetoric of liberation from

oppressors, a vision of justice, and often utopian universalism. As Jewish involvement in socialist movements in Eastern Europe involved an uneasy relationship with non-Jewish socialist leaders, Jewish socialists in North Africa were beholden to the French Communist party, unsure of whether to break or ally with a power that might work against their interests. This was only one of a myriad of dilemmas facing Jewish socialists in Eastern Europe, hardly a monolithic group, ranging from Socialist Zionists to Bolsheviks and inspiring much internecine political squabbling.

Such a comparison between North Africa and Eastern Europe remains to be written, but an initial examination reveals similar tensions for Jewish groups facing nationalism, modernity, and oppressive political powers, albeit in different chronologies. For Eastern Europe and the United States these formative years took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while in North Africa the chronology spans the 1920s-1970s.<sup>7</sup> As Tony Michels concludes his book *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York*: “If the Yiddish socialists and their descendants failed to achieve their largest goals and dreams, the questions they posed – Who are we? What is a just society? How might we achieve it? – remain forceful and relevant for Jews and all Americans.”<sup>8</sup> The same questions could be raised in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century North Africa and its struggles with decolonization, as well as Jewish participation therein.

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<sup>7</sup> For Eastern and Central Europe in particular, the chronology extends into the nineteenth century. For example, see: Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, trans. Chaya Naor, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labor Bund in Poland, 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood. (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2003); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jonathan M. Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Edmund Silberner, *Western European Socialism and the Jewish Problem (1800-1918): A Selective Bibliography* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Press, 1955); Michael Stanislawski *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983); Robert S. Wistrich *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 259.

This study also contributes to a body of historical work concerning Leftist political agitation in North Africa and the Middle East. Joel Beinin's *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* highlights the heterogeneity of early and mid-twentieth century Egypt, as well as that within Egyptian Jewish communities. Beinin cites this heterogeneity as both a factor of strength and "demise" of Egyptian Jewry, going against the grain of Zionist narratives that would homogenize and authenticate this population for its own historical purposes, as well as against neo-lachrymose representations of the Sephardic and Mizrahi world.<sup>9</sup> While most Egyptian Jews were apolitical, concerned with "business" and "sporting clubs," Beinin writes: "Zionist nationalist and Communist internationalism, which was in practice the left wing of the Egyptian nationalist movement, were both strategies for resolving the contradictions of being Jewish in Egypt."<sup>10</sup> Here is the point at which the stories of Morocco and Egypt overlap: those Moroccan Jews who were politicized tended to join Leftist organizations in a bid to reconcile nationalism and Jewish identity. A comparative view of Egyptian and Israeli Communist parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Beinin's *Was the Red Flag Flying There?* delineates the variety of Egyptian Communist movements and Jewish membership therein and the ethno-nationalistic troubles incited by Jewish access to French education. As the conflict ground on, Beinin argues, suspicion of Communists became conflated with suspicion of Jews and rhetoric conflating "Jew" with "Zionist" became more common.<sup>11</sup> Orit Bashkin's work on Jewish involvement in the Iraqi Communist Party, notably *New Babylonians: a History of Jews in Modern Iraq* as well as *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture*

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<sup>9</sup> Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Cairo: the American University in Cairo Press, 2005), pp. 6 and 15.

<sup>10</sup> Beinin 2005, p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co LTD Publishers, 1990), p. 110.



*in Hashemite Iraq*, offers the most direct comparison to the Moroccan case. In Iraq the story has a much more dramatic arc – Jews were involved in the Communist Party in much higher numbers than in Morocco, and were comparatively more prominent. The stakes for them with regard to the Israel/Palestine conflict, as well as Iraq’s own particular mandate and independence story, made the Iraqi Jewish political past somewhat more turbulent and much more violent than that of Morocco. Yet, this commitment to an Arab-Jewish and universalist identity/ideologies crosses the region of North Africa and the Middle East, bridging the contexts of Eastern Europe and the Americas as well. Such stories complement the comparative perspective of Eastern Europe in considering the motivations of Jews in Egypt, Iraq, Eastern Europe, France or North Africa for joining Communist organizations. These comparisons, while not the focus of this study, raise the question of common motivations, common bodies of literature, and how, if at all, these diverse Jewish leftists considered or related to one another.

In the realm of Moroccan scholarship, Mohammed Kenbib’s magisterial *Juifs et Musulmans au Maroc: 1859-1948* gives the most comprehensive narrative of Jewish participation in Moroccan political life in the twentieth century. Kenbib draws upon a host of sources, significantly newspapers such as *Le Maroc Socialiste*, *L’Espoir*, *Ar-Ra’i al-‘Am* as well as the post-independence *al-Wifaq*, to construct his account of Jewish political engagement. As in Beinun’s account, Kenbib argues that Socialist and Communist movements were more appealing to Jews than *Istiqlal* given the inclusive avoidance of ethno-confessional nationalism.<sup>12</sup> Kenbib cites Vichy rule and the stripping of Jewish rights, as well as the over-crowding of the *mellahs* (historic Jewish quarter), as a tipping point into nationalist movements away from French

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<sup>12</sup> Mohammed Kenbib, *Juifs et Musulmans au Maroc: 1859-1948* (Rabat: Université Mohammed V, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1994), p. 663.

sympathies, as well as the founding of Israel as a catalyst for future separation between Moroccan Muslims and Moroccan Jews.<sup>13</sup> As with Beinun, Kenbib notes the accelerating conflation of “Jew” and “Zionist” in Morocco, leading to anti-Zionist rhetoric. This transformed into anti-Jewish boycotts and violence, compounded by Morocco’s support of the Arab League. By independence in 1956 and despite *Istiqlal* and *al-Wifaq*’s efforts of inclusion, as well as the abolition of *dhimmi*<sup>14</sup> status (upon independence) and other legal gains for Jews, 90,000 Moroccan Jews had already voted with their feet.<sup>15</sup> John P. Halstead’s *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism* complements Kenbib’s broad scope by focusing on the development of the *Istiqlal* and its interactions – typically antagonistic – with the PCM. Work by Susan Gilson Miller, Aomar Boum, Daniel Schroeter, Emily Gottreich, Yaron Tsur, Haïm Zafrani, Jamâa Baïda, Susan Slyomovics and many, many more has established the historiographical structures to which I hope to contribute one more insight. This study interacts with these diffuse literatures, combining themes and subjects not typically considered together into a coherent narrative. While socialist or anarchist movements may no longer have much currency in either Eastern Europe or North Africa and the Middle East, scholars must examine such movements understanding them in their time, avoiding the teleologies of hindsight. This project contributes to this broad set of historiographical questions, as well as those closer to Morocco. It is at once trans-national and deeply local.

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<sup>13</sup> Kenbib, p. 595.

<sup>14</sup> “Protected” status of “People of the Book,” namely Jews and Christians, in those lands where Muslim law was predominant. According to this law, Jews and Christians were to pay a unique poll-tax, called the *jizya* in Arabic, and were subject to a host of other clothing, living, and construction restrictions that were enforced to a greater or lesser extent depending on one’s historical, geographic and political context.

<sup>15</sup> Kenbib, p. 708.

The chapters that follow elucidate the waxing and waning of Moroccan Jewish political engagement following four increments: the interwar period, the Second World War/Vichy period, the struggle for national liberation (roughly 1945-1961 – independence was achieved in 1956), and finally, the post-independence period of repression known as the Years of Lead. Each of these chapters will examine Jewish agency in a corner of the world where Jews have been so often represented as the passive subjects of colonialism and Zionism. Chapter One, entitled “Growth of the Left in Morocco, Demographic Upheaval and Jewish Reactions” focuses on the roots of the Communist party through labor unions and leftist organizing in Morocco during the 1920s and 1930s. Such political efflorescence was rooted in the industrialization of Casablanca in the 1920s and expansive infrastructure projects, notably the railway and mining industries, across French controlled Morocco. In the same time period, Moroccan Jews and Muslims were migrating from rural Morocco to Casablanca and other burgeoning cities. This movement put them in touch with the Spanish, Italian and French workers in Moroccan labor unions. The chapter weaves a tale of industrialization, union activism and demographic shifts alongside the story of the PCF's support of Abd el-Krim's rebellion in the middle of the 1920s. Finally, it addresses contemporaneous Zionist efforts to reach Moroccan Jews.

The second chapter, entitled “The Vichy Years and the Politicization of Moroccan Jewry” examines the Vichy years and the effects of anti-Semitic legislation on Morocco's Jewish population. In addition to the political galvanization of Moroccan Jews, it looks at European Jews and political prisoners in Morocco's labor camps. The efforts of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and other American philanthropic initiatives to assist refugees dovetailed with the reestablishment of Communist politics (the Communist Party of Morocco was banned under

Vichy) as the Moroccan Communist Party in 1943 by Léon René Sultan, an Algerian born Jewish lawyer based in Casablanca. Sultan had suffered greatly as a result of Vichy laws and lobbied Protectorate officials both for his rights and those of his fellow Jews. After the American landing, he worked with the JDC on behalf of refugees, most notably the Communist political prisoners interned in the labor camps. The chapter concludes with Léon Sultan's death in 1945 and a story from one of the oral histories I gathered of Jews -- and many others -- attending Sultan's funeral cortège in the streets of Casablanca.

Chapter three, “The Rights and Obligations of Divorce: Jews and Moroccan Independence” picks up after the death of Léon Sultan and addresses the Moroccanization of the PCM. As explored in the first chapter, Communist and leftist engagement in Morocco began as a primarily European affair. Ali Yata came to be secretary general of the PCM after Sultan's death, surrounded by French members in the Central Committee. While Yata was perhaps the most prominent, many other Jews and Muslims joined the PCM in this immediate post-war period. France had been demonstrably weakened by the war, and the PCM as well as other liberation groups, most prominently Istiqlal, began to organize more intensively. This chapter explores the PCM's evolution into a national liberation party, its shift in membership, and its competition with Istiqlal. It concludes by addressing (urban) Jewish communal attitudes to this struggle and the available marketplace for political ideas and ideologies, including the accelerating popularity of Zionism. As Jews began to leave Morocco for Israel, those Jews who were members of the PCM entrenched themselves in national liberation politics. Included in this chapter is the fatefully violent year of 1952 which saw bloodily suppressed popular protests (at the heart lay Union activists). This prompted Protectorate officials to exile most of the Central Committee's

European leaders as well as Abraham Serfaty and his sister, Evelyne, to France in attempt to diffuse the situation. The chapter ends on an optimistic note, with the al-Wifaq organization in 1956 celebrating Jewish-Muslim political victories and the future of the Moroccan state. This cautious euphoria, however, was short lived.

Chapter Four, “Absence and Counter-Narratives: The Years of Lead and the Moroccan Jewish Exodus” discusses the failed hopes of national liberation as an increasingly authoritarian regime cracked down on political opposition.<sup>16</sup> As the *makhzan* (the Moroccan Arabic term for the Sultan/King’s authority) strengthened its power, Jews began to leave in accelerating numbers. The chapter includes the Arabization of the Moroccan Judicial system, the clandestine movement of the PCM, and the anti-Jewish activity surrounding the Suez crisis, exploring the stumblings of the PCM into first the Party of Liberation and Socialism (PLS), then finally the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) in its ultimate domestication by the *makhzan*. During this process, a rift between Simon Lévy and Abraham Serfaty split communist activism into a pacified, legal version and a far-left, Marxist-Leninist party (Ila al-Amam). In this period, two trajectories prevailed for Jewish leftists in Morocco: working with the regime, or revolutionary aspirations against it. In addition to this split, the chapter interweaves the effects of the Israeli 1967 and 1973 October wars in Morocco, further pushing Moroccan Jews to leave. The 1975 Green March (in which the *makhzan* laid claim and marched into Western Sahara) concludes the chapter, an event that constituted another profound split in the Moroccan left. Regime change in Morocco in the late 1990s upon the death of King Hassan II and the ascension of King Mohammed VI to the throne end this study. The late 1990s and early 2000s were witness to a Moroccan Truth and

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<sup>16</sup> The phrase “Years of Lead” (Arabic *Sanawat al-Rusas*, French *les Années de Plomb*) refers to the period from 1960s through the 1980s, under King Hassan II of Morocco. This period involved intense political oppression, “disappearances” of political actors and two attempted coups d’état.

Reconciliation Committee. As a result, the conscious pariahs, those Jewish members of the Moroccan Communist Party and its many iterations, were transformed into national heroes. By that point, however, the vast majority of Moroccan Jews were dispersed between Israel, France and Canada. According to most in these diaspora communities, the Moroccan Communist Jews are still considered pariahs, more likely to cause trouble than anything else.

All of this initiated from a deceptively simple question. I traveled to Morocco for the first time in September 2009 – I was to remain there for nine months on a Fulbright grant exploring any vague aspect of Jewish life in Morocco that interested me. I traveled across the country, photographing endless synagogues, cemeteries, community centers and Vichy labor camps. Most often, these lieux de mémoire were cared for by Moroccan Muslims, and when I chatted with the caretakers about the sites I noticed a consistent, revealing vocabulary choice. The caretakers, and many others I met with in Morocco during that year, distinguished “Moroccan” from “Jew,” as if they were not one and the same. “Moroccan” was never qualified by “Muslim” and “Jew” was never qualified by “Moroccan” – and I began to wonder why this was. Morocco is over 95% Muslim, and the underpinnings of the modern Moroccan state rely on a monarchy imbued with deeply religious significance – clearly most Moroccans are and have been Muslim. But the subtle vocabulary selection, used by Moroccan Muslims and Jews alike, intrigued me as I heard and read endless narratives of the Moroccan Jewish past over the course of those nine months.

This initial question gave rise to further questions still when I met someone who defined himself very much as Moroccan above all, whose Jewishness enabled his Moroccanness and vice versa. I first met Simon Lévy in the fall of 2009 – over the course of the nine months or so that I

volunteered at the Casablanca based Moroccan Jewish Museum and Foundation (founded and run by Lévy until his death in 2011), I heard snippets of his activism and his deeply felt political beliefs. Lévy, who figures prominently in this dissertation, indeed, who inspired it, had been deeply involved in the Moroccan Communist Party and its vision for a pluralistic Morocco. He was also profoundly interested in the Jewish past of his country and had deeply invested in his Jewish identity. An educator and scholar, he wrote on Haketía – Moroccan Judeo-Spanish – as well as the Moroccan Jewish past. Through his museum and foundation, he reached out to Muslim and Jewish schools, hoping to raise interest in this shared Moroccan identity. In the wake of the 2003 Casablanca bombings that targeted several Jewish sites, Lévy redoubled his efforts. All of this cohabitated comfortably with his Communist politics and unionizing activities. I had never met someone like Lévy before, and I began to wonder how exceptional his story was.

Since my initial 2009 meeting with Lévy I have sought to contribute answers to yet another question: how did Jews envision themselves in an independent Morocco? My interactions with Lévy, his family, and other activists and scholars corroborate the somewhat dustier, more distant voices of the archives. The sources for this dissertation include archival material from Morocco, France, Israel and the United States, personal papers, oral histories, political ephemera, memoirs and fiction. All of these sources combine to combat the notion of “inevitable” Jewish exodus, shedding light instead on alternative visions for Morocco and its Jewish community. Simon Lévy was one such advocate. What unfolds, I hope, is a narrative of another, possible Morocco, envisioned by some of its greatest modern conscious pariahs. It is intended not as an epitaph, but rather a presentation of one ray of a prismatic variety of possibilities.

## Chapter 1

### Growth of the Left in Morocco, Demographic Upheaval and Jewish Reactions

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Legend has it that Encarnacion Lévy's family came to Morocco because of illiteracy. From Almeria, Spain, this poor Christian family intended to take the first boat to Latin America. Unable to read the appropriate signs, they simply got on the wrong boat and wound up on a surprisingly brief trip across the Mediterranean to Algeria. After working for some time in Algeria on various French colonial infrastructure projects, Encarnacion's family, along with many other working class families from Spain, Italy and France, earned the opportunity to work on the booming port of Casablanca in the French colonial construction network.<sup>17</sup> While Encarnacion's father worked on the port, her mother, an avid Socialist, sold horsemeat and drew the whole family into politically active networks. Encarnacion was born in Casablanca in 1926 and died there in 2015. She would marry a Jewish leader in the Moroccan Communist Party (PCM), Simon Lévy. Her older sister, Rosalie, would marry the second secretary general of the party, Ali Yata, a man of Algerian Muslim background.<sup>18</sup> These characters had their political awakenings during the Second World War, but such political awakenings were possible in the alphabet soup of political ideologies and demographic shifts in the unique Moroccan interwar context.

Stories of the Rif war, the industrialization of colonial Morocco, the Spanish Civil War, the Communist International and interwar Moroccan Jewish political engagement intertwine in a

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mme Encarnacion Lévy in her apartment in Casablanca on 12/23/13.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with M. Jean Lévy in Mme Lévy's apartment in Casablanca on 12/22/13.



tight knot of institutional, political and social histories. The history of twentieth century Morocco is cross cut with many locales and events that have not been fully explored in the historiography of this period. Existing histories of French Protectorate (1912-1956) Morocco have kept Spain marginal to the story – in this chapter it will loom much larger. While there is not a tremendous body of secondary literature about the beginnings of Leftist activism and the roots of the Communist party in Morocco, that which does exist tends to focus on the PCM as a foreign import. As this chapter will demonstrate, Communist and broadly leftist ideas in Morocco stemmed not only from France but reformulated and reinterpreted themselves among Spanish, Italian and local Moroccan (both Jewish and Muslim) workers. Thus, the story is not one of the French Communist Party (PCF) simply implanting itself in Morocco, but rather one of an active Moroccan reception amid a dynamic, constantly recalibrating urban civic society. This chapter will also show that the PCF enacted its own form of *mission civilisatrice* in Morocco and embraced aspects of the prevailing colonial, protectorate discourse. Yet, the party was quickly “domesticated” to the needs of Moroccan Jewish and Muslim revolutionaries.

The rise of the Communist Party in Morocco is inherently bound up with the industrialization of Casablanca and Morocco taking place by the docks, in the mines, and along the railroads. In addition to the workplace, the Protectorate industrialists provided housing for works often constructed in urban industrial sectors; indigenous and European workers not only labored together, they also lived together. As Casablanca and other Moroccan cities boomed with economic and labor opportunities, those Jews and Muslims who had had their traditional trades and livelihoods disrupted flocked to fill new niches within the colonial apparatus.<sup>19</sup> This tremendous demographic shift and landscape transformation gave birth to a potent marketplace

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<sup>19</sup> See Kenbib, Lévy, Lydon, Miller, Gottriech and Adam.

of ideas, for both Jews and Muslims, as they interacted with European leftists and nationalists, as well as Zionists. Further, this chapter gestures to a center-periphery model of the French Communist Party and its own kind of *mission civilisatrice* in Morocco that mirrors the relationship of Metropole Paris to its colonies. Setting this stage is crucial for an understanding of Jewish navigation among political options in twentieth century Morocco, in the context of sweeping global tumult. These sources have never before been placed in dialogue with one another as the historiography has typically embraced grand nationalist narratives, rendering colonial tales as cute footnotes for the stories of twentieth century France and Spain. On the other hand, Moroccan nationalist histories, and the story of minority politics within them, have been underdeveloped. While there has been some work on Moroccan Communism, Jews remain footnotes. Thus, the stakes for what may appear to be an “antechamber” chapter to the main question of Jewish political engagement in the national liberation movement of Morocco is critical to a number of trans-national and minority histories. This chapter puts into conversation several strands of modern historiography – Jewish, Spanish, Maghribi and Zionist – that have largely been treated in isolation. Within this historiographical background, archival materials build a macro, institutional and structural picture of interwar Morocco before the dissertation returns to a more micro level of social and cultural history, examining characters such as the Lévyys set on their national and international stage.

The structure of this chapter is one of intersecting historiographical and archival planes, building a clearer understanding of the place of Jewish political life in interwar Morocco. It will first address the rapid industrialization of French Morocco, in particular Casablanca, the construction of the port of Casablanca and national rail system, exploitation of phosphates as well as other

sources of mining wealth. With infrastructural development came new laboring populations, both from abroad (mostly France, Spain, and Italy) as well as internal rural-urban migration. The migration of new sources of labor, the disruption of historic Jewish trades, and the massive urban to rural, particularly toward Casablanca, migration of Moroccan Jews in the 1920s and 1930s all contributed to the development of labor unions and with them, leftist political agitation. The French Communist Party's activism in Morocco began contrapuntal to Casablanca's industrialization and Amir Abd el-Krim's rebellion in the Northern Spanish Rif region (addressed below). All of this serves to depict the rich landscape of political ideals and ideologies available to Moroccan Jews of the 1920s and 1930s, built on sometimes conflicting but not mutually exclusive rapports with Protectorate officials, Zionism, and leftists, enriched, in the middle of the 1930s, by Republican, and mostly Communist, refugees of the Spanish Civil War. The chapter concludes with a meditation on the range of political avenues available to Moroccan Jews, and how the Moroccan Jewish community saw itself navigating these simultaneously contradictory and complementary trajectories on the eve of the Second World War. In total, the chapter argues that the interwar period was one of vast political efflorescence for Moroccan Jews with a transnational genesis. These options, as subsequent chapters will discuss, would narrow and become increasingly mutually exclusive. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, Moroccan Jews were participants in a dynamic, constantly recombining political sphere of ideas and ideologies, all of which held both conflicting and complementary visions for the future of Moroccan Jewry.

## II. BACKGROUND AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INTERVENTION

After a long process of economic and political manoeuvring, Morocco was formally divided by treaty into two protectorates (French and Spanish) in 1912. This added another jewel to France's colonial crown of North African territories, the forging of which formally began with Algeria in 1830, followed by Tunisia in 1881. Spain received a smaller portion of territory, confined largely to the north where Spain already controlled a few enclaves as well as the enormous desert region of Western Sahara (known as Rio del Oro – this will become more important in the dissertation's final chapter).<sup>20</sup> The Mediterranean port city of Tangier, according to the terms of the protectorate treaty, would be an international zone surrounded by Spanish territory. French authorities had grand plans to build a new port to outflank the traditional shipping hub of Mogador (today Essaouira) on Morocco's Southern Atlantic coast. This new port city would be an expansion of the small fishing village of Anfa. By the 1920s, Casablanca was a boomtown of infrastructural industry, including the construction of the port, railways and stations, colonial offices, grand boulevards and more.<sup>21</sup> It attracted workers from across the Mediterranean, largely France, Spain and Italy, and catalyzed a tremendous rural-urban migration among indigenous Moroccan Jews and Muslims. This urban-rural migration was not only due to a burgeoning increase in employment opportunities; it was also a consequence of growing colonial infrastructure that disrupted overland trading routes in favor of new coastal or rail routes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Officially Spain was co-protector of Morocco, but in practice it sublet its area from France because negotiations with the Moroccan government were always conducted through the French authorities"(See Balfour, p. 39)

<sup>21</sup> See Hoisington, William A. *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails : Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 383 - 400.

Former inland Moroccan imperial capitals such as Fez, Marrakesh and Meknes suffered to the advantage of coastal cities like Casablanca and the administrative capital of Rabat.<sup>23</sup> As former routes of trade were disrupted, so were the professional opportunities of artisans, craftsmen, merchants and middlemen. The conclusion of the First World War brought a significant number of European settlers to Morocco, largely French but including Spaniards, Italians and others.<sup>24</sup> In addition to a boom of infrastructural work, Protectorate authorities founded the Sharifian<sup>25</sup> Office of Phosphates (OCP) in 1920 to exploit Morocco's wealth of this natural resource. The city of Khouribga and its environs – inland and just southeast of Casablanca – was home to an enormous wealth of phosphates.<sup>26</sup> Khouribga mining operations became one of the Protectorate's most lucrative enterprises.<sup>27</sup> Access to the mines and shipping the phosphates required reliable rail links to Casablanca and an army of workers. As Susan Gilson Miller has noted, “the Khouribga mines readily responded to rising world demand for phosphates (thirty-three thousand tons exported in 1921, nearly two million tons in 1930).”<sup>28</sup> European miners were, predictably, paid at a higher rate than Moroccans; and unionization among Moroccans was forbidden. Despite this prohibition, Moroccan labor organizing began through fraternization with European workers. The European workers who arrived in Morocco following the First World War brought their ideological affinities with them. Moroccan branches of the French General Labor Confederation (CGT – *Confédération générale du travail*) were established, and Moroccan workers were

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<sup>23</sup> Berques, *French North Africa: The Maghrib Between Two World Wars*, trans. Jean Stewart, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> A nod to the *sharif* (in Morocco understood to be a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad – the word itself references “nobility” in Arabic), the Alawite Sultan of Morocco).

<sup>26</sup> Phosphates are used primarily for agriculture and industrial manufacturing – they also figure as common additives in food and drink as well as cleaning products.

<sup>27</sup> Miller, p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> Miller, p. 116.

increasingly drawn to them. Morocco's first labor union – the Association Générale (AG) – was founded in 1919, just two years after the Russian Revolution in 1917. Protectorate officials legally barred Moroccan workers from joining, but it would only be a matter of time before Moroccans, working alongside Europeans in the mines, became inspired and even radicalized – a profound fear of Protectorate authorities.<sup>29</sup>

As the Moroccan map became ever dotted with the tracks, pits, avenues and towers of industry, rural-urban migration accelerated. The drought of 1936-1937 parched the land and dried up rural agricultural opportunities, incentivizing many more rural Moroccans to gravitate to Casablanca and its satellite industries. Casablanca's grand boulevards and elegant syncretic Maghribi-French apartment buildings were neither affordable nor intended for Moroccan workers who formed *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) on the outskirts of the city.<sup>30</sup> Moroccan labor historian and former Communist activist Albert Ayache estimated that half of the Moroccan population of Casablanca lived in *bidonvilles* in 1934.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, Robert Montagne has described Morocco during the interwar period as “the pride of France. Lyautey [referring to General Hubert Lyautey, French Morocco's first Resident General] had ... made out of an old dominion of Islam, entombed timelessly for centuries, a modern State criss-crossed with paved roads and rail tracks.”<sup>32</sup> Railroads, ports, mines and paved roads there may have been – there were also the roots of anti-colonial, class based agitation, syndicalism, and a primed populace for radicalization.

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<sup>29</sup> Miller, p. 116.

<sup>30</sup> Miller, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> In Miller, p. 141.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Montagne et al. *Naissance du Proletariat Marocain : enquête collective exécutée de 1948 à 1950* (Paris : Peyronnet & Cie, 1950), p. 9.

Spain's rump protectorate in Northern Morocco (as well as the phosphate rich Saharan zones to the south) became the unlikely crucible for manifold nationalist struggles in the 1920s. These bloodlettings included the Riffian War (1920-1926), the Spanish Civil war (1936-1939), the Moroccan nationalist struggle and to some extent, the Second World War. The nineteenth century brought a long string of territorial losses to Spain's empire and independence for Spanish territories in the Americas. The "First Moroccan Crisis" or "Tangier Crisis" (an imperial territorial squabble between Germany, France, Britain and Spain initiated by Kaiser Wilhelm II's landing in Tangier and meeting with Sultan Abdulazziz) in spring 1905 to spring 1906 resulted in the Treaty of Algeciras, after the eponymous Andalusian Spanish city. The 1906 treaty established the State Bank of Morocco and entrenched European control over state finances, as well as a détente of control between Britain, Germany, France and Spain. Spain's army was necessarily much reduced from its former imperial grandeur, active only in Morocco aside from "an existence of provincial garrisons" on the eve of the First World War.<sup>33</sup> In this much emasculated state, "for Spanish officers keen on promotion, service in Morocco promised real soldiering far from the boredom of barrack life at home. An '*africanista*' mystique developed, making them the elite of the Spanish armed forces."<sup>34</sup>

Francisco Franco, future general and dictator of Spain, was one of these soldiers. Franco entered the Spanish military academy in 1907, one year after the Treaty of Algeciras, along with a cohort of young men of the colonial Army of Africa who questioned the "moral" competence of Spain's

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<sup>33</sup> Antony Beevor. *The Battle for Spain: the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Beevor, p. 14.

leadership and sought personal advancement through Spanish regeneration.<sup>35</sup> The *Africanistas*, as these soldiers came to be known, embarked on a militaristic, violent “civilizing mission” over indigenous Moroccans.<sup>36</sup> The ideologies that justified the brutal, violent “purification” of Catholic Spain during the Spanish Civil War were formulated in North Africa.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the “reconquest” of “true” Spain originated in the “reconquest” of the Rif. As has been so often the colonial justification, “civilization became the rationalization for uncivilized behavior. [...] The assumption was that the Moroccans who opposed Spanish penetration should be killed for the good of Morocco.”<sup>38</sup> Such violent tactics were often met with opposition in the Metropole, but they continued and as will become clear during the 1920s, became more brutal. Spain’s economic and political position became weaker following the First World War when the wartime “industrial boom” busted and Spanish workers increasingly embraced the ideals of the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>39</sup>

Muhammed ibn Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi (often just referred to as “Abd el-Krim,”), a Berber *qadi* (Muslim judge) and journalist inflicted further damage on Spanish pride when he and his Riffian (so called after the Rif mountains) Berber troops handily crushed Spanish forces on July 20, 1921, in the north-eastern Moroccan town of Anwal.<sup>40</sup> Abd el-Krim’s forces were so successful against the Spanish that they were able to declare an independent –both from Spain,

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<sup>35</sup> Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain’s Civil War in Europe’s Long Twentieth Century* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Graham, p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> Graham, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Beevor, p. 15-16.

<sup>40</sup> Beevor, p. 16.



and from the Sultan in French Morocco -- Rif Republic by September of 1921. As Spanish controlled towns fell to the Riffian fighters, French Morocco and the Sultan looked with alarm at the northern upstart. In April 1925, Abd el-Krim and his troops struck within the French zone, provoking France and Spain to circle their wagons and form a military alliance.<sup>41</sup> By September 8 1925, this alliance succeeded in dealing a crushing blow to Abd el-Krim's forces. The war was brutal – chemical weapons, beheadings and grotesque violence were commonplace. One emblematic photograph from the war features soldiers hoisting the decapitated heads of Riffian soldiers, their silent grimaces in stark contrast with the gleeful smiles of the European soldiers.<sup>42</sup> Abd el-Krim surrendered on May 26, 1926 and was first exiled to the French island of Réunion (east of Madagascar) before being granted asylum in Cairo, where he later played a critical role in the development of Moroccan nationalist agitation as connected to Arab nationalist currents.

The brutality of the war coincided with ongoing events in France and Syria. These events ultimately enabled the establishment of a branch of the French Communist Party (PCF). As war raged in northern Morocco, the Great Syrian Revolt (1925-1927) also challenged French authority. Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War, the newly established League of Nations awarded France a Mandate over the territory that would become Syria and Lebanon. This matters tremendously for the development of the French Communist Party and for its subsequent engagement in North African national liberation politics. The French city of Tours hosted the 18<sup>th</sup> national congress of the French Section of the

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<sup>41</sup> Beevor, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Gruesome postcards were not unique to this war. See J. P. Daughton's talk "Wish You Were Here? Understanding Graphic Violence in Colonial Postcards, c. 1900-1940," Society for French Historical Studies Annual Conference, Los Angeles, March, 2012.

Workers' International (*Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* – SFIO) in 1920. This congress resolved a long-running debate within the French left, namely between the Communists and the Socialists, and formally established the French Communist Party (PCF) as a member of the Third International. In order to join the Third International, the PCF had to agree to adopt 21 conditions furnished by Moscow, two of which (conditions four and eight) directly addressed colonialism.<sup>43</sup> The fourth condition required the dissemination of propaganda within the military – including among indigenous soldiers in the French army as well as French soldiers, wherever they might be posted. The eighth condition is worth quoting at length:

Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a most well-defined and clear-cut policy in respect of colonies and oppressed nations. Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its “own” country, must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples.<sup>44</sup>

Historians of the PCF, as well as Moscow at the time, proved cynical regarding the PCF's commitment to the Comintern, to the revolution above national politics. Historians have criticized the PCF in that “the Communist movement in a few colonies was nothing more than an extension of the PCF in these countries” and developed unevenly, with uneven support from the

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<sup>43</sup> Jacob Moneta, *La politique du Parti communiste français dans la question coloniale, 1920-1963* (Paris : François Maspero, 1971), p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> “Terms of Admission into Communist International,” V.I. Lenin Internet Archives, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm>, (1/9/15). The text was originally published 1921 (written in July 1920) in the book *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Verbatim Report*. Published by the Communist International, Petrograd. Source for website: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 31, pp. 206-211.

Metropole, and from the PCF's own Metropole of Moscow.<sup>45</sup> One historian has summarized this suspicion quite handily: "admiration for the Russian Revolution did not necessarily mean subordination to the Russian Communist Party. Nor, it turned out, had the domestication of the PCF been easy. For if the French were the most enthusiastic Bolsheviks of 1919, they were also the most rebellious Communists of 1922."<sup>46</sup> French Communist supporters in Algeria were resistant to supporting Moscow's directives – they argued that Algeria was not prepared for independence and that Algerian liberation would result in reactionary, "dangerous" movements and not progressive Marxist policies.<sup>47</sup> This earned the PCF a stern reaction from Moscow, placing it under greater scrutiny.<sup>48</sup> In 1921, *l'Humanité* – the main organ of the PCF – appointed a propagandist for North Africa – André Julien – but while the PCF leadership was "Leninizing" progressively and following Moscow's directives, Algerian Communists remained recalcitrant.<sup>49</sup> The first Resident General of the Moroccan protectorate, General Hubert Lyautey (term in Morocco: 1912-1925), who had cut his administrative teeth in Indochina, Madagascar and Algeria, was adamantly opposed to any leftist activity in Morocco. His successor, Théodore

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<sup>45</sup> Moneta, 17. See Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 408 as well: "When the Comintern drafted an appeal for the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia in May 1922, the Algerian section of Sidi Bel Abbès replied with a memorandum requesting that its publication in Algeria be countermanded. Despite their long tradition of Leftism, the memorandum read, the Communists of the Sidi Bel Abbès section could not accept the International's colonial policy. The liberation of Algeria would be reactionary, not progressive, if it came before a victorious revolution on the mainland. The native population of North Africa was composed in major part of elements hostile to the economic, social and intellectual development necessary to enable an autonomous state to build Communism. The job of the PCF in North Africa was therefore to establish a favorable attitude toward Communism. These propositions were accepted unanimously by the Second Communist Interfederal Congress of North Africa, on December 7, 1922. The attitude of the North African Communists was that appeals to revolt and Communist propaganda among the native population would not only be premature, but dangerous. Meanwhile, the memorandum of the section of Sidi Bel Abbès had earned the French a dressing down by Trotsky at the Fourth World Congress. Communists, he said, who sustained such opinions could not be tolerated in the party for an instant. The resolution on the French question passed at the congress instructed the CD 'to devote infinitely more attention, force, and means than it heretofore has to the colonial question and to propaganda in the colonies, and, among other things, to create a permanent Bureau of Colonial Action closely related to the CD.'"

<sup>46</sup> Wohl, p. vi.

<sup>47</sup> Wohl, p. 408.

<sup>48</sup> Wohl, p. 408.

<sup>49</sup> Wohl, p. 407-8.

Steeg (term in Morocco: 1925-1929), proved more amenable.<sup>50</sup> The PCF was not legally able to establish a Moroccan branch until Steeg became Resident General in the autumn of 1925. Pursuant to the demands of Moscow and feeling the pressure to prove itself on the international stage, the PCF began acting on the 21 conditions almost immediately. It established a Committee for Colonial Study (*Comité des Etudes Coloniales*), although it was slow in taking concrete actions until the Riffian crisis.<sup>51</sup>

### III. THE RIF AND THE PCF

News of the intense violence in Morocco outraged French leftists, provoking demonstrations numbering in the thousands.<sup>52</sup> The PCF's main newspaper, *l'Humanité*, was available in North Africa during the interwar years – it was banned in May 1925 as it called for fraternization between French and Riffian fighters and the spread of Communist propaganda, but it remained illegally obtainable.<sup>53</sup> Moscow excoriated PCF members Doriot and Chasseigne at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International (June/July 1924) for not doing enough regarding France's colonies. Chasseigne returned to France and reported that “the most immediate task of the PCF is work in Morocco.” First on the agenda was fraternization of soldiers and “infiltrating”

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<sup>50</sup> Albert Ayache, René Gallissot and Georges Oved, *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier: Maghreb: Maroc des Origines à 1956* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier/ Éditions Ouvrières, 1998), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> “A Comité des Etudes Coloniales was created, but it does not seem to have functioned during the following year. As late as June 1924, an Arab Communist could write that since the Fourth Congress the party had done ‘almost nothing’ for the masses in the colonies. The leadership was aware of this gap. At the Lyon Congress an impressive and detailed report was presented by the Comité des Etudes Coloniales. It promised a program of agitation among the natives in both metropolitan France and the colonies. Two types of nationalist movements were distinguished: one reformist, which collaborated with colonial governments; the other proletarian and anti-bourgeois. The party was to oppose the first and sustain the second. It emphasized, however, that the PCF would not hesitate to support any nationalist group during the early stages of its struggle for independence. More specifically, it was recommended that the post of colonial delegate be re-established, that the colonial forum in *L'Humanité* be reopened, and that the Comité des Etudes Coloniales be represented on the CD”(Wohl, 408)

<sup>52</sup> Miller, p. 110.

<sup>53</sup> John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912-1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 151.

the army.<sup>54</sup> The youth wing of the PCF, the Fédération des Jeunesses Communistes, alongside PCF higher-ups expressed goodwill and solidarity for the Riffian cause via direct telegram to Abd el-Krim. *L'Humanité* published the text of this telegram in September 1924:

The Communists of Parliament, the Central Committee of the PC [*Parti Communiste*, in this case the PCF] and the Youth Communists welcome the striking victory of the Moroccan people over the Spanish imperialists. They congratulate their courageous leader Abd-el-Krim. They hope that after his decisive victory over Spanish imperialism he will continue, alongside the French and European proletariat, his struggle against all imperialists, including the French imperialists, until the complete liberation of Morocco. Long live Moroccan independence! Long live the international struggle of colonial peoples and the world proletariat!<sup>55</sup>

In addition to this telegram, the PCF contacted the Spanish Communists to collaborate on Moroccan liberation, including joint French and Spanish military fraternization with Riffian soldiers. Doriot read the above quoted telegram aloud to the Chamber of Deputies, shocking those present who supported French military action against what they regarded to be upstart Berber forces. The CGTU (*Confédération générale du travail unitaire* – the General Confederation of Unionized Labor) joined forces with the PCF, which formed an Action Committee. A joint CGTU and PCF congress on Moroccan liberation (held from 4-5 of July 1925), boasted approximately 2,500 attendees – and this was one of many such meetings.<sup>56</sup> That same summer of 1925, the Jeunesses Communistes of the PCM, shepherded by Doriot, visited Morocco in the hopes of establishing contact with local nationalist activists and Abd el-Krim himself.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the Jeunesses Communistes was a particular site of PCF activity and propaganda for Morocco. The Paris Police Préfecture archives are full of surveillance and

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<sup>54</sup> Wohl, p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> Moneta, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Wohl, p. 409.

<sup>57</sup> Wohl, p. 409.

warnings regarding political youth activity regarding the French colonies. In October 1924 the Paris Youth Communists distributed the following leaflet: “Young workers, Young conscripts: in a short while, you will depart to serve France. Have you asked yourself what that means? You will lose eighteen months of your youth, will never eat your fill, toil without payment, grow rusty in your profession. In Morocco and in Syria you will go and starve to ‘pacify’ the country and to double the value of lands that General Lyautey owns in Rabat. [...] YOUNG COMRADES, the Youth Communists have given their watchwords: DOWN WITH COLONIAL WARS! [...] LONG LIVE THE SOLIDARITY BETWEEN WORKERS AND SOLDIERS!”<sup>58</sup>

The Youth Communists were particularly successful in their propaganda aimed at conscripted young French soldiers about to leave for the Rif. One October 1924 item took the form of a creative dialogue. Interestingly, these documents are not in the French colonial archives for Morocco in Nantes, but rather in Paris, in the Police archives. They are the products of police surveillance of suspected political subversives, and in the 1920s, Communists were primary among them. The PCF sought to infiltrate the French military and turn soldiers against colonial warfare, as the subversive document quoted below makes clear:

- Have you received your papers, Pierre?
- Oh! You mean what I’m going to show those *sidis* [pejorative term for North Africans, after *Sidi* in Arabic, meaning Mr. or an honorific]. I’m going to the Rif in Morocco.
- What are you going to show them, what do you mean by that? Don’t you see that colonial warfare doesn’t serve your interests?
- What! We must civilize these savages. And besides, haven’t they already killed some Frenchmen? Over there, you have to defend yourself: they’re still attacking us!
- I see, Pierre, that you don’t understand the question. You don’t understand the basis of this war. Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco were free counties. At various times, our army went there to wage futile wars. We had to wait for railroads, potash [naturally occurring mineral deposit], and leather to hand them over to French companies. [...]
- You think that’s the goal of war?

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<sup>58</sup> Police Archives Série GB II, IV GA07 & GA08.

-- Exactly. There are also others. The great and fertile plains in the colonies, which were cultivated by Arabs, were distributed to the colonizers. Everywhere this is known as 'theft.'

-- I knew that. But still, we brought them civilization.

-- Civilization? You must be joking. Don't you know that Arabs have to work for practically nothing for the colonizers that stole their fields? Some of them, who are renting from the French the fields that belonged to them yesterday, give four-fifths of their harvest to the colonizers [...]. [Even] under Louis XIV French peasants didn't have it so hard, the lords of Touraine and Picardie indulged themselves less than the French colonizers of Algeria and Morocco. And you call that civilization?

-- Well, you've certainly taught me something new. But what do you want me to do? I've been called up I have to go!

-- Of course. But here is some advice: treat the Arabs like your brothers and victims of the same exploiters as you. If they struggle to rid themselves of the French vampires that suck their blood, reach out to them, help them. Never forget that in your uniform you look like the oppressor. Fix this by helping oppressed people free themselves.

-- But why haven't I ever heard what you're saying in France before? [...]

-- Because you've never been to the workers' meetings. The *bal musette* [popular accordion dance] is good enough for you. Have fun, fine; defend yourself, that's better. You look determined to change your habits a bit. Come to the *Jeunesses Communistes*, you will hear all about everything you don't know and you will learn how to struggle against a regime that exploits, in Algiers as in Paris, and that has no motive other than profit.<sup>59</sup>

Propagandists for the PCF made common cause with Moroccans not just as victims of colonial violence, but crucially, as victims of the same capitalist oppressors of the French worker. Such dialogues were not intended for the average Moroccan. On the contrary, Morocco was almost in the background of the above quote, focusing on the expendability of the French worker and soldier foremost in an argument about the ideals of the French revolution. In addition to such didactic tactics, the *Jeunesses Communistes* circulated a gruesome image on a postcard of French soldiers playing with a Riffian severed head bearing the inscription: "12,000 killed, 4 million wasted! Workers and farmers gave all of this. TO WHAT END?"<sup>60</sup> Thousands attended meetings in Paris to protest the Rif war, and with it, colonization of Morocco.<sup>61</sup> Women of the PCF and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Police Archives BA 1676.

<sup>61</sup> Police Archives BA 1676.

other organizations banded together in July 1925 to form the Union of Mothers and War Widows to protest the Rif war. The group was oddly prescient, predicting that “the Moroccan affair will lead to a new world war.”<sup>62</sup> Women were scolded: “These are your husbands, your fiancés, your sons, your brothers who, in Morocco, fall by the thousands, on the order of assassin-bankers. Will you not revolt?”<sup>63</sup> Even the Polish communist press recorded the ongoing Rif war and French communist protest against it; multiple protest ballads were composed.<sup>64 65</sup> As previously noted, by late 1925 Abd el-Krim’s forces were roundly crushed by joint French and Spanish troops. However, Communist support for national liberation and association with local movements was growing. While this war for liberation had ultimately failed, a deeper, more nuanced ideological war was just getting started.

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<sup>62</sup> Police Archives BA 1676.

<sup>63</sup> Police Archives BA 1676.

<sup>64</sup> Police Archives BA 1676. Lyrics to the song in question: AU MAROC Paroles de Jules HUBERT et CHARLYS/Peut se chanter sur l’air de : DOLOROSA/ I/La foule accourt, chacun veut voir l’embarquement/Des ce poilus, tous ces jeunes gens de vingt ans/Bien des mouchoirs sont agités,/Plus d’un cœur bat à se briser./Un coup d’sirèn c’est le signal on tir’ le pont,/De voir partir cett’ bell’ jeunesse’ quelle émotion/Une maman seule à son tour,/Murumure alors avec amour:/REFRAIN/ Ils vont là-bas/Sous le soleil marocain./Ces pauvres gars/Pour eux, que sera demain/Dans notre cœur/C’est une grande douleur/De voir partir ces pauvres gars,/Qui vont là-bas. / 2/ Voilà sept ans que la grande guerre à pris fin./Celle qui fit partout des milliers d’orphelins,/Tous les pays restent meurtris,/C’est là misèr’ dans les logis/Quand chaque jour on parle de désarmement,/Chacun répète ‘assez de ruines, asse de sang’/Rêve trompeur, folle illusion,/Puisqu’ aujourd’hui d’autres s’ent vont./AU REFRAIN/ 3/ Chaque pays parle toujours d’humanité/Mais si vraiment, nous nous croyons civilisés/Plus de canons, plus de fusils,/Notre raison cela suffit/Quand chaque jour en cherchant des progrès/De grands savants se sacrifient jusqu’au tombeau./La guerre nous prend tous nos enfants/Regardez-les, ces jeunes gens./AU REFRAIN » from J. HUBERT, Éditeur, 102, rue de Paris, Noisy-le-Sec  
Dépôt : Maison COLOMBO, 34, rue du Vert-Bois – Paris.

<sup>65</sup> Police Archives BA 1676. Lyrics to another one of these songs: « Nouvelles Œuvres de Montéhus Aux Victimes du Maroc/Monologue Lancé dans le Peuple par l’Auteur Montéhus./Paroles de Montéhus » : « AUX VICTIMES DU MAROC G. MONTEHUS/Pauvre petit pantin, ô triste marionnette/On te donne des cartouches, fusil et baïonnette/Puis l’on te dit : ‘Va-t’en pour tuer d’autres soldats,/C’est un métier bien triste, un bien triste mandat./Et tu t’ en vas chantant des chansons de victoire,/Et tu t’ en vas rêvant de galons et de gloire,/A la première étape du réfléchis un peu,/A la deuxième tu pleures et tu es malheureux,/A la troisième tu souffres en toi nait la colère,/Et tout bas tu murmures : ‘Oh ! oui je hais la guerre !/ Ce n’est plus la parade, on entend le canon/Et le soir à l’appel il manque pas mal de noms,/Puis une nuit, c’est ton tour, tu es de sentinelle/Tout seul aux avant-postes et tu penses à ta belle/Pendant un clair de lune tu regardes son portrait/Et tu dis en pleurant : ‘La reverrai-je jamais ?Ah ! tu ne chantes plus de chansons de victoire/Ah ! tu ne rêves plus de galons et de gloire./Mais tu penses à tes vieux qui t’attendent au hameau/Et tu trouves, qu’une mère ça vaut bien drapeau,/ Surtout quand ce drapeau est sorti de sa gaine/Pour couvrir de ses plis une entreprise malsaine/Comme celle du Maroc, ou pour des financiers./Les enfants de la France, sans honte noblesse./Tu seras inconnu de madame la presse./Si tu étais gradé, on mettrait ton portrait,/De belle funérailles aussi l’on te ferait ;/On ferait des discours et à la Madeleine./On ferait dire des messes au moins pendant une semaine./Et puis sur ton cerceuil, couvert des trois couleurs,/On mettrait la médaille ou bien la croix d’honneur./Mais comme tu es le fils d’un simple citoyen/Tu as le droit de mourir et d’être enterré comme un chien./Pourquoi cette injustice ? pourquoi cette bassesse ?En guerre il n’y a plus ni grande, ni noblesse./Il n’y a que des martyrs que l’on doit respecter./Au moins devant la mort, Messieurs les ministres,/Un peu d’Egalité ! »



Having supported both the Syrian revolt and the Riffians, the PCF was now intimately engaged with anti-colonial politics within the French empire. While labor unions were already established in Morocco, they were not yet legally open to Moroccans. PCF leaders now aimed to increase indigenous exposure to labor unions, communist propaganda and political groups. These efforts would be directed from the Metropole, but rested firmly in the hands of local communist representatives. The representatives were largely French, but during and after the Spanish Civil War, these numbers would be augmented as new ideological elements poured across the Straits of Gibraltar. In June 1930, the CGT established a branch in Morocco (l'Union des syndicats du Maroc) at a grand congress in Casablanca.<sup>66</sup> Syndicalism and nationalism began to coalesce, alongside the growing influence of the French Communist Party in Morocco. While the Communist Party was permitted in Morocco under Resident General Steeg (although only for European members), protectorate and Metropole authorities were increasingly anxious concerning political developments in its Mediterranean colonies of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Syria.<sup>67</sup> The Residency would grow more alarmed when war broke out in Spain, threatening the stability of both French and Spanish Morocco. The Spanish Civil War, and its figurehead, both had their roots in the Rif. The refugees of this war would come to play an important role in the growth of the indigenous Moroccan left.

#### IV. FRANCO, THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND SPANISH REFUGEES

General Francisco Franco rose to military prominence via the Rif war. Born to a conservative family in 1892, Franco was a mere twenty years old when he was sent with the Spanish army to

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<sup>66</sup> Ayache, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Moneta, p. 49.

Morocco. He spent the next ten and a half very formative years in Morocco, with the *Regulares Indígenas* (“Native Regulars”) and the *Tercio Extranjero* (Foreign Legion). As one historian of the Spanish Civil War put it, “in Africa, he acquired the central beliefs of his political destiny and, most importantly, his own right to command.”<sup>68</sup> Some historians of Spanish empire would extend the timeline of the Rif war to the Mellian campaigns (after the small town of Melilla on Morocco’s northern Mediterranean coast – to this day still under Spanish control) of 1909-1910. These battles did not yet involve Abd el-Krim as leader, but they were formative for increasingly effective Riffian battle tactics against the Spanish army. It was into this context that Franco was thrown as a young soldier. Spanish forces suffered considerable losses, not to mention embarrassment, in the battles against the Riffian soldiers until French intervention. Compiled onto a long nineteenth century of territorial loss, this threatened Spanish political stability. Blaming “decadent Spain” and aiming to regenerate their nation’s “pure essence,” the *Africanistas* (the Army of Africa) were at the vanguard of a military coup that sparked the revolt of 1936 and subsequent Civil War. Under intense political pressure the Spanish Monarch (Alfonso XIII of the Bourbons) abdicated in 1931. Historians of the Spanish Civil War have argued that “the so-called Army of Africa crossed the Straits of Gibraltar with a mission to destroy the internal enemy and transform a decadent Spain from outside. The self-appointed agents of Spain’s purification were those officers who had fought and won a colonial war, and that war inspired their initial strategy and tactics in the Civil War.”<sup>69</sup> The *Africanistas* defined themselves differently, more severely, in comparison to the Metropole forces – Franco, too, had

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 50.

<sup>69</sup> Balfour, p. x.

been formed in this crucible.<sup>70</sup> The Second Spanish Republic was established with Alfonso XIII's abdication. Right wing forces including Falangists and the *Africanistas* rose up, helped by the Francoist *pronunciamiento* of July 17, 1936. Spain swiftly became a battleground for Fascism versus anti-Fascism, an ideological and blood drenched conflagration that has often been cited as the antechamber for the Second World War.<sup>71</sup>

Republican and Communist refugees from Spain would stream into Morocco after Franco's 1939 victory. They fundamentally shifted the nature and development of Communist politics in French Morocco, particularly in large urban zones such as Casablanca and Meknes. The umbrella terminology of "Spanish Civil War refugee" obscures one critical group for the purposes of this dissertation: the Jews from Eastern Europe who volunteered and fought against Franco's forces on the side of the Spanish Republicans, within the International Brigades. The Soviet Union, from which many of these Ashkenazi Jews came, was intimately involved in the war and framed the struggle of Fascism versus anti-Fascism, which became all the more pronounced with Hitler and Mussolini backing Franco's efforts.<sup>72</sup> Soviet personnel and equipment arrived in Spain by October of 1936, and commanded the International Brigades. The International Brigades enjoyed enhanced funding and prominence thanks to Moscow's largesse.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Balfour, p. 120.

<sup>71</sup> "The focus has remained [...] on the rapid military intervention by expansionist Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, bent on displacing Anglo-French hegemony in Europe – which turned Spain into the antechamber of continental, and ultimately, world war," (Graham, p. 11).

<sup>72</sup> François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: the Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 245.

<sup>73</sup> Furet, p. 252.

At their height, the International Brigades numbered 35,000 and contained volunteers from all over the world, especially those disenfranchised by far-right regimes.<sup>74</sup> Thirty Soviet Officers and many more Soviet representatives were “camouflaged” within the ranks of the International Brigades and Spanish Republican battalions – estimates suggest that there were never more than 800 Soviet personnel in Spain at any given time.<sup>75</sup> One member reflected: “There was all sorts of nationalities in it [...] such as Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, etc.”<sup>76</sup> For Ashkenazi Jews, the appeal is clear enough. The International Brigades contained approximately 8,750 Jewish volunteers – a quarter of the total.<sup>77</sup> The interwar period in Europe (as well as in the United States) was rife with Social Darwinist discourse alongside increasingly insidious nationalism hitched to anti-Semitism and fears of a “Judeo-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy.”<sup>78</sup> Franco and his followers believed in such a conspiracy, giving fuel to their mission to save “eternal Christian Spain.”<sup>79</sup> A long nineteenth and early twentieth century legacy of Jewish radicalism in Eastern and Central Europe is also behind such heavy Jewish involvement – anti-Semitism and fascistic stirrings at home certainly contributed as well. While most Jews were dispersed among various units, the Polish Jewish brigadiers were numerous to the extent that they formed their own company. This company contained Jews from Palestine, two Palestinian Arabs, a German defector from the Nazi army, as well as Polish Jews and Jews from a variety of

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<sup>74</sup> Graham, p. 76.

<sup>75</sup> Beevor, p. 163.

<sup>76</sup> Beevor, pp. 162-3.

<sup>77</sup> Graham, pp. 81-82.

<sup>78</sup> Graham, pp. 81-82.

<sup>79</sup> Graham, pp. 81-82.

European countries.<sup>80</sup> The Jewish company was named “the Botwin Company” after Naftali Botwin, a Polish Jewish Communist killed in 1925. “The Botwin Company’s flag bore the words ‘for your freedom and ours’ in Yiddish and Polish on one side and in Spanish on the other. Its members would later fight, along with many other International Brigade veterans, in the French resistance and in other partisan conflicts.”<sup>81</sup> Secular internationalism, married to anti-Fascism, formed the ideological backbone of Ashkenazi Jews fighting in the Spanish Civil War, a foreign, but deeply personal and familiar, struggle.

Once the Republican forces at last gave way to Franco, a wave of political refugees streamed across the Pyrenees into France and across the Straits of Gibraltar into French Morocco. In Morocco the Spanish refugees flocked to large coastal urban centers such as Casablanca, Rabat, and even the interior cities of Fez, Meknes and Marrakesh. Spanish and European Jewish Leftists in cities such as Meknes and Casablanca sparked the invigoration of leftist organizations in those locales as well as others. In the 1930s, Meknes witnessed numerous Spanish Communist fundraisers, dances, film projections and other events. Police surveillance indicates Jews attended these functions in high numbers. Even those Jews who opposed this political trend could not help be influenced by the many posters pasted on the *mellah* (the Jewish quarter) and the *medina* (the “old city” or Muslim quarter, the walled Arab city) walls as well as the political café culture that abounded in the city.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Graham, p. 82.

<sup>81</sup> Graham, p. 82.

<sup>82</sup> PCF archives 3 MI 6 / 92 Séquence 598 - Résolutions, projets de résolutions, manifeste (1933).

The Spanish Civil War not only dramatically altered the political and demographic landscape of Morocco, it also mattered deeply for political events in France which in turn influenced colonial policy. The 1930s represented a “golden age” of Franco-Soviet relations, while the USSR, as we have seen, was deeply invested in Spanish events.<sup>83</sup> Léon Blum’s socialist Popular Front government came to power in France in 1936, heralding a promising new era of the left in France and in its colonies. While this leftist optimism would prove short lived (the Popular Front was in shambles by late 1938),<sup>84</sup> this opening had profound implications for the growth of Communism in Morocco. Almost immediately, European workers in Morocco were granted the right to organize and “soon strikes broke out all over the country, with workers demanding basic rights such as minimum wage and an eight-hour day.”<sup>85</sup> While it may seem clear enough why such rights were not extended to indigenous Moroccans, the Laval-Stalin pact in May of 1935 allowed the PCF to put colonial politics on the backburner in favor of a Franco-Soviet alliance intended to respond more immediately to the threat of Hitler and Fascism.<sup>86</sup> These accords, which secured for France the right to defend its national interests (loosely defined) in war, spoke to a broader phenomenon within the Communist International. Hitler’s rise to power (1933) marked a turning point – national defense became the dominant concern of the PCF, not colonial independence.<sup>87</sup> It is important to note that the PCF considered the Popular Front to be a “bourgeois government,” and so it had its own understanding of the Laval-Stalin pact.<sup>88</sup> Despite this

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<sup>83</sup> Furet, p. 276.

<sup>84</sup> Graham, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, p. 141.

<sup>86</sup> Moneta, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Moneta, p. 105.

<sup>88</sup> Moneta, p. 105.

judgment, the PCF supported the Popular Front's policy to postpone consideration of national liberation and decolonization, fearing that "the colonies could fall into the hands of Hitler and Mussolini."<sup>89</sup> However, it would be incorrect to say that Moroccan workers did not benefit at all from the Popular Front. On an official level they were certainly excluded from this legislation, and the PCF was able to move more slowly in North Africa because of the Franco-Soviet pact. Yet, on an informal level, the French Communist Party as well as the Diplomatic archives in Nantes demonstrate that fraternization and indigenous attendance at Communist and union events and indeed radicalization of the Moroccan populace was somewhat inevitable. Meanwhile, how real was the French fear of Morocco "falling into the hands of Hitler and Mussolini"? How was the local nationalist movement developing? From this broader, more diplomatic and institutional history, the rest of this chapter will engage in on-the-ground Moroccan political developments.

## V. THE GROWTH OF THE MOROCCAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The 1930 Berber *dahir* ("decree"), which sought to separate Berber from Arab legal status, had an electrifying effect on Moroccan nationalist movements. The *dahir* was a continuation of a French policy of preference for Berbers in North Africa, as supposedly clearly distinguishable from Arabs. According to this understanding, Berbers were not "true" Muslims and could be pushed toward Catholicism, to "reclaim" a noble, Romano-Phoenician heritage.<sup>90</sup> The Berber

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<sup>89</sup> Moneta, p. 106.

<sup>90</sup> See for example: Edmund Burke III, "The Image of the Moroccan State in French Ethnological Literature: a New Look at the Origin of Lyautey's Berber Policy" in *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* Ernest Gellner and Charled Micaud, eds. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1972), pp. 175-199. Also Robert Montagne, *The Berbers: Their Original and Political Organisation*, translated, and with an introduction by David Seddon. (London: Frank Cass, 1973 (original 1931)).

dahir was not the beginning of Moroccan nationalism; it was a boiling point. As Susan Gilson Miller has noted in her survey of modern Moroccan history, Moroccans began to be active in Leftist political networks both during and after the First World War.<sup>91</sup> Elites also traveled to France for educational and employment opportunities, where they met and learned from politicized Algerians as well as supporters of national liberation politics. “The Moroccans’ sudden immersion in techniques of political organization and their growing recognition of their rights as workers would have important implications for the future.”<sup>92</sup> Following the First World War and the inauguration of what Erez Manela has called the “Wilsonian moment,” Moroccans, like so many colonized peoples around the globe, became more acutely aware of themselves in a broader, international sphere that included the League of Nations, Mandates and demands for sovereignty.<sup>93</sup> As Manela has noted, the material hopes of the Wilsonian moment were quickly dashed in the colonies without erasing a new internationalist awareness.

The activities of the French Communist Party were strictly illegal under Morocco’s first resident general, Marshall Hubert Lyautey. Lyautey forbade publication and propagandizing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (passed by France’s General Assembly in 1789, widely considered fundamental to the history of human rights) in the 1920s, a current which only became stronger during the Rif war until Lyautey was replaced by Theodore Steeg.<sup>94</sup> The Rif war placed Morocco, along with Syria, at the forefront of the infant French Communist Party’s

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<sup>91</sup> Miller, p. 104.

<sup>92</sup> Miller, p. 104.

<sup>93</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>94</sup> Arsalane Chakib, Unpublished dissertation: “CONTRIBUTION A L’ETUDE DE L’HISTOIRE DU PCM DURANT LA PERIODE COLONIALE” at Université Hassan II, Faculté des Sciences Juridiques, Economiques et Sociales – Casablanca. Sous la direction de Mohammed Ghomari, 1985, p. 6.



international agenda.<sup>95</sup> Just because Communists in France took up the Rif cause does not, however, mean the Rifians, or Moroccans more broadly, embraced Communism. The Arab world, in its broadest contours of North Africa and the Middle East, was not terribly welcoming toward Communism during the interwar period.<sup>96</sup> Amir Shakib Arslan, with the support of Haj Amin el Husseini (Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestinian nationalist leader), invited Moroccan nationalists (from both Spanish and French Morocco) to attend a congress in Jerusalem in December 1931.<sup>97</sup> Haj A. Benouna was invited, but asked his brother Mohammed Ben Larbi, to go in his stead, along with prominent nationalist leaders Mekki Naciri and Mekki Kettani.<sup>98</sup> The congress predictably condemned imperialism and colonials, but perhaps more importantly, firmly anchored mainstream Moroccan nationalism in a wider Islamic nationalist, anti-colonial discourse. Arslan was adamantly opposed to Communism. In *The Arab Nation*, he wrote: “Bolshevism, which goes against all religion, can never accommodate the Qur’an. [...] Moscow is a clear dictatorship that uses the same methods as the Imperial powers, and with less care for spilling human blood.”<sup>99</sup> It would be a mistake to think that contemporary events in the Levant and Egypt didn’t matter for Morocco, and vice versa. Publications such as *The Arab Nation* made their way to Morocco and with them, a diffusion of ideas. The aforementioned A. Benouna would also publish in *al-Salaam* in 1933 against Communism as an atheistic, destructive force that was antithetical to Islam and therefore could not serve the Moroccan national movement.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Chakib, p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> Chakib, p. 29.

<sup>97</sup> Chakib, p. 27.

<sup>98</sup> Chakib, p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> Chakib, p. 29.

<sup>100</sup> Chakib, p. 29.

Moroccan nationalist leaders such as Ahmed Balafrej, Mohammed Hassan al-Ouezzani and Makki Naciri were all educated in France, which proved a radicalizing experience. It proved especially potent when combined with homegrown legitimacy in the form of ‘Allal al-Fassi, educated at the prestigious and venerable Qarawiyyin University in Fez and darling of Salafi nationalist intellectual circles.<sup>101</sup> The report of *al-Salaam* and Shakib Arslan aside, it would be a grave mistake to say that Communism and nationalism were always diametrically opposed. As will be explored over the course of the next several chapters, the mainstream Moroccan nationalist movement *Istiqlal* and the PCM had a waxing and waning of rapprochement and disavowal, acceptance of common cause and revulsion. While studying at the Sorbonne, Anis Balafrej established the journal *Maghrib* which was largely supported by the French left, with Karl Marx’s own grandson, Robert-Jean Longuet, served at its helm. As Susan Gilson Miller has noted, “Socialist themes were highlighted, but they were never a dominant tone, leading French leftists to criticize the Moroccans as the ‘bourgeois of Islam ... clerical, racist, and even anti-socialist.’ As a result, the connection between the Moroccan nationalists and the SFIO, the *Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière*, or French socialist party, was a tentative one.”<sup>102</sup> Workers and nationalists, however, were not mutually exclusive, and in an increasingly tense nationalist political scene, syndicalists and nationalists shared tactics, methodologies and in many cases, ideological goals.<sup>103</sup> These strategic lessons can be observed in the mainstream nationalist press, including *Maghrib* and *l’Action du Peuple* (“The People’s Action”), which employed socialist terminology.<sup>104</sup> After the revolts and protests in the wake of the 1930s Berber

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<sup>101</sup> Miller, pp. 122-123.

<sup>102</sup> Miller, pp. 132-133.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, p. 141.

<sup>104</sup> Halstead, p. 146.

*dahir*, nationalists Mohammed Lyzazizi, ‘Allal al-Fassi and Mohammed Hassan al-Ouezzani emulated and studied Communist tactics as their activities were forced into increased clandestinity. Al-Ouezzani “attended PCF meetings in Paris to learn its methods, and al-Fassi was in correspondence, around 1930, with Gim Argila and other Spanish, French and Algerian Communists as well as with Messali Hadj.”<sup>105</sup> John Halstead has characterized this rapport clearly: “In the final analysis, the union of French Socialism with Moroccan nationalism seemed more like a marriage of convenience than of love, but though the two were often separated by differences of philosophy and temperament, they were never completely divorced.”<sup>106</sup>

Nazism, and Fascism more broadly, was also propagated in the Moroccan nationalist scene. After 1933, Nazi Germany began to spread propaganda in the Arabic speaking world, “stressing the anti-Semitic theme to which Goebbels apparently thought Moroccans would be most responsive. An increasing volume of hate literature was deposited by German vessels on the quays of Ceuta and Las Palmas for Moroccan consumption, and Arab-speaking German agents such as Dr. Fritz Kern of Bonn University and his Algerian colleague, Taq eddin al-Hilali, a disciple of Shakib Arslan, infiltrated the French zone and established contact with Moroccan nationalists. *L’Afrique Française*, of course, had much to say about Nazi provocation in North Africa. In December 1932, it reported the creation in Vienna of the “Islamischer Kulturbund” by Shakib Arslan, and noted that among those attending the founding dinner were Mekki Naciri, Mohammed Hassan el-Ouezzani and Abdelsselem Bennouna. The editors also alleged that trips made to Germany and Austria by Moroccans were financed by Herr Goebbels, and while the

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<sup>105</sup> Halstead, p. 151.

<sup>106</sup> Halstead, p. 149.

charge was unsubstantiated there is little reason to doubt it.”<sup>107</sup> Radio Berlin was broadcast across the Moroccan radio waves, particularly in northern Spanish Morocco.<sup>108</sup> Franco’s Spain and Nazi Germany both promised future aid for an independent Morocco.<sup>109</sup> Spanish Morocco in particular was a site for potential Nazi expansion of propaganda, in secret or public meetings.<sup>110</sup>

Despite this effort, while it may be that some Moroccans embraced aspects of Nazism and Nazi organizational and financial support, it would be primarily Vichy France, and not Germany, that would receive the ugly laurels of spurring anti-Semitism in Morocco – that is the subject of the next chapter. One more element still in the Gordian knot of nationalisms is the figure of the Alawite Sultan. On an official visit to Fez in 1935, the Sultan was hailed by a group of youth nationalists who were establishing a nationalist party with similar ideological underpinnings to contemporary organizations in Syria, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>111</sup> It is important to recall that at this time the Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef (Sultan Mohammed V, born 1909) was himself a youth (age 26 in 1935), wedged in a difficult position between Protectorate authorities and the burgeoning political consciousness of his people. Indeed, Sultan Mohammed V had a close relationship with General Noguès, Resident General of Morocco from 1936-1943 whose primary initiative from 1936-1937 was to repress nationalism.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Halstead, p. 153.

<sup>108</sup> Halstead, p. 153.

<sup>109</sup> Police Archives BA 1676.

<sup>110</sup> Police Archives BA 1676. For example, one in Tetouan.

<sup>111</sup> Montagne, p. 190.

<sup>112</sup> Montagne, p. 191.

## VI. INTERWAR COMMUNISM IN MOROCCO

Meanwhile, what was happening with Communism in Morocco following the Rif war? When the Rif war concluded in 1926, the European population in larger urban centers, particularly Casablanca, expanded, receiving reinforcements from the refugees of the Spanish Civil War. With this population expansion came a growth of the left. The European population in the French zone was approximately 104,712 in 1926. A decade later in 1936, it had nearly doubled to 206,506. Casablanca had by far the largest population with 55,981 Europeans in 1931, and 14,258 in Fez. The economic crisis of the early 1930s accentuated the urban crush and needs of workers and so unions and leftist organizations flourished and expanded during the interwar period.<sup>113</sup> When Italian-born Boston anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed (many believed they were falsely accused on charges of murder in Braintree, Massachusetts) in August 1927, protests broke out in cities around the world, including in front of the American Consulate in Casablanca. Police violently broke up the protest – seven were arrested, accused “of having led a demonstration with red flags and for obstructing the police.”<sup>114</sup> Two months later, Protectorate authorities would become further alarmed following the discovery that Communists were circulating propaganda among Moroccan soldiers and Moroccan students.<sup>115</sup> One of these tracts appears to be a direct response to Moscow’s twenty-one conditions – it was written in Arabic and encouraged Moroccan soldiers (declared equal to French soldiers) to organize for independence.<sup>116</sup> A Protectorate official in late 1920s Fez

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<sup>113</sup> Chakib, p. 37.

<sup>114</sup> Chakib, p. 41.

<sup>115</sup> Chakib, p. 41.

<sup>116</sup> Chakib, p. 42.

remarked that his ministry had found numerous Communist papers in Arabic from searches in politically suspicious European homes, such as *Riat al-Hamra* (“Red Flag”), pamphlets and anti-military tracts which were specifically directed to Moroccan soldiers in the French forces and often signed “Brahim – a North African worker,” assembled by the youth wing of the PCF in France.<sup>117</sup> This is particularly significant in light of the fact that Fez has been historically freighted with tremendous political and religious significance. Fez boasts the birth of the Idrissid state (roughly 788 to 974, named after Idriss I) and Moroccan empire; the site of al-Qarawayyin mosque and university; and the Protectorate treaty signed in 1912. ‘Allal al-Fassi of the Istiqlal (“Independence”) party was born, studied, began organizing and became problematic for the Protectorate in Fez. However, Fez was no longer economically important or growing unlike the industrial center of Casablanca. This was not simply a case of European workers influencing the local masses, but was more politically strategic and symbolic. By the early 1930s in Casablanca, police reports noted “a notable increase in Communist propaganda” alongside increased organizing.<sup>118</sup>

The PCF’s Politburo had become increasingly concerned with its activities in French colonial territories. In September 1933, well after the conclusion of the Syrian Great Revolt as well as the Rif War, there were a series of “new decisions concerning North Africa in general.”<sup>119</sup> PCF leaders lumped ongoing events in Morocco, Syria, Palestine, as well as Algeria and Tunisia into one ideological basket for the sake of creating a unified, formal colonial policy. The decisions

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<sup>117</sup> Chakib, pp. 42-43.

<sup>118</sup> In Chakib, p. 44.

<sup>119</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

followed up on the demands made during the Rif war (“Morocco for Moroccans – immediate evacuation”) and called for an “immediate end of military operations” as well as the publication of Franco-Spanish military agreements.<sup>120</sup> The decisions specified the “creation of an expanded committee for the liberation of Arab countries.”<sup>121</sup> This committee was designated to include representatives from across North Africa as well as France, and was charged with “publishing a call for a conference for the liberation of Arab countries, a call geared toward the nationalist movements of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria [...] the conference may take place in Paris or Marseille.”<sup>122</sup> Intriguingly, while the PCF Politburo called for the national liberation of French colonial holdings, it also perpetuated a center-periphery model in which Paris, or perhaps by geographical convenience concession, Marseille, continued to serve as Metropole for the overseas territories. As the PCF proclaimed that it was preparing the colonies for national independence and self-determination, one is struck by the rhetorical similarities with the *mission civilisatrice* that justified more “straight-forward” French colonial initiatives. Accentuating this notion was the seventh general decision: “Set as an urgent and personal task for comrades to find and recruit students in the colonies for the school in Paris.”<sup>123</sup> Specific recommendations for Morocco included spreading propaganda (including *Cahiers du Bolchévisme*), increased bolstering of local organizations (particularly among the youth) and making common cause with Spanish communists in Morocco.<sup>124</sup> In order to persuade PCF members in the Metropole of the

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<sup>120</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

<sup>121</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

<sup>122</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

<sup>123</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

<sup>124</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

importance of such initiatives, the PCF released a manifesto arguing that such initiatives were in keeping with the ideological foundations of the party:

The Daladier government is waging a murderous and savage war in the High Atlas mountains against Moroccan tribes heroically defending the independence of their country. Don't believe at all the news full of lies that present this war, which engulfs tens of thousands of men, as police operations and as 'pacification.' [...] Comrades! This magnificent resistance of the Moroccan populace against French imperialism is not an isolated struggle. In all Arab countries, particularly North Africa and Syria, mass liberation movements against the imperialist oppressor and growing every day. [...] Workers of France! Proletarians! You must support the struggle of your exploited brothers with all your might, [they are] oppressed by the same [people/forces] that exploit you in France [...] Their struggle is your struggle, every [victory] from colonial peoples against the most savage forms of bourgeois domination and against militarism, is a victory against your class enemy!<sup>125</sup>

One European Communist agitator, Jules Joseph Dumont, was arrested in Casablanca toward the end of 1934 for distributing a newspaper by the name *Maroc Rouge* ("Red Morocco") – organ of the Communist Party of Morocco (*le Parti Communiste du Maroc* – not to be confused with the subsequent "Moroccanized" establishment of the *Parti Communiste Marocain* – PCM – in 1943).<sup>126</sup> Dumont was a reserve officer in the French army and an agent in the Meknes market. He reportedly became a Communist while in Morocco. Upon arrest, he was accused of spreading Communist propaganda among indigenous Moroccans in the *medina* (old city) of Meknes in central Morocco. During his trial before the military tribunal in December 1934 he cried out: "Frenchmen outside of Morocco! Long live anti-colonialism! Morocco for Moroccans!"<sup>127</sup> He was summarily condemned to three years in prison and expelled from the reserve officers. His trial is credited with the "official" appearance of the PCM (again, *Parti Communist du Maroc*).

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<sup>125</sup> PCF archives Bobine 3/Mi/92 séquence 598.

<sup>126</sup> Chakib, pp. 45-46.

<sup>127</sup> In Chakib, pp. 45-46.



A typed, roneotype issue of *Maroc rouge, organe du PCM* (“Red Morocco, the PCM’s organ”) was distributed in February of 1935 stating: “From Marrakesh to Ouezzan, from the Chaouia to the Tafilalt [...] in clandestine student clubs, we now know that a party in France and across the world dares to openly take up the cause of oppressed peoples...Forward, Morocco! Our party was born amid the rattling of sabers [...], it lives on today growing each day with the misery of the hopeless masses in the [...] failure of the French imperialism.”<sup>128</sup>

In the wake of this trial, the PCM became a distinctly organized force – 1937 witnessed a growth of party cells, more than half of which (forty-three) were in Casablanca. Rabat boasted eleven, Meknes had nine, and Fez six. The PCM had cells in other, smaller cities, but these imperial and industrial capitals remained at the forefront.<sup>129</sup> Each of these cells reflected the particular demographic and cultural bents of their home locales. For example, Casablanca was credited as “the most diverse and working-class, with construction workers, postal workers as well as a strong minority of Spaniards and Moroccan Jews. Rabat was more intellectual with civil servants and teachers.”<sup>130</sup> Increasingly, Socialists left groups like the SFIO to join the Communists, as in Meknes where it appears all of the Socialists abandoned the SFIO for the PCM.<sup>131</sup> Since the PCM activity was now legal, but it was strictly prohibited for Moroccan Muslims or Jews, it could not extend to the *medina* or the *mellah* (in 1936 the PCM counted approximately 500 members).<sup>132</sup> The same held for propaganda. The message was clear: Communism was to remain

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<sup>128</sup> In Chakib, pp. 45-46.

<sup>129</sup> Chakib, p. 54.

<sup>130</sup> Chakib, p. 54.

<sup>131</sup> Chakib, p. 54.

<sup>132</sup> Benseddik, pp. 154-5.

firmly European, and thus (according to colonial logic), controllable.<sup>133</sup> In practice, this would prove very difficult. Industrializing urban zones and habitation sites meant that the indigenous population was constantly interacting with European workers. Further, before Communist activity was legal, Arabic language Communist pamphlets and publications were clandestinely circulated. Joseph Dumont was, after all, arrested for attempting to spread Communist propaganda among Moroccans. After 1936, despite such Protectorate prohibitions, PCM efforts among indigenous Moroccan increased.<sup>134</sup> Two local Communist publications, *Maroc Rouge* (“Red Morocco”) as well as *Clarté* (“Clarity”) were permitted by Protectorate officials, and who could stop local Jews and Muslims from reading them?<sup>135</sup> Police reports from the interwar period in Casablanca note that many Moroccans, Jews and Muslims, had joined the PCM; Moroccans formed the majority (and in that Moroccan majority, mostly Jews). Recruitment typically occurred in the context of literacy efforts among the youth, in the “Maison du Peuple” (“House of the People”) where youth communists, particularly the “Lenin,” “Passionaria,” and “Fraternité” groups met daily.<sup>136</sup> Not only workers but also prominent intellectuals and writers were visible Communist figures, including Mehdi Lemniai, a writer and activist in the local theater. The Fez based political newspaper *La Dépêche de Fès* (“The Latest in Fez”) recorded his attendance at a local Communist event: “He was greeted with strong applause by his Muslim comrades. In a simple manner, without oratorical pretense, he analyzed the negative effects of consumption taxes had just been levied. The Moroccan people is the primary victim of this policy. ‘It is the rich who should pay [...] Perhaps they want to push the Moroccan people into

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<sup>133</sup> Chakib, p. 61.

<sup>134</sup> Chakib, p. 61.

<sup>135</sup> Chakib, p. 61.

<sup>136</sup> Chakib, p. 63.

the arms of Fascism?’ While descending from the stage, a veritable ovation broke out and the whole room intoned the “International.”<sup>137</sup> Moroccan workers would prove instrumental in the 1937 strikes at the Khouribga phosphate mines and Fez urban transport, as well as 1938 strikes at the OCP in Louis-Gentil and by the Casablancon construction workers.<sup>138</sup> Fez witnessed nationalist agitation in 1936 and 1937. These strikes originated with Europeans employed by the CGT and were taken up by the locals, followed by a 1936 Bakers’ Strike.<sup>139</sup> By the late 1930s “it was clear that both the Residency and the European-dominated labor organizations had lost control of the Moroccan worker,” as well as politically inclined Moroccan elites, whether Jewish or Muslim.<sup>140</sup> Meknes hosted a May Day celebration in 1937, organized by the CGT and PCM members such as a certain Mr. Plain and the local Union leader Paul Durel, presided.<sup>141</sup> This was hardly an exceptional event. In the late 1930s, the PCM had embraced a strain of “traditional colonial discourse marked by a kind of missionary ambition: progressive education for Muslims, education for the masses.”<sup>142</sup> Thus, the PCM embraced a *mission civilisatrice* and, in its own way, was part of the prevailing Protectorate colonial logic. Both the French colonial project (widely construed) and the PCF (via the PCM) embraced education as a tool for reformation, with vastly different teachings and aspired outcomes. That said, the model is strikingly similar as Paris served as Metropole and center both of formal empire operations and the machinations of the PCF in North Africa.

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<sup>137</sup> Chakib, p. 65.

<sup>138</sup> Chakib, p. 84.

<sup>139</sup> Berques, p. 181.

<sup>140</sup> Miller, p. 117.

<sup>141</sup> Benseddik, p. 155.

<sup>142</sup> Benseddik, p. 156.

While increasing its own political profile in Morocco, the PCM and other leftist organizations continued to attract an increasing number of indigenous Muslims as well as Jews. But these categories of “Muslims” and “Jews,” even of “indigeneity,” can be misleading. Even “French” citizens are a fraught category. In addition to its perhaps more “straightforward” meaning, a French citizen in the colonial Moroccan politicized context might refer to an Algerian Jew (there were many, particularly involved in the left), a naturalized Spaniard from Algeria (as was often the case), as well as the odd Muslim granted French citizenship (relatively rare). Informants for the Protectorate authorities in Morocco often approximated how many “Europeans,” “Jews” and “Moroccans” (read: Muslims) attended political events – each of these categories should be understood as porous and flexible.

One was to ascertain an individual’s identity (French, Arab, Jew, etc) is to look at surnames. Common Maghribi Jewish family names provide an example. For instance take: “GRIGRI, Albert, French, born October 8 1905 in ORAN [Algeria], son of Henri and Tamar BENZAQUEN” and “SANCHEZ, Edouard, French, born 7.8.1902 in Mascara [Algeria], son of Juan Gonzalo Sanchez and Isabelle Vargas.”<sup>143</sup> By inference, Mr. Grigri was an Algerian Jew who had French citizenship by dint of the 1870 Crémieux decree; Mr. Sanchez was of Spanish origin and a naturalized French citizen, likely alongside his parents, as part of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century French push in Algeria to “create” more citizens to counterbalance the indigenous population and Europeanize the area. Both of these men arrived in Morocco in the interwar period to work on infrastructure projects: Mr. Grigri worked on the railroads and did clerical work in Khouribga; Mr. Sanchez worked for a metallurgy company, the railroads as well

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<sup>143</sup> CADN IMA/200/319.

as in the Khouribga mines. The two men appear in the same archival document: a report to the Resident General in Rabat about an organization called “Association France-URSS” (the “France – USSR Association”).<sup>144</sup> This is but one of many such documents of the 1920s and 1930s that demonstrate the variegated and leftist Moroccan interwar membership.

Further, the organizations were manifold: members of the PCM freely attended and propagandized at meetings of the International League Against Anti-Semitism (LICA – *League internationale contre l'antisémitisme*), the League for Human Rights (*League des droits de l'homme*); as did Moroccan nationalists. At these meetings, often held in cinemas and bars, European members who had visited the USSR would often speak of the marvels they had witnessed in reverential tones.<sup>145</sup> The leaders of various PCM cells and other leftist parties tended to be lawyers, workers for the OCP as well as the rail laborers, and teachers. Moroccan Jews, whose French teachers often initiated them into leftist political philosophy and engagement, were increasingly noted in attendance over the years.

In the late 1930s, Moroccan Jews were directly affected by the turbulent political conditions of Europe. European Jewish refugees fled into Morocco at an ever accelerating pace, some to remain but most in the hopes of transiting to the United States of America or elsewhere. Veterans and refugees of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Jewish or otherwise, infused Moroccan cities with new populations and ideologies, including leftist activism. In addition to these demographic changes, the mainstream Moroccan national independence movement, Istiqlal

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<sup>144</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

<sup>145</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

(“Independence”) and other related independence parties drew increasing membership. The Zionist movement, although not overwhelmingly popular, continued propaganda and recruitment efforts in both rural and urban Jewish communities of Morocco. Finally, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a French Jewish philanthropic educational organization devoted to making Jews full citizens in their countries of origin, had educated generations of Moroccan Jews. It simultaneously Gallicized them, formed political and cultural sensibilities, and divorced them from the broader Moroccan Muslim populace.

## VII. POLITICAL OPTIONS AND INTERWAR MOROCCAN JEWRY

Moroccan Jews faced three prevailing political options on the eve of the Second World War, which were by no means mutually exclusive and in many cases overlapped: “Alliancism” (in which Jews were firmly committed to the notions of citizenship and emancipation as enshrined by the French Republic but as applied to their Moroccan homeland); religious as well as secular Zionism; and leftist political activism.

Since the Alliance Israélite Universelle established its first school in the northern city of Tetouan, Morocco in 1862, Moroccan Jews in the major urban centers had been progressively Gallicized and educated according to French visions of citizenship and republicanism. While not as dramatic as the Algerian case wherein (most) Algerian Jews were granted French citizenship via the 1870 Crémieux decree, the French education system and embourgeoisement of urban Moroccan Jews produced generations of Moroccan Jewish subjects spoon-fed the ideals of the

French republic, including nationalism and ideals of citizenship.<sup>146</sup> Jews in Morocco embodied a palimpsestic existence: subjects of the Sultan, educated by a French-Jewish philanthropic endeavor, ingesting ideals of citizenship and nationalism. By the time of the Second World War, Moroccan Jews were simultaneously taught to identify with France, world Jewry, and their Muslim compatriots. Given this orientation, it is not surprising that at least at the official administrative level of the Alliance, the organization and the education it disseminated was antithetical to the goals of Zionism.

Zionism was neither received nor interpreted in a monolithic fashion among Moroccan Jews. For urban Jews, Zionism was more politically motivated, whereas among Jews in southern, rural communities, Zionism was received in a largely religious mode.<sup>147</sup> Generally speaking, of those Jews who left Morocco, the poorest embraced Zionism and dreamed of better economic opportunities in Israel.<sup>148</sup> Prior to French infrastructural developments, the majority of Moroccan Jews were petty merchants and artisans who found their crafts, routes and methods of transport rendered obsolete via French initiatives, which impoverished them and made them susceptible to offers of economic opportunity elsewhere.<sup>149</sup> Zionist representatives promised land, employment as well as the fulfillment of millennial religious beliefs.

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<sup>146</sup> See work from Aron Rodrigue, Lisa Moses Leff, and Esther Benbassa.

<sup>147</sup> Aomar Boum, "From 'Little Jerusalems' to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan Nationalism and rural Jewish emigration," *The Journal of North African Studies*, 15, no. 1 (2010): pp. 51-69.

<sup>148</sup> Lévy, p. 33.

<sup>149</sup> Lévy, p. 33.

Zionism had pre-protectorate roots in Morocco, but did not gain wide support until after the First World War, and even then was not truly widespread until after the Second World War. The first Zionist association, Sha'arei Zion, was founded in 1900 in Mogador (Essaouira) by businessman Moses Lougassy, a Moroccan native who had been living in England.<sup>150</sup> Yet, from the installation of the French in 1912 through 1919, Sha'arei Zion was not allowed to distribute propaganda or actively operate, as General Lyautey and the Residence General actively opposed Zionism on the grounds that it disrupted the peace. Yahia Zagury, the Jewish inspector of Jewish institutions under General Lyautey, opposed Zionist institutions on the same grounds. Writing to the Resident General in 1919, Zagury was adamant that Zionist propaganda led Moroccan Jews to believe that all would be taken care of on their behalf in Israel. He wrote: "Zionism, which I consider to be a great danger for Moroccan Jews – and on this I am in agreement with the Alliance Israélite Universelle and some eminent French Jews – has tried to act upon certain populations...In the case that the Resident shares my point of view, it serves everyone's interest to watch over and discretely prevent all Zionist propaganda in Morocco."<sup>151</sup> The Alliance promoted educational solutions with the goal of Jewish emancipation and citizenship in the countries where Jews lived, while Zionism called for Jewish migration to build a Jewish state. Given these opposed ideological foundations, it is not surprising that Zagury and the Residence opposed the dissemination of Zionist ideas and activities. However, teachers with Zionist political leanings worked within the Alliance schools, and the two ideologies would not remain opposed throughout the intervening years.

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<sup>150</sup> Robert Assaraf, *Juifs du Maroc à travers le monde: Émigration et identité retrouvée* (Paris: Éditions Suger/Suger Press, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>151</sup> Assaraf, p. 23-24.



On July 24, 1919, Nahum Sokolow, the head of the Zionist delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, successfully persuaded France to permit Zionist activities in Morocco.<sup>152</sup> The year 1919 marked increased activity on the part of the Fédération Sioniste de France (FSF), and 1926 witnessed the establishment of the pro-Zionist paper *L'Avenir Illustré* in Casablanca.<sup>153</sup> Further, shekel sales and collections were allowed to continue after the 1912 pause. *L'Avenir Illustré* exhorted Jews to buy shekels, which in 1927 was about ten francs to one shekel. On the anniversary of the start of shekel payments in 1897, a May 1927 issue proclaimed: "Jews of Morocco! Do your duty! It is by increasing the number of 'shekelists' that world Judaism will truly celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the movement that is the fermenting agent of its renovation."<sup>154</sup> Significantly, *L'Avenir Illustré* was founded by a Polish Jew from Warsaw, Jonathan Thurz who arrived in Morocco in 1923 as a representative of the World Zionist Organization, charged with fundraising among Moroccans.<sup>155</sup> Thurz swiftly rose to prominence, representing various Moroccan communities at the Zionist congresses of Vienna in 1925, Basel in 1931 and Antwerp in 1938.<sup>156</sup> In April 1928, *L'Avenir Illustré* began publishing monthly installments of Theodore Herzl's *Altneuland*, translated into French under the title, "David Littwak."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Assaraf, p. 23.

<sup>153</sup> Zvi Yehuda, "Zionist Activity in Southern Morocco: 1919-1923," *Revue des Études juives*, CXLIV, no. 4 (October-December 1985), pp. 363-368, p. 364.

<sup>154</sup> *L'Avenir Illustré*, 27 May 1927, p. 17.

<sup>155</sup> Jamaâ Baida, "La Presse Juive au Maroc entre les Deux Guerres." *Hespéris-Tamuda*, XXXVII (1999), pp.171-189, p. 173.

<sup>156</sup> Baida, p. 173.

<sup>157</sup> Baida, p. 174.

Not everyone, in particular members of the Moroccan Jewish élite, accepted *L'Avenir Illustré*'s message. This gave rise to the creation of a paper that promoted Moroccan Judaism with an "Allianciste" bent, *l'Union Marocaine*, founded in February 1932.<sup>158</sup> As with *L'Avenir Illustré*, *l'Union Marocain* was founded by a foreigner named Elie Nataf, a Tunisian Jew who was a naturalized French citizen (Jews from the former Ottoman domains frequently taught in Morocco and elsewhere – it was a longstanding Alliance policy not to send teachers back to their home countries). Nataf had been in Morocco since 1912, serving as the director of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) schools.<sup>159</sup> Promoted and distributed through the AIU schools, *L'Union Marocain* maligned Zionism as a "utopian" ideology and emphasized Moroccan Jewish "evolution." As the first 1932 issue proclaimed: "Evolved, assimilated, one would not have any less love for the patrimony of his ancestors [...]. Assimilation is not abdication, it is an adaptation, respectful of the past, but mindful of the future."<sup>160</sup> In the middle of the 1920s, Zagury, acting in concert with the Residency and General Lyautey, admitted that while it would not be possible to again forbid shekel buying, they could make it more cumbersome by sending the funds not to the Central Zionist Committee, but to France first and then to Jerusalem.<sup>161</sup> The Hebrew journal of the World Zionist Organization, *Haolam* ("The World"), was forbidden in Morocco in 1924 because of its "political character [which is] likely to provoke trouble."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Baida, p. 175.

<sup>159</sup> Baida, p. 175.

<sup>160</sup> *L'Union Marocain*, 4 February 1932. In Baida, p. 175.

<sup>161</sup> Assaraf, p. 27.

<sup>162</sup> Assaraf, p. 27.

This pace continued through the late 1930s, when Moroccan Jewish political activism increased in response to Hitler's coming to power in 1933 as well as the growth of Zionist activity. An official report from the Residence General in July 1933 stated:

Jews number 270,000 in Morocco; this is a very intelligent and active segment of the population. Its youth suffers; it currently has shown the tendency to join up with a young Muslim party still forming in order to creation a Moroccan national party. This is a danger whose gravity must not be exaggerated but would be imprudent to ignore. [...] International events can occur which could facilitate exploitation of these currents and could, in the midst of conflict, become much worse. And although one must not dramatize these things, one must look ahead, because the hour draws near when the destiny of the country will rely on the political, social and moral stability of North Africa. On the whole, the Jewish population is deeply indebted to France, for having, after twenty years of the protectorate, assured the security of property and family [...] We must strengthen these sentiments. A tighter connection between the Communities and the Government, effective and precise monitoring is the best way [...] to put an end to the Francophobe propaganda that so often interests the youth, to control, direct and strengthen Jewish loyalty.<sup>163</sup>

This report alludes to the many political currents Jews experienced in the 1930s as well as the importance the protectorate authorities placed on maintaining the loyalty of the Jewish population. The prospect of Jewish loyalty fraying in the face of nationalism merited deep concern. However, internal political debates in the Metropole under the socialist government of Léon Blum meant that authorities could not focus concerted attention on Jewish loyalty. Nevertheless, in the pre-war period Zionism had gained enough traction to worry colonial authorities, nationalists, and leaders of the Moroccan Jewish community. Unable to halt either the steady pace of nationalist organizing or the spread of Zionism, a March 1938 plan proposed by a certain Mr. Jules Braunschwig living in Tangier alarmed the authorities.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3

<sup>164</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3

Mr. Braunschwig proposed establishing an “agricultural colony” for Jews in Morocco. Since there were few comfortably middle-class Jews, argued Braunschwig, plans must be made to complement their French education.<sup>165</sup> Unfortunately, the protectorate authorities as well as Zagury found evidence of Zionism in Braunschwig’s scheme. A report was issued against authorizing any such settlement in light of events in Palestine, and more importantly, how those events had weakened Britain’s international standing, particularly among Muslims. Anxious to maintain control over a growing Moroccan nationalist movement, the residency concluded that support for any such “agricultural colony” would smack of Zionism and weaken their increasingly precarious hold on indigenous politics. Further, as the nationalists were already supposedly working with the “totalitarians,” it would be extremely unwise to appear to overtly support Jewish endeavors. The report quoted Mekki Naciri, a Moroccan nationalist based in the Spanish zone in Tetouan as saying on Radio-Rome: “We hate France, the enemy of Islam and religion, especially since it’s governed by Atheists and Jews, by Léon Blum in particular.”<sup>166</sup> Thus, according to the official logic, support for this initiative would only serve to increase the power of Fascist Germany and Italy in Morocco through the nationalist parties; kindle “latent anti-Semitism”; as well as remove land from already beleaguered Moroccan peasants. The report concluded ominously: “we can predict with certainty that this matter will take on much more importance than the protest movement against the Berber dahir of May 16 1930.”<sup>167</sup> Comparing the ramifications of any potential support for Zionism with Berber dahir revolts, almost universally cited by historians as the launching point of the Moroccan nationalist movement,

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

speaks volumes. It is clear how seriously the protectorate authorities, as well as relevant Jewish authorities, took the threat of Zionism to the political and social stability of Morocco and its Jewish population.

Zagury repeatedly petitioned the Residence Generale for more surveillance of Jewish political activities in 1938. In December of 1938, Zagury wrote an alarmed letter to the head of protectorate affairs in Casablanca stating that a letter was circulating among Casablancon synagogues urging Jews to boycott products from Germany and Italy.<sup>168</sup> After requesting police intervention and increased supervision, Zagury agreed with the protectorate authorities stating “any political demonstration must be forbidden in religious establishments,” and any potential non-strictly religious activity must first be approved by the relevant authorities.<sup>169</sup> Zagury’s attempts to circumscribe Jewish efforts of solidarity with their beleaguered brethren in Europe failed. Jews were increasingly politicized in many spheres, and continued to call for the boycott of German and Italian goods.<sup>170</sup> Zagury had banned such actions on the grounds that only religious activities would be appropriate for a synagogue, but this was ignored.

Behind such boycotts lay a Paris-based organization, the International League Against Anti-Semitism (LICA in French). Sections of LICA had sprung up in every major Moroccan city by 1939, notably Casablanca, Mogador (Essaouira), Rabat, Meknes, Fez, Safi, Mazagan (El-Jadida), Marrakesh. While the ostensible *raison d’être* of the LICA was solidarity and discussion of anti-Semitism in Europe, anti-Semitism was not an unknown phenomenon for Moroccan Jews.

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<sup>168</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3, 20 March 1939.

Moroccan Jews used LICA to voice their concerns about local incidents of anti-Semitism as well as address broader European concerns. For example, in Mazagan (August 1939), a Protectorate informant reported that on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August “there was a local meeting of LICA at the Employment Office. About ten ‘leaguers’ were there. M. RIVAULT, the president, made it known that he had received numerous complaints against M. MARANO, of Italian origin, a naturalized French citizen since 1933, who pronounced nasty statements against Jews at the Café du Commerce.” A certain Mr. Giminez, also present at the meeting corroborated the story and claimed to have overheard the same M. Marano ordering an apéritif (a *pernod*, specifically, also known as *pastis*) uttered to the waiter: “give me a non-Jewish *pernod*.”<sup>171</sup> This story illustrates local appropriation and identification with universal political aims in a distinctly Moroccan context – those who filed complaints were all LICA members. Through LICA, Moroccan Jews were politically active on a local level. One report from Meknes in April 1939 emphasizes this – it contains six different examples of leaflets that local ‘leaguers’ distributed around the city, notably in shop windows. Two of them are worth quoting: “ALL OF YOU WHO WANT TO LIVE / Boycott products from enemy nations!” and “French Mothers, French Businessmen, HITLERIAN, MUSSOLINIAN and JAPANESE products are stained with blood. BOYCOTT THEM!”<sup>172</sup> Protectorate informants suspected that such propaganda was most likely distributed by Jewish women, particularly in Meknes, but also noted it in every major Moroccan city.<sup>173</sup>

The LICA was one of many modes of Jewish political engagement in the interwar period. While Moroccan Jews and Muslims were formally prohibited from joining the PCM or other European

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<sup>171</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3

<sup>172</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

<sup>173</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

dominated political parties and labor unions (as we have seen, this was more de jure rather than de facto), nothing legally prohibited European leftists from attending LICA or other specifically Moroccan Jewish meetings. Anti-Fascism and activism against racism was a common cause. A Protectorate informant reported a meeting of the LICA in Rabat in June 1938, 9pm at a local cinema. About 200 people were present for the event, titled “THE BROTHERHOOD OF RACES” – a police agent present for the event suggested about 20% of the audience was composed of civil servants and 80% workers (unspecified).<sup>174</sup> The stage was decorated with the Moroccan and French flags, and foreigners “comprised about 60% of the audience, communists and socialists.”<sup>175</sup> A certain Mr. Romani intoned universalist values before the crowd: “the earth belongs to all men of all colors, religions, and opinions. [...] He preached the sincerity of the Brotherhood [Fraternité] of races, peace and freedom [Liberté]. Mr. Romani evoked the Great War – 12,000 Jews fought in the French army, he said, and 6,000 paid with their lives on the battle field to defend the land that was so dear to them. Mr. Romani finished by saying that the LICA is persuaded that democrats will combat all forms of racism to bring about Human Brotherhood.” Next came the President of the Rabat section of LICA, a Mr. Beaurieux who said that “to combat as much as possible Hitler’s regime, there must be a boycott on Moroccan soil against German products. [He] finished his speech by inviting audience members to purchase brochures at the exit, whose proceeds would go to supporting Spanish Republicans.”<sup>176</sup> This episode represents an iconic moment of political confluence for interwar Moroccan Jewry. European leftists, interested in propagandizing among indigenous Moroccans, found an ideologically predisposed audience in the LICA attendees and leadership. The universalist

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<sup>174</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

<sup>175</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

<sup>176</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

overtone of the discourse went hand in hand with an increasingly anti-Fascist and universalist drive espoused by the PCM and its Metropole leaders, the PCF. Further, that fundraising for Spanish Republican relief efforts occurred at such meetings (examples are abundant of similar efforts at LICA meetings in other cities of the same time period) underscores the Gordian knot of mutual influence, trans-nationalism, demographic shifts and Moroccan Jewish political consciousness in the interwar period. Protectorate informants reported an astonishing number of SFIO members, Communists, Socialists, not to mention Algerians and Spaniards in attendance at LICA events. Increasingly, Moroccan Jews themselves were noted leftists and communist supporters. One even went so far as to publically question “Sharifian Justice,” which significantly raised Protectorate hackles.<sup>177</sup> It is not surprising that Protectorate authorities had sought to ban, or at least limit, LICA’s expansion by the mid-1930s. However, as was clear from the case of unions, social events and more, Protectorate control over such matters was not as hard and fast as may have been desired. An indignant protectorate report from Morocco’s eastern border city of Oujda underlines this phenomenon:

The Oujda section of LICA has no legal existence. [...] Consequently, we determine that those affiliated with or sympathetic to the Oujda [section] must not be authorized under any circumstances to publically distribute registration materials. Further, from a political perspective, such agitation is clearly undesirable in Morocco which may have the most immediate effect of resurrecting old racial conflicts. We must be careful concerning such a personality as Mr. Bernard LECACHE, founder of the LICA, who recently visited Morocco and gave a speech in Oujda. The propagandist of the Popular Front visited Moscow in 1935 and one wonders whether he seeks to stir up trouble in his activities among the Jews, whose activities are closely watched by the Muslims. [...] Ongoing bloodletting in Jaffa [this was in the midst of the Palestine Great Revolt] gives this matter particular importance. The particular situation of the Moroccan Jews, who enjoy under our aegis complete security, demands of their [the Moroccan Jews’] friends [alluding, in this case, to LICA] to maintain the greatest discretion and to abstain, in their own interests, from any activity likely to provoke reactions among the Muslims.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> CADN IMA/200/319

<sup>178</sup> CADN IMA/200/319



LICA members were also likely to be members of an indigenous leftist group, active primarily in Casablanca and Rabat. The *Jeunesses Socialistes Autonomes* (the Young Autonomous Socialists) were consciously not aligned with the PCM or any other European dominated Moroccan political party. However, Communism and Spanish Republicans were frequently praised in their meetings (often held in bars)<sup>179</sup> with Moroccan labor issues were frequent subjects of discussion. Communists, particularly Spanish Communists, would attend and speak about the virtues of their political platform. Muslims attended as well, and at least one was responsible for selling a newspaper entitled *Revolution* at the conclusion of Rabat meetings, which were noted to be dominated by Moroccan Jews including a few Jewish women.<sup>180</sup> A frequent speaker at the Rabat meetings and president of the Rabat section, a Mr. Isaac Azoulay, was an eccentric, oddly emblematic character of Mediterranean trans-nationalism and the colonial workforce of the interwar era. Born in October 1916 in Alexandria, Egypt, Azoulay pretended to be an American Jew who had somehow found himself in Morocco. He worked for Moroccan infrastructural development (the telegraph agency to be exact), as well as for the Employment Office. With some small note of glee, a report is quick to mention that he is “currently unemployed.”<sup>181</sup> The Casablanca group was led by another with foreign ties: Mr. David Gabay, a Moroccan Jew who had obtained British citizenship.<sup>182</sup> One final political grouping bears mentioning: the *League des droits de l’homme et du citoyen* (“League for Human and Citizens’ Rights”). Members of LICA, the PCM, the SFIO, the Young Autonomous Socialists and others attended these

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<sup>179</sup> CADN 1MA/200/319

<sup>180</sup> CADN 1MA/200/319

<sup>181</sup> CADN 1MA/250/1-3

<sup>182</sup> CADN 1MA/250/1-3

meetings; teachers, civil servants, laborers and more formed its base. Spaniards, Frenchmen, Moroccan Jews and, to a lesser extent, Muslims, filled the ranks and leadership. One worried protectorate note cites at least two Jews in the Fez 1939 leadership, a Mr. Abraham BENAÏM (“Albert”), a noted CGT militant and leftist activist, and a certain “BOTBOL, Georges – lawyer. Leftist militant, member of the following groups: 1. – vice president of the local section of LICA [...] three-times re-elected to be the assessor for the League for Human and Citizens’ Rights.”<sup>183</sup> Georges Botbol represents many of the argumentative and thematic threads of this chapter: a Moroccan Jew, locally engaged in nationalist and universalist politics, concerned with the broader Jewish world and yet deeply committed to Moroccan events and matters.

On the eve of the Second World War, the protectorate authorities admitted the need to increase surveillance of the Moroccan Jewish community, adding that intervention was necessary beyond the capabilities of the Casablanca regional government. Assistance from the Sharifian protectorate advisors was required: “Your intervention would be a useful contribution to maintaining order among the Casablanca Jewish community which has, for a while now, undertaken initiatives of which the Government does not approve.”<sup>184</sup> Subsequent protectorate reports frequently refer to the need to maintain Jewish religious traditions, supposedly to prevent further “deracination.” Given the increasingly tense political climate, it seems more likely that such initiatives were intended to circumscribe potentially troublesome activities. Given the concern with the nationalist movement and fear of any potential alliance of Moroccan nationalists with Germany or Italy, the protectorate authorities and their inspector of Jewish

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<sup>183</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3

<sup>184</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3

institutions were inclined to limit Jewish political activities as much as possible. This would not prove successful.

Following a nationalist meeting in Fez in November 1936 at which Jews and Muslims were in attendance, *Le Maroc Socialiste* published an article entitled “the call from a group of young Jewish intellectuals,” and affirmed a desire for Jews to remain “inextricably united to Muslims for the good of the Moroccan people, regardless of race or religion. Long live the Moroccan proletariat!”<sup>185</sup> This statement reflects the policies of the Moroccan Union of Muslims and Jews, formed in Fez in July of 1936 and composed of young Socialists and Communists.<sup>186</sup> It is clear that by the late 1930s Jews were already politically active in leftist politics as well as Zionist and reflected “Allianciste” political trends. In Meknes, Rabat, Casablanca and elsewhere, Jews attended and organized political meetings.<sup>187</sup> Spanish refugees mingled with Moroccan war veterans and Jews in cinemas and leftist meetings. They sang the International together, agitated against anti-Semitism— and the protectorate authorities were quite concerned.<sup>188</sup>

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued for a rich interwar marketplace of political ideologies available to Moroccan Jews. This political landscape was enriched by dramatic demographic shifts across the

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<sup>185</sup> *Le Maroc Socialiste*, 21 November 1936. In Jamaâ Baïda, “La Presse Juive au Maroc entre les Deux Guerres”, *Hespéris-Tamuda*, XXXVII (1999), p. 179.

<sup>186</sup> Mohammed Kenbib, *Juifs et Musulmans au Maroc: 1859-1948* (Rabat: Université Mohammed V, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1994), p. 556.

<sup>187</sup> CADN IMA/200/319: “parties politiques de gauche.”

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

Mediterranean as workers from France, Spain and Italy flocked to work on colonial infrastructure projects such as the railroads and port of Casablanca. Moroccans migrating to large urban centers from more rural areas looking for job opportunities worked alongside European union leaders, socialists and communists. While such political activities were formally illegal for indigenous Moroccans, this policy was nearly impossible to enforce and surveillance reports during the interwar period reflect an increasing number of Moroccan Muslims and Jews engaged in leftist activities. Moroccan Jews were politically active through a prismatic variety of political options, none of which were mutually exclusive, including Alliancism, Communism, and Zionism. Despite ideological contradictions, on the ground affiliations were multiple. The next chapters will dig deeper into interpersonal, familial and social connections; as well as political and cultural frictions and fissures among Moroccan Jews and between Moroccan Jews and Muslims in war time. Encarnacion Lévy, her husband Simon, and the first two Communist secretaries general, Léon Sultan and Ali Yata, loom larger as the PCM Moroccanized and the Vichy period galvanized Moroccan Jewry into further political engagement.

## Chapter 2

### The Vichy Years and the Politicization of Moroccan Jewry

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In August 1941, the future founder of the Moroccan Communist Party was disbarred following the application of Vichy legislation in Morocco.<sup>189</sup> Born in Algeria, Léon Sultan had legally been a French citizen pursuant to the Crémieux Decree of 1870, which granted most Algerian Jews French citizenship.<sup>190</sup> Before 1941, Sultan had practiced law in Casablanca with all the advantages of French citizenship. He petitioned the Protectorate authorities to be allowed to continue practicing law to no avail and was forced to comply with Vichy's laws by April 1941. He continued these petitions through March 1942, when he wrote that although he "submitted, naturally, to your decision," he did not find it to be legally well-founded.<sup>191</sup> However, certain exemptions were possible. Article two of the *dahir* (Imperial decree) of January 1942 (as well as Sultan's argument) stated that one condition of practicing law was the ability to express oneself orally in Arabic without a translator. Sultan took a sarcastic tone: "suppose if one were suddenly struck with amnesia and one could no longer speak Arabic, does it immediately follow that the viziriel decree would be automatically overturned? Clearly not. Indeed [...] we know of examples of lawyers who don't know how to speak Arabic and still your Office did not take into account the viziriel decrees that named them no longer fit for service."

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<sup>189</sup> USHMM RG 81/1/4/208

<sup>190</sup> Most, but not all. See Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

<sup>191</sup> USHMM RG 81/4/197

Having demonstrated the inconsistent nature of the Vichy regime's legal operations, Sultan continued: "Concerning myself, I don't seek to cling desperately to a profession that I have practiced so passionately. But having practiced it so scrupulously and without failing, I was hoping to leave it with less brutality."<sup>192</sup> Sultan acknowledged that he did not meet the requirements to continue practicing law as he had not been decorated in the war of 1939-1940 and that while "it wasn't possible for me to go and fight," he had made the honest effort to register. In the months that followed through the liberation of Morocco in 1943, Sultan would continue to advocate on behalf of Jews who were forced to leave their professions, homes and schools, as well as provide legal services for political refugees in Morocco. At the same time, Sultan founded the Moroccan Communist Party (PCM) in 1943, shortly after Morocco's liberation from Vichy rule. He perished in 1945 from wounds sustained during the Allied landing. He was one of many Jews living in Morocco who were galvanized into Communist politics as a result of experiences in the Second World War. This category includes two recurring characters for the remainder of the dissertation: Simon Lévy and Abraham Serfaty.

Simon Lévy related in an interview one year before his death in 2011 how he was affected by this legislation. Lévy was born in Fez, 1934. With the arrival of the war, he and his family were crammed into a single room in the *mellah*. Previously, he had lived in a spacious house in the European sector known as the *ville nouvelle*. Lévy mused, "I remember standing on a balcony in the mellah of Fez. The streets were so over-crowded that people were obligated to walk very, very slowly, in baby steps." He recalled attending synagogue with Ashkenazi refugees who had

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<sup>192</sup> USHMM RG 81/4/197

escaped the political prisoner labor camps, celebrating Chanukah together and exchanging religious traditions and experiences.

Upon Léon Sultan's death in 1945 (discussed toward the end of this chapter), Ali Yata, a Muslim from Tangier, became the PCM's secretary general. Yata married Rosalie (Encarnacion's sister – whose family had missed the boat from Spain to Latin America and instead found themselves in North Africa). This made him Simon Lévy's brother-in-law. Simon Lévy would prove critical to the PCM's efforts for independence from France. Having worked for Moroccan independence from France since 1953, he joined the Moroccan Communist Party in 1954, holding several posts. From 1998 he served as the director of the Foundation for Moroccan Jewish Patrimony as well as Casablanca's historical and ethnographic Museum of Moroccan Judaism. Moroccan media heavily reported Simon Lévy's funeral in 2011, with many prominent government officials in attendance. His life spans the crucial nexus of North African Communism, Vichy rule as well as the dispersion of Moroccan Jews.

Abraham Serfaty, another prominent Jewish member of the PCM and a subsequent radical Leftist extremist group, also ascribes his political awakening to the Vichy period. When Serfaty was only 17 years old, he wanted to enlist in the Free French forces to fight Hitler. Being too young, he turned his attention to protesting the continued presence of Vichy colonial administrators after Allied liberation and read “the leaflets dropped by US planes with the face of FDR promising imminent liberation.”<sup>193</sup> Serfaty fraternized with Spanish political prisoners, dock workers and avidly followed the Red Army's resistance at Stalingrad. Under the influence

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<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Robert Watson, “Between Liberation(s) and Occupation(s): Reconsidering the Emergence of Maghrebi Jewish Communism, 1942-1945,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 13, no. 3 (November 2014): pp. 381-398.

of Spanish Republicans seeking refuge in Morocco, Serfaty joined the Communist Youth wing and befriended American soldiers while working as a night watchman at the port of Casablanca. Many Casablancon Jews welcomed American Jewish soldiers into their homes and synagogues in this era. Serfaty attempted to bring a Black American soldier to a Jewish social with disastrous consequences.<sup>194</sup> Later, he led workers' strikes in the Khouribga phosphate mines and spent nearly twenty years in prison during the repressive regime of Hassan II following independence. He was a cause célèbre for human rights organizations in the 1990s and died an avid Communist. His political awakening, as for so many Moroccan Jews, was in the Vichy era.

The legacy of the Vichy regime (1940-1942 in the Maghreb) is one of profound betrayal, as well as political and social upheaval for North African Jews. While many French historians have devoted tomes to Vichy rule in France, North Africa has largely been omitted from the tale. What happened on the “other” side of the Mediterranean has typically been overlooked by standard narratives of Vichy France, assuming that the North African front played a marginal role in what is traditionally construed as a European story. Occasionally Morocco or Algeria surfaces for the briefest of paragraphs, and oddly enough Tunisia (which endured direct German occupation) is all but forgotten. This is changing, with more recent scholarship from France, Morocco, Tunisia and the United States. The Vichy era in North Africa had profound implications for France as well as Jews and Muslims of the Maghrib, including the tangled questions of emancipation, citizenship, colonization and independence movements. Indeed, while ethnically based nationalist ideologies, Palestine and the establishment of the modern state of Israel and post-war episodes of violence against North African Jews certainly played a role in the eventual mass exodus of Maghribi Jews, the Vichy era is central. Thus, in addition to

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 387.



illuminating hitherto unexamined or obscured archival material, this chapter represents a historiographical reinterpretation of events.

Interwar Morocco was home to a diversity of political refugees, notably those of the Spanish Civil War. On the eve of the Second World War and especially after France fell to Germany in the fall of 1940, Casablanca (and Morocco more broadly) served as both a safe haven and transit point (typically to the Americas). Previously, European Jews had been benefactors for Moroccan Jews. Abigail Green has noted this in her study of Sir Moses Montefiore's philanthropy; Frances Malino, Aron Rodrigue, Esther Benbassa, Lisa Moses Leff, Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Joshua Schreier and other scholars have written extensively on the Alliance Israélite Universelle's philanthropic, particularly Jewish, *mission civilisatrice*. Daniel Schroeter and Jessica Marglin have documented a long history of European consular support for Jews which served to initiate or strengthen trans-national Jewish support. As disenfranchised European Jews fled hostile fascist regimes and anti-Semitic legislation, their Moroccan Jewish hosts turned from beneficiaries, to benefactors. However, when Vichy anti-Semitic legislation was applied in France's colonial holdings, this dynamic shifted. The French betrayal of all that the Alliance had inculcated and Protectorate authorities had promised marked a watershed moment for Moroccan Jewry. Pre-existing debates among Moroccan Jews regarding their place in their homeland intensified, as did their fears and hopes.

This chapter argues that the Vichy period was crucial for the political galvanization of Moroccan Jewry. It manifested itself in many different political directions, most notably Zionism and Communism. Some Moroccan Jews joined the prevailing mainstream *Istiqlal* party, but not

many. Further, there were many more Jews (likely a majority) who could claim no hard and fast political ideology but observed alternately alarming and promising events leading to their ultimate choices (socially, politically and geographically). Overall, the prismatic nature of Jewish political possibilities in the interwar period began to steadily narrow into distinct political organizations and a stark choice: to remain in Morocco or to leave, either for France or, more commonly, for Israel.

This chapter will first discuss France's immediate fall to German forces in 1940 and the installation of Marshall Pétain's Vichy regime. It will then discuss the new legal realities of Moroccan Jews with the application of anti-Semitic Vichy legislation, alongside a wave of European Jewish and political refugees. Next, it will address the divergent fates of these populations, notably in the context of forced labor camps constructed along and across the Moroccan-Algerian border to serve the long colonial dream of a trans-Saharan railroad. Both populations will reconvene in the narrative via the interventions of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as well as the American army after the Allied landings of Operation Torch in 1942. Finally, the chapter will examine the political aftermath of the Second World War for Moroccan Jews and the state of the Moroccan Communist Party. It will conclude with the death of the aforementioned Léon Sultan and the PCM's post-war transformation into a full-blown Moroccan nationalist movement in the context of a weakened France, ascendant Cold War powers, and the growing power of Sultan Muhammed V.

## II. THE FALL OF FRANCE AND THE INSTALLATION OF VICHY

In order to fully appreciate the magnitude of Vichy's betrayal of the Gallic Jewish emancipatory promise, it makes sense to explore the roots of that social contract. The French Revolution of 1789 was a watershed moment for Jewish history as well as world history when understood in its broadest context. As Paula Hyman has argued, there was no "French Jewish community" before the Revolution – there were Jewish communities dispersed across French territory, notably the technically illegal population in Paris; the Sephardim around Bordeaux and Bayonne in France's southwest; the Provençal communities of the Papal states and the Ashkenazim of the French/German borderlands Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>195</sup> With the Revolution, Jews were transformed from subjects to citizens after the formal emancipation of French Jewry in 1790 and 1791. Just prior, the Declaration of the Rights of Man had been voted into law in August 1789. This French iteration of the "Jewish question" was part of a wider contemporary European conversation concerning Jewish emancipation. Immediately before the Revolution, the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences in Metz held a now infamous essay contest asking for submissions in response to the following prompt: "Are there means of making the Jews happier and more useful in France?"<sup>196</sup> Nine essayists entered the contest and three won prizes. Perhaps the most famous of the three was penned by Abbé Henri Grégoire, a liberal priest from Lorraine. During the Revolution Grégoire would prove an ardent supporter of Jewish emancipation. In his essay, Grégoire argued for the physical, political and moral "regeneration" of Jews, understanding that Jews were in a debased state largely due to structural causes and that they were hence "reformable." Salo Baron famously wrote in his 1928 essay "Ghetto and Emancipation" that

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<sup>195</sup> Paula H. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>196</sup> Hyman, p. 20.

Jews enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in pre-emancipatory, early modern and medieval Europe – not all was nasty, brutish and short. Baron was writing against a particularly lachrymose vision of medieval Jewish history, and his point rings true illustrating the pitfalls of emancipation. As emancipated citizens, Jews were now required to relegate religious particularism to the private sphere; the public sphere was that of the nation (in this case, that of France under the stringency of *laïcité* (“secularism”)). As Count Clermont-Tonnere famously put it after the Revolution, France should “give nothing to the Jews as a nation, everything to the Jews as individuals.” Jewish communal identity was to take a permanent backseat to the institutions and requirements of the nation-state. Lisa Leff has argued that this integration into the French state permitted new modes of Jewish agency and identity “expression,” which had clear and direct consequences for the Jews of North Africa. French Jews were to embrace Enlightenment emancipatory values as well as the French notion of a *mission civilisatrice*.<sup>197</sup>

This ethos is particularly evident in the Alliance Israélite Universelle, founded in Paris in 1860 by Adolphe Crémieux and his supporters. He was a lawyer from the Alsace-Lorraine area of France who believed profoundly both in the benefits of emancipation and the French civilizing mission. Fueled by reports of “Oriental” Jewish degradation and the need for regeneration from prominent Jewish philanthropists such as Sir Moses Montefiore, the Alliance opened its first school in the northern Moroccan city of Tetouan in 1862 and quickly spread its network of schools for Jewish girls and boys across the Southern Mediterranean, up and around through Ottoman lands and even beyond. Its Talmudic Hebrew motto – *kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* (“all Jews are responsible for one another”) – took a distinctly French tint. In Alliance schools, Jewish

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<sup>197</sup> Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: the Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

children from North Africa and the Middle East would be instructed about “*nos ancêtres les gaulois*” (“our ancestors the Gauls” in French), memorize French geography, study French authors and the Enlightenment. A relatively small amount of time was devoted to Jewish subjects, Hebrew, as well as local language instruction in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish. By the eve of the Second World War, generations of Jews across Morocco, in bustling urban centers as well as more remote settlements, had been educated to identify with France, spoke French, and were separated from their Muslim compatriots as a result.

France itself had meanwhile endured challenges to the “Frenchness” of its Jewish citizens. Anti-Semitism attended the birth of Romantic nationalism, another legacy of the French Revolution. The Dreyfus affair of 1894-1906 and the 1886 publication of Edouard Drumont’s *La France Juive* exposed the growth of French anti-Semitism. It not only weakened Jewish security in France, it also exploded into violence in French colonies, notably in Algeria where most Jews had been made French citizens with the application of the 1870 Crémieux decree (the decree was not applied in Morocco or Tunisia as French colonial authorities later came to regard it as a mistake). Compounded with such experiences, Eastern and Central European Jews immigrated to Paris and other French cities in high numbers and French anti-Semitism, fed by the popularity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, made Jewish life in France ever more precarious.<sup>198</sup> Nancy L. Green’s work on Eastern European Jewish immigrant workers in Paris highlights the unease of a French bourgeois, assimilated community absorbing those perceived to be “backward,” alternatively dangerously religious or dangerously socialist.<sup>199</sup> Pierre Birnbaum dubbed such

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<sup>198</sup> Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State and Community in Modern France*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), pp. 58 and 179.

<sup>199</sup> Nancy L. Green, *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the Belle Epoque* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986).

French bourgeois Jews “the Republic’s fools,”<sup>200</sup> in light of his perception of their gullibility in the face of Vichy anti-Semitism and the Vichy betrayal of Enlightenment, universalist values. Arthur Hertzberg has put it more bluntly: “the era of Western history that began with the French Revolution ended in Auschwitz.”<sup>201</sup> Hannah Arendt has famously analyzed this trajectory with more nuance, but what happened in Vichy France, as with most things, is more complicated.

The mass migrations of workers from Eastern Europe, Italy, and Spanish refugees of the 1920s and 1930s into France exacerbated French populist anti-immigration sentiment. The French government actively sought Polish and Italian workers in the 1920s. The flood of politically persecuted refugees from Eastern Europe and Spain in the 1930s coupled with financial collapse in 1929 added to the prevailing xenophobia and anxieties over unemployment and perceived dangers of socialists and communists. While Léon Blum’s Popular Front socialist government proved victorious in 1936, he faced heavy opposition as anti-Semitism enabled the collapsing of Jews, Bolshevism and Capitalism into one perplexing evil. There were approximately 180,000 refugees in France in 1938, but “they had arrived at the wrong time and in the wrong place – the usual fate of refugees.”<sup>202</sup> A widespread European climate of pre-war anti-Semitism made international Jewry and whatever conspiracies that necessarily attended them ripe for persecutions under the Vichy government which catalyzed into action with Nazi take over.

France fell to Germany in June of 1940. A Nazi occupying government controlled the northern part of the country, based in Paris, and a puppet collaborationist government under Marshal

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<sup>200</sup> Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: a Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 337.

<sup>201</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 5.

<sup>202</sup> Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1981), p. 35.

Philippe Pétain (who had cut his teeth in North African colonial wars) was installed in the southern unoccupied zone, its capital at Vichy. On October 3, 1940, the *Statut des juifs* was promulgated. On October 7, the Crémieux decree was revoked, depriving Algerian Jews wherever they were living of their French citizenship. In December, Vichy authorities pursued a project to send about 150,000 “dangerous” Spanish Republican refugees to Mexico.<sup>203</sup> Also in December, foreign-born Jews came under severe scrutiny, despite, in many cases, having obtained French citizenship. They were considered risky – supporters of Spaniards, Communists and other undesirables.<sup>204</sup> The Vichy regime quickly acted upon the anxieties of the late 1930s – such “measures against Jews came from within, as part of the National Revolution. They were autonomous acts taken in pursuit of indigenous goals. The first goal was to block further immigration of refugees, especially Jewish refugees, into a country hardly able to feed and employ its own people...As we have noted, the German expulsion of more Jewish refugees into Unoccupied France roused Vichy to strenuous protests.”<sup>205</sup> Following the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942 when the “final solution” was settled upon, France began to deport its Jews (mostly foreign born Jews – such as at the Vel d’Hiv Roundup of July 16-17 1942). Deportations from France to death camps continued through 1944. Many scholars have produced insightful, detailed work on Vichy France. What has been less explored are the implications this period had for France’s colonial territories.

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<sup>203</sup> Marrus & Paxton 1981, p. 14.

<sup>204</sup> Marrus & Paxton, p. 225.

<sup>205</sup> Marrus & Paxton, p. 13.

### III. VICHY MOROCCO AND ANTI-SEMITIC LEGISLATION

The installation of the Vichy regime had profound consequences for North African Jewry. The stakes were highest in Algeria. Due to the 1870 Crémieux decree, Algerian Jews had had the advantages of French citizenship on top of a Gallicizing Alliance education. There were no North African death camps as there were in Eastern Europe, although there were specific Jewish internment camps in North Africa; it was a very different experience of anti-Semitism on a much reduced scale. Vichy laws were applied strictly, rigidly across the Maghrib, and local colonial authorities often surpassed the severity of their directives from the Metropole.<sup>206</sup>

Moroccan Jews became very politically active upon Hitler's ascent to power in 1933. Public meetings and boycotts were organized; in March of 1933 alone, approximately 5,000 people attended a rally held at the Regent Cinema in Casablanca. It included organizers from local human rights organizations, LICA members, Communists and many others.<sup>207</sup> Signs calling for mass boycotts were distributed in synagogues and written in both French and Judeo-Arabic.<sup>208</sup> On the eve of the Second World War many Moroccan Jews wanted to enlist and fight for France. They were largely denied out of a concern for "French prestige."<sup>209</sup> Thousands of Jews fled Central Europe between 1933-40, many of whom ended up in Morocco and necessarily created a

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<sup>206</sup> Henri Msellati, *Les Juifs d'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy, 10 juillet 1940-3 novembre 1943* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p. 254.

<sup>207</sup> Robert Assaraf, *Une certaine Histoire des Juifs du Maroc : 1860-1999* (Paris : Jean-Claude Gawsewitch Éditeur, 2005), p. 362.

<sup>208</sup> Assaraf 2005, p. 363

<sup>209</sup> Mohamed Kenbib, "Moroccan Jews and the Vichy regime, 1940-2," *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19 no. 4 (September 2014), pp. 540-551 and p. 542.



mounting climate of anxiety.<sup>210</sup> When the Vichy laws were applied, it was not without care for the precarious political stability of the 1930s. Resident General Noguès enforced Vichy legislation (via the Sultan) and also sought to prevent Jewish “subversion” in opposition to France.<sup>211</sup> The laws published in the *Journal Officiel* in November 1940 and August 1941 “limited to only 2% the number of Jews who could serve as medical doctors and lawyers and to 10% the number of Jews allowed to teach in the secondary schools. Similar restrictions were imposed on other professions such as cinema operators, real estate agents, pharmacists, and lawyers. Discriminatory laws required Jews who had recently bought or rented houses or flats in modern European neighborhoods to return to the old Jewish quarters.”<sup>212</sup> In addition to such legal restrictions, pro-Vichy Europeans spread graffiti and pamphlets and fliers replete with anti-Semitic slogans, such as: “This is a Jewish business, a business of profiteers”; “Buying from Jews destroys French commerce”; “Worker, your enemy is the Jew; he exploits you and derives his ill-gotten gains from your misery.”<sup>213</sup> In addition to such fliers, pro-Vichy Europeans – most notably in Moroccan branches of *Croix de Feu* (“Cross of Fire,” a reactionary anti leftist veterans’ organization founded in France during the interwar period) sought to encourage Moroccan Muslims to identify Jews as a common, exploitive enemy.<sup>214</sup> Nazi representatives in Northern Morocco blamed the Spanish Civil War on Jews as well as current economic suffering. Nazi Germany maintained an office at the Hotel National in Melilla and founded the International anti-Jewish League in Tangier. All of this propoganda was in addition to appeals to

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<sup>210</sup> Kenbib, p. 543.

<sup>211</sup> Kenbib, p. 544.

<sup>212</sup> Kenbib, p. 545.

<sup>213</sup> In Kenbib, p. 547.

<sup>214</sup> Kenbib, p. 547.

Moroccan nationalists and broadcasts from Radio Berlin.<sup>215</sup> Leaflets and other propaganda in Arabic claimed that “Jews would enslave Muslims if the Communists should win the war.”<sup>216</sup> These extreme elements would have deleterious consequences for the refugee Jewish community in Morocco. In the face of such legal restrictions, many Moroccan Jews sought foreign intervention from American Jewish organizations.<sup>217</sup> Barring that, they sought exemptions which were possible, although difficult to procure.

The case of one French loyalist serves as an example. On November 12, 1941, Raymond Bensimhon, a Jew from Fez, wrote to the protectorate authorities protesting that he should be allowed to maintain his business. Article 10 of the August 5, 1941 dahir stated that exemptions may be possible “for those Jews who have rendered unto Morocco exceptional service.”<sup>218</sup> Bensimhon then related his family’s exceptional service: his grandfather, Juda Bensimhon, had served as the guide and host for Charles de Foucauld, who came to Fez to study and write his book “Reconnaissance au Maroc.”[1888]<sup>219</sup> Historians have noted that Foucauld’s time in pre-Protectorate Morocco is indicative of the ever-reaching arm of France into North Africa. Bensimhon rightly pointed this out, and further the dangers hosting de Foucauld held for his grandfather:

If Father de Foucauld had been found out, my grandfather ran the risk of being insulted and harassed by the Jews for having allowed a non-Jew to disguise himself as a rabbi. He also ran the risk of being purely and simply executed by the Arabs for having brought into the city a Christian at a time when all Christians were considered spies [...] today, with my own

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<sup>215</sup> Aomar Boum, “Partners against Anti-Semitism: Muslims and Jews respond to Nazism in French North African colonies, 1936-1940,” *Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 4 (September 2014), pp. 554-567: p. 565.

<sup>216</sup> Boum 2014, p. 565.

<sup>217</sup> Kenbib, 549.

<sup>218</sup> USHMM, BNRM Rg-81.001M.0001.00000016.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

employment at risk, I am obliged to knock on door of great and generous France, whose gratitude has never been expressed in vain, to remind her – indeed, in spite of myself – of her debt to my family.<sup>220</sup>

Bensimhon helpfully attached newspaper clippings from *La Vigie Marocaine* and *Presse Marocaine* from 1933 describing Consul Lemaire installing a commemorative plaque outside the family's home in gratitude for such "exceptional service."<sup>221</sup> Bensimhon was ultimately successful in his petition, but his example set a very high bar indeed for Moroccan Jews demonstrating service to the French authorities in Morocco.<sup>222</sup> Most Moroccan Jews were not so lucky to have served France in such a historic fashion.

Sultan Muhammed V, with the guiding hand of the Vichy protectorate authorities, published a series of dahirs (imperial decrees) on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941. The articles contained in these dahirs specified the professions, living spaces, education and much else now forbidden to Moroccan Jews.<sup>223</sup> By November of 1941, Moroccan Jews were to have ceased practicing their prohibited professions (which included virtually anything that was not directly related to Jewish communal functioning) or else face imprisonment and/or steep fines from 100 up to 10,000 francs. And yet, as Bensimhon successfully (Léon Sultan less so), pointed out, there were exceptions. In addition to "exceptional service" such as that exemplified by the Bensimhon family, these included: 1. Possessing a French veteran's registration card; 2. Having fought in the 1939-1940 campaign and having been decorated with a "croix de guerre" for this service; 3. Having received the

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> USHMM, BNRM Rg-81.001M.0001.00000034 contains the press clipping about installing the sign from *La Vigie Marocaine* of 20 décembre 1933; Rg-81.001M.0001.00000036 another from PRESSE MAROCAINE no. 7396 dec. 20 1933.

<sup>222</sup> USHMM, BNRM Rg-81.001M.0001.00000019.

<sup>223</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0002.00000017: Dahir du 5 Aout 1941 prescrivant le recensement des juifs marocains.

nomination of Légion d'honneur or other military decorations for war service; 4. Being a descendent, widow or orphan or a soldier who died for France.<sup>224</sup> While the Vichy protectorate authorities would prove quite rigorous in the application of prohibitions, approval of exemptions was inconsistent at best.

Léon Sultan, future founder of the Moroccan Communist Party and disbarred Casablanca-based lawyer, continued to agitate the protectorate authorities after he was forced to quit his law practice. He wrote numerous letters inquiring about the legal grounds on which Jewish children were removed from French protectorate schools and required to attend only institutions such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle that were specifically geared toward Jews. In non-Alliance schools, the Jewish student body was fixed at 10% or less.<sup>225</sup> Jewish students whose fathers had fought for France most often had their petitions rejected, as did their fathers' petitions to maintain their employment. Indeed, in direct contradiction to the August 5<sup>th</sup> 1941 dahir, Jewish orphans of veterans were still not permitted to attend the protectorate schools. For Algerian Jews in Morocco to maintain their French citizenship, there was no clear standard of what military record had to have been achieved.<sup>226</sup> As most Jews were now required to leave the French built *villes nouvelles* ("New Towns") to crowd into the historic (and underserviced) *mellahs*, reports abounded of deeply unsanitary conditions with disease "ravaging" the Jewish population.<sup>227</sup> Depending on family circumstances Jews could petition for better housing or to maintain their

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<sup>224</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0002.00000022: DAHIR du 5 AOUT 1941 (11 rejeb 1360) relatif au statut des juifs marocains.

<sup>225</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0012, nos. 379-80 referencing "l'application de la règle fixant à 10% le nombre des élèves israélites de toute nationalité à admettre dans chaque classe;" (nos. 384-6 AIU can only be for "pure" Jews).

<sup>226</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0012.559-562.

<sup>227</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0007: nos. 454-6 references epidemics "ravaging" the mellahs.

housing. Most of these petitions appear to have been unsuccessful.<sup>228</sup> Jews were further prohibited from hiring female Muslim help.<sup>229</sup> This particular measure was protested by Muslims as well as wealthier Moroccan Jews.<sup>230</sup>

At the same time, pro-Vichy European settlers in Morocco placed increasing pressure on Resident General Noguès. In response, historian Mohammed Kenbib has argued that “some of the 7,700, mostly Jewish, refugees documented by the residency between June 1940 and February 1941 awaiting departure for America or Palestine were moved to detention centers located far from the cities. Jewish refugees denounced by Vichy activists as ‘dangerous’ and others who did not hold transit visas or held visas that were no longer valid, were sent to forced labor camps such as Agdz and Bou Denib located in remote and desolate parts of the country.”<sup>231</sup> While Moroccan Jews did not face forced labor camps, the period wrought grave legal, economic and political instability. This was in addition to raising the increasingly urgent question of belonging and the naked truth of a fickle French Republican bargain.

Edmond Amran El Maleh was one affected by the sweeping changes brought about by the Second World War. El Maleh will become more prominent in the next chapter for his involvement in the PCM during the struggle for national liberation. He was another Moroccan Jew politicized by the war into the Communist party. El Maleh was born to a relatively well-to-do Moroccan Jewish family in 1917 in the Atlantic coastal city of Safi. Following the conclusion

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<sup>228</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0007: #381

<sup>229</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>230</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>231</sup> Kenbib 2014, p. 547.

of WWII, he held a leadership position on the PCM's Politburo. He would eventually leave the PCM for a mixture of political and personal reasons. At the age of sixty-three, living in Paris since 1965, El Maleh picked up the pen and began a prolific career as a semi-autobiographical novelist. His characters float between personas, often representative of different segments and epochs of Moroccan Jewish society and history. His 1986 novel *Mille ans, un jour* ("A Thousand Years, a Day") begins somewhat incongruously with a Jewish man – the protagonist, Nessim – in Morocco looking at a photograph of a dead child in Lebanon. This photograph serves as a Proustian madeleine – and the reader is jolted into several different intervals of the Moroccan Jewish past, simultaneously touching and intersecting vectors in a grand narrative tesseract. One of these moments is 1933 when Hitler rose to power and the news media shockwaves spread to North Africa. On "some day of some month that's difficult to pin down [...] Certainly a Thursday," in 1933 Nessim goes to a local restaurant, Morgane's, where he regularly meets his friends which include many European settlers.<sup>232</sup> Nessim does not keep kosher and looks with disdain on the "pious and traditional Jewish community," a community in which his family has a long history for producing notable rabbis, for he is an *évolué*, a Moroccan Jew thoroughly educated and acculturated to France.<sup>233</sup> The table conversation turns to Hitler, "something that happened over there, in another universe."<sup>234</sup> El Maleh paints a vignette that encapsulates much of the *évolué* identity:

"Hitler! How funny," said De Bergerac with a humor that this time irritated his companions.

"Don't believe it old boy," said Mr. Angrand with all seriousness. [...]

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<sup>232</sup>Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Mille Ans, Un Jour* (Paris: La Pensée Sauvage, 1986), p. 55.

<sup>233</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 57.

<sup>234</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 57.

Nessim listened without saying anything. It all struck him as being very far away. At the Alliance Israélite [Universelle] school, the only education had been that of French history. At the exit exam, the cold and distant examiner, conducted by a very haughty woman, questioned Nessim, pale and shaking with nerves, about taxis in the Marne. This was history and Nessim no longer remembered where his history book was in which there was only one black and white illustration, that of a *Poilu* [First World War soldier] or something like that, but Nessim liked the image and it distracted him from the boredom of his lessons.<sup>235</sup>

“Don’t you see,” Mr. Angrand said to Nessim – to whom he continued to speak in the formal *vous* form despite a long, old friendship – “Don’t you see that what’s happening in Germany is very bad for you Jews!”

“Drink, drink,” shouted Morgane and Petitburon, who were not inclined to cast a pall over this merry meal, among friends, a concentrated form of this small colonial society into which Nessim had been admitted, but without fully participating. He had been well assimilated, but he held onto a deep difference that he himself still didn’t fully grasp.<sup>236</sup>

Nessim, a product of the Alliance and surrounding himself with European, distinctly non-Jewish friends, cannot escape an abiding sense of alienation. The obvious understatement -- “what’s happening in Germany is very bad for you Jews!” – highlights Nessim’s alterity – “you Jews.” El Maleh writes Nessim to be dimly, but perhaps increasingly, conscious of the fact that his Gallicizing, Alliance education, his perfect French, his disdain for and even abandonment of his “traditional” Jewish background, has left him somewhat stranded. “Jewishness” comes to the fore and challenges Nessim’s French identity further with the arrival of European, Yiddish-speaking Jewish refugees in Morocco, as well as the rampant increase of anti-Semitic propaganda distributed by European settlers in Morocco well before the installation of the Vichy government.<sup>237</sup> El Maleh’s depiction of such anti-Semitic propaganda clashes tragically with images of French assimilated Jewish women, “corseted, their hair in *chignons*, the mirror image

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<sup>235</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 61.

<sup>236</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 61.

<sup>237</sup> See this quote, for example: « Le juif suant de peur, de crasse et de servilité confondues, cafard rampant aux encoignures moises, nez et serres crochus harponnant l’or et l’argent, cette caricature secrétée par ce milieu colonial, reprise parfois sous une forme épurée, polie par les antisémites éclairés, Nessim ne pouvait pas supporter que les siens, son entourage, la communauté dans son ensemble s’y résignât et qu’en quelque manière put l’alimenter par des conduites sans dignité, l’échine courbée ! » El Maleh 1986, p. 98

of French women,” forced, by an abrupt change in the politically acceptable air, to “change partners!”<sup>238</sup> Nessim is not politicized by these experiences, but rather courses through this segment of the narrative in a confused state, unsure of his place in society. He describes one friend, another Moroccan Jew, Messaoud, as being remarkably, impressively, politically active.

No Jew ventured into politics, no one joined an activity about which we knew nothing and which could bring trouble; better to remain Jewish without history, separated from everything, like the authorities, the friendly paternalism of the French entourage pushing you imperatively to do so. A blue shirt and red tie, a certain Messaoud, a petty worker from a poor family, regarded with a certain distance by the [Jewish] community aristocracy, Messaoud thus dressed went to Casablanca one day. They say he went to attend a meeting, that he sold a newspaper in the city streets, even that he got in a fight with some Frenchmen, something extraordinary! [...] Nessim didn't wear any particular color or any external sign, he disliked any ostentation, but he harbored many ardent [political] beliefs, which were not settled on any one program and didn't amount to any particular activity.<sup>239</sup>

Nessim's confusion is met with decisiveness in the broader Jewish communal setting. While Jews “don't do politics” in this world, El Maleh depicts cracks in the perceived a-political Jewish atmosphere. First through characters like Messaoud, embracing Leftist political activism, then through the synagogues: “Hitler was there in that far away geographic space, the first German Jews fleeing their country were arriving, the announcement had been made in the synagogue one Saturday to urge the community's solidarity.”<sup>240</sup> El Maleh depicts the Jews of Safi as perplexed as to how exactly best channel their feelings of Jewish solidarity for the European refugees: “No one knew a single word of Yiddish in the Safi community and it wasn't even certain that our two extra-terrestrials knew how to speak it, but they could more or less speak German sounding

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<sup>238</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 103.

<sup>239</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 107.

<sup>240</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 108.



words. Only Ruben knew a little bit.”<sup>241</sup> The only reason why Ruben knew any Yiddish was because he read an imported Zionist magazine and had come to identify Yiddish with Zionism rather than Hebrew. This is an interesting and revelatory detail considering El Maleh’s critical perspective on Ashkenazi-Sephardi-Mizrahi relations in North Africa and the Middle East, especially after Israeli statehood in 1948. Ruben, another emblematic character for El Maleh, works for the local Zionist paper. His primary job, Nessim explains, is to correct the Ashkenazi magazine director’s French. This enigmatic character of the Ashkenazi writer remains a vaguely threatening, outside force, “about whom we knew nothing.”<sup>242</sup> Nessim likes to tease Ruben about the Zionist paper, and relates that he “didn’t understand why Ruben devoted himself so to that paper,” for he had read about Herzl, the miracles performed by the settlers in Palestine and all about kibbutzim and was still not persuaded.<sup>243</sup> With the arrival of the European Jews in Safi as well as more numerous in places like Casablanca, the “sacred bonds of solidarity” about which Lisa Moses Leff has written inverted. Where European Jews had been the benefactors for the downtrodden “Oriental” Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, Moroccan Jews (as well as Jews in other North African and Middle Eastern contexts) now found themselves in the role of benefactors rather than beneficiaries. This was both empowering for Moroccan Jews and simultaneously distressing. Increasingly, their Jewishness was to be their central identity. Jewish and Moroccan identification rather than “French” was accelerated with Vichy’s anti-Semitic legislation in the country. The two German Jews in Safi become symbols of political and cultural isolation and alienation for El Maleh: “Exile was an elsewhere, the return consummated in beginning again the spiritual quest. The two German Jewish refugees had thus arrived, enigmatic

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<sup>241</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 109.

<sup>242</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 110.

<sup>243</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 112.

beings upon reflection, passing signs written in the landscape, withdrawn from the daily back-and-forth. Hitler!”<sup>244</sup> As Moroccan Jews were compelled to leave protectorate schools and jobs, positions as cinema owners, doctors, lawyers and merchants, local Jewish institutions (such as the Alliance), became overburdened with joint responsibilities to Moroccan and European Jews. Further, Jewish political refugees represented yet another kink in the Vichy political atmosphere. Labeled political undesirables, they were interned in forced labor camps built to fulfill the longstanding colonial vision of a trans-Saharan railroad that would effectively transport and mine Morocco’s phosphate rich regions for the Metropole. In the political prisoner population, largely Communist, the Vichy authorities had the cheap labor to accomplish this goal.

Moroccan Jewish fates intertwined intermittently, yet increasingly, with those of Eastern and Central Europe as well as Moroccan Jewish protégés who claimed European passports. A certain David Gabay was arrested in January 1940 and sentenced by a military tribunal in Casablanca to 22 months in prison for distributing political propaganda, alongside Spaniards and other “undesirables.” He was born to Moroccan Jewish parents (Samuel Gabay and Bellida Benzaquen) in Casablanca in 1915 and had acquired British protection.<sup>245</sup> His fate, and those of many Moroccan Jews, complicates historical understandings of colonial legal definitions such as “European,” “Moroccan” or “*Israélite*” (“Jewish”). They defy generalization. Along with political undesirables, European Jews fleeing the continent were similarly unwanted. Resident General Noguès, in conjunction with orders from Vichy, frequently bemoaned their presence on Moroccan shores. Estimates vary as to initial numbers – 800 to 1,000 is a frequent figure quoted by Vichy authorities in January 1941. Often already “armed with visas for overseas French

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<sup>244</sup> El Maleh 1986, p. 113.

<sup>245</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

colonies, these immigrants, mostly Jews, are transported from Marseille to Algiers, on a French boat, from where they get to Casablanca.” Many of them then went to Portugal, with hopes of eventually crossing the Atlantic.<sup>246</sup> As time went on, refugee numbers increased. Just a couple of weeks later in January, estimates had risen to 1,000-1,200 refugees awaiting passage out of Morocco to safety (the Algerian authorities suggested this number was closer to 2,000). Noguès was anxious to see them leave to lessen the added stress they contributed to the already beleaguered Moroccan economy and housing market.<sup>247</sup> A ship bound for the United States named the *Wyoming* caused particular anxiety in May of 1941. The French Vichy authorities ordered that its departure from the port of Casablanca be delayed. On board were about 800 migrants “majority Jewish” alongside Poles, Germans and many other “*apatrides* [stateless].”<sup>248</sup> While their departure was stalled, the Moroccan Protectorate authorities refused to allow them to disembark as “the Protectorate camps were full to maximum capacity and the Administration is already responsible for more than 4,000 foreigners dispersed among internment camps and worker units.” Noguès firmly stated only two possible solutions: that the refugees return to Marseille, or continue to their final destinations.<sup>249</sup> In Tangier, the falsified document business flourished and cargo-space tickets to the United States were sold at exorbitant, exploitation rates.<sup>250</sup> As over-crowding worsened in Casablanca with European Jews and, to a lesser extent, political refugees from Poland or Germany hastening to leave for the Americas, Noguès justified limiting the stays of Jews for fear of heightening the risk of “anti-Semitism is always ready to

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<sup>246</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>247</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>248</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>249</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>250</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

strike violently.” Significantly, he didn’t specify who would commit such violence.<sup>251</sup> Noguès continued his report of June 16 1941: “With their numbers increasing each day, fugitives establish themselves in Morocco, where they inflate the ranks of the Mosaic [Jewish] community to the point where we may fear bloodletting. Further aggravating the danger, another contingent of Jews is returning to the country. The steamships *Alsina*, *Wyoming* and *Mont Viso* have disembarked their passengers in Casablanca. This massive dumping runs the risk of inciting, among a population particularly sensitive to orders and impulsiveness, an unpredictable backlash. It’s out of the question to impose such a thing on Morocco.”<sup>252</sup> Noguès then threatened if the boats weren’t able to leave Casablanca with this singularly vexing cargo on board, the Protectorate authorities would be forced to transport them to Dakar, where supposedly housing was less crowded.<sup>253</sup> <sup>254</sup> The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a Quaker philanthropic aid organization based out of Philadelphia, reported about two million refugees. The AFSC tried to help facilitate exit visas for the Americas, but:

Unfortunately, those who had not escaped in November were sent by degrees to concentration camps. It is impossible to know the exact number, because they were taken on a few hours’ notice. (These camps were located in Settat, Bou Arfa and Bou Denib as well as in other places). Many of the men were shipped to the Trans-Saharan Railway. The women and children were put in concentration camps where they slept either in barracks, guarded by Senegalese troops, or in tents where they slept on the ground either on blanket or light mattress with insufficient covering. Many of the camps were seas of mud, and people unaccustomed to manual labor were obliged to work long hours a day in the fields.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>252</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>253</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>254</sup> The Argentinian Embassy, for one, was concerned for its citizens on board the *Alsina*: USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables,” Vichy, 20 June 1941: « L’Ambassade d’Argentine a attiré mon attention sur la situation d’une soixantaine d’Argentins passagers de l’ *Alsina* qui sont menacés d’internement. En raison de l’intérêt que nous avons, notamment du point de vue de notre ravitaillement, à ménager le Gouvernement argentin, ainsi que l’opinion publique de ce pays, je vous serais reconnaissant de réserver aux passagers en question le traitement le plus favorable que permettent les circonstances, et, en tout cas, de ne pas les envoyer dans un camp de concentration. »

<sup>255</sup> AFSC Box 1, folder 5/36 in USHMM RG-67.008

Leslie Heath, head of the AFSC operations in Morocco, penned the above report and many others. The AFSC will become more prominent in a subsequent section of this chapter as they dealt with non-Jewish refugees working on the trans-Saharan railroad. As is increasingly evident, the swirling international context traversing Casablanca defies neat categorization, no matter how hard Protectorate authorities ought to enforce one. Adding to prevailing anxiety, *l'Humanité* reported in November 1941 that Nazi forces sought to immediately conquer North Africa.<sup>256</sup>

Moroccan Protectorate authorities had expressed similar fears well before the installation of the Vichy regime and the fall of France to Germany. In August of 1936, Protectorate authorities reported finding a trove of Nazi documents in Barcelona regarding German plans for North Africa. Within this trove were reports of *Stützpunkte* (“centers”) and *Ortsgruppen* (“branches”) of Nazi propaganda in Spanish Morocco, notably in Ceuta, Tetouan and Larache.<sup>257</sup> A letter dated July 27, 1935 in the same trove of documents indicated that German spies were visiting Morocco for intelligence, disguised as tourists.<sup>258</sup> This same letter was reportedly directly addressed to Von Ribbentrop’s office and described (in retrospect, rather optimistically) popular Moroccan support for the Reich, taking on rather unexpected imagery:

Like the Virgin Mary’s immaculate conception, the apparition of the Führer on the scene has fertilized the Muslim world, particularly in view of its fight against Judaism. This is apparent even today and is reflected (not without bloodshed) in violence across the country [Morocco]. The Arab is only just beginning to become conscious after his long European oppression, and, if he turns against the Jews, this is just the beginning. From India to Egypt and from Egypt to the Souss [valley in Morocco] to the great desert, there

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<sup>256</sup> Police Archives p. 53-54 *l'Humanité* 5 Novembre 1941

<sup>257</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL 1AFF-POL/902

<sup>258</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL 1AFF-POL/902

is ferment. How far things may go when, in Algiers, which has been the white city after 80 years of struggle, the Arabs cry out against the Jews ‘Germany forever!’ The sons of rich Muslims who visit Paris and Berlin fill their own heads with new ideas. We, Germans, must find avenues of access to these people. Until the Great War, England, France and America barred all routes to the West or East, but here, in Morocco, we can open new doors based on friendship and sympathy with the population. [...] The Jews act as though they are the masters of Morocco, we will continue the struggle against them in Germany, and only that, all other considerations laid aside, will place the Muslims on our side.<sup>259</sup>

While it is unclear what Nazi propaganda officers thought they would achieve with such Virgin Mary imagery, Nazi goals for Morocco and the Muslim world more broadly were quite clear. However, as was explored in the previous chapter, Moroccan Nationalists largely eschewed anti-Semitic Nazi agitation. When nationalists did embrace Nazi friendship, it was out of anti-colonial strategic concern since Germany was at war with France. Most anti-Semitic activity in the war years was carried out by European settlers, not Moroccan Muslims. After the Vichy regime was installed in Morocco, Radio-Maroc spread German propaganda in the North – it was formally prohibited in the French South.<sup>260</sup> However, while listening to such radio was prohibited, it carried on. The protectorate authorities reported rising anti-Semitism among both Europeans and indigenous Moroccan Muslims across the country. Jewish stores in Oujda on Morocco’s north-eastern border with Algeria were plastered with signs reading “Here is a Jewish house, a house of profiteers.”<sup>261</sup> The community of Marrakesh was repeatedly “threatened,” particularly when Jews from Casablanca fled to that city out of fear of bombardment.<sup>262</sup> Fez also witnessed anti-Semitic activity in this period, while “certain elements in Fez, in contact with leaders in the Spanish zone, think that a delegation went to Berlin obtained important promises from the

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<sup>259</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL 1AFF-POL/902

<sup>260</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>261</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>262</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

German government. In Casablanca, nationalist propaganda is intensifying, following the arrival of emissaries from the neighboring [Spanish] zone.”<sup>263</sup> Not too surprisingly, the report mentions that Jews were becoming fiercely pro-British, fearing for their future. As Jews were forced to crowd into the *mellahs*, housing tripled in value rendering life ever more expensive, cramped and anxious. Rich Moroccan Jewish families thought to leave for the United States and sold their jewels, while some Jews in Rabat sought Brazilian passports, having been refused recognition of Brazilian naturalization by Protectorate authorities.<sup>264</sup> Rumors raced across the country that Hitler had expressed support for Moroccan nationalists and would soon free those who had been imprisoned or exiled in 1937, some believed Germany would establish an air-base in Port-Lyautey, and the German radio broadcasted in Arabic repeated its propaganda “endlessly;” swastikas appeared on the medina walls “in several cities.”<sup>265</sup> An Italian Commission arrived in Rabat in July of 1940, which, alongside the landing of a Lufthansa flight in Casablanca en route between Seville and Dakar caused heightened tension.<sup>266</sup> Casablanca witnessed stones thrown through the windows of Jewish owned stores, alongside fliers bearing anti-Semitic slogans.<sup>267</sup> One rather cynical report from October 1940 notes: “The abrogation of the Crémieux Decree has inspired two kinds of reactions among the Algerian-Moroccan Jews residing in this Protectorate. [...] Some, whose military decorations exempt [them] from this legislation, have said that they will not accept to be treated differently from their co-religionists and ask to share in their fate. But other, more sincere, see in this the prelude to a new era of sadness and misery for the people

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<sup>263</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>264</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>265</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>266</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>267</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

of Israel. [...] The relationship between Muslims and Jews doesn't seem to have changed."<sup>268</sup> Mostly, it seems that Moroccan Jews continued to affirm loyalty to France, hoping it would grant them some leeway, and "bowed their heads before the storm," circulating less in public and expressing utmost deference.<sup>269</sup> Jews were prohibited from any political organizing or meeting except for strictly religious purposes, to take place in the synagogues. Under no circumstances were Jews to take advantage of the space of the synagogues to make political statements. The report expresses: "These indications were received graciously [and the Jews] took advantage of the occasion to affirm their sentiments of perfect loyalty [to France]. They demonstrated, in fact, that current events have left the Jews profoundly demoralized. They feel threatened from all sides and seek, above all, to go unnoticed."<sup>270</sup> As the war waged on through the Anglo-American Allied landings in Morocco in November 1942, Jewish hopes were increasingly pinned on political avenues other than the French emancipatory dream.

By 1944, after the Vichy period in Morocco had drawn to a formal close, an official protectorate report concluded: "But the many difficulties that surrounded them have revealed a great malaise within the Jewish Communities, in particular in the most important centers such as Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes. [...] This malaise is nothing more than the logical conclusion of a number of currents running through the Jewish communities; these currents were already noticeable in the pre-war years."<sup>271</sup> The Vichy years and the Gallic betrayal that accompanied them left the Moroccan Jewish community, particularly the urban, politicized elites, shaken and vulnerable.

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<sup>268</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>269</sup> ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>270</sup> Bulletin 3-9 nov 1940 ANOM FR CAOM/COL/1AFF-POL/1424

<sup>271</sup> USHMM, BNRM RG-81.001M.0020: nos. 773-779 (1944).



Further, it discouraged politically motivated Moroccan Jews away from France and into the arms of Zionist or nationalist leftist politics. One indication of the economic, political and psychological strain of the period is reflected in the special autumn Purim the Jews of Casablanca celebrated upon the Allied landings from 8-11 November, 1942, as well as by Muslims in the popular (and cynical) song by Houcine Slaoui, *Maricane* (“American”) which mixed together Arabic with English words and phrases such as ‘come on,’ ‘bye-bye,’ ‘dollar,’ ‘chewing gum’ and ‘rhum.’” However, before arriving to that moment of military relief, what became of the European Jews and Communists who fled to Morocco for safety prior to the summer of 1940, only to be interned in forced labor camps?

#### IV. VICHY FORCED LABOR CAMPS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS

Political prisoners and refugees, largely Communists, many of them Spanish Republicans or other European exiles, were subject not only to legal woes but also forced labor. At the same time as Jews were subject to discriminatory laws and political prisoners were incarcerated in desert labor camps, Morocco also served as a transit point and refuge for European Jews trying to reach the United States or other potential safe havens.<sup>272</sup> While the Vichy authorities put a stop to this transiting in 1942, it would pick up again in earnest after 1943, largely directed by Hélène Benatar, a lawyer and president of the Association des Anciens Élèves de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle.<sup>273</sup> Benatar worked not only with displaced Jews, but also with the

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<sup>272</sup> Michel Abitbol *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy* (Paris : G.P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1983), p. 98.

<sup>273</sup> Abitbol, p. 99.

American Friends Service Committee – a US based Quaker organization – in order to help political prisoners in the forced labor camps.

More than thirty forced labor camps crossed Morocco and Algeria.<sup>274</sup> Approximately 2,000 of the total prisoner population across North Africa was Jewish, with a “cosmopolitan” amalgamation of Spaniards, Italians, French, Poles, Czechs and more.<sup>275</sup> Of these camps, one was exclusively populated by Jews (about 400), that of Berguent (today Ain Benimathar) on Morocco’s eastern border with Algeria.<sup>276</sup> In a turn of betrayal and tragedy, approximately ninety-percent of these 400 Jews had been volunteers in the French army according to a Red Cross survey in July 1942.<sup>277</sup> These camps were built to fulfill a long-standing French colonial dream for a trans-Saharan railroad stretching from Timbuktu north to Oran, Algeria on the Mediterranean. Along these rails, colonial goods, particularly phosphates and manganese, would flow seamlessly to the Metropole. In the political refugees and prisoners, the Vichy regime of Morocco (as well as Algeria and Tunisia) had found the cheap labor reserves required to accomplish the task. Furnished with almost comical labor contracts, prisoners would work under extraordinarily harsh conditions either along the rail lines themselves or the mines.<sup>278</sup> The railroad was to snake along the border of eastern Morocco and western Algeria, stretching from

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<sup>274</sup> Indeed, many more. According to Susan Slyomovics, there were 27 alone in Algeria. See Susan Slyomovics, “French restitution, German compensation: Algerian Jews and Vichy's financial legacy” in *Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 5 (December 2012), pp. 881-901.

<sup>275</sup> Abitbol, pp. 105-106.

<sup>276</sup> Abitbol, p. 106.

<sup>277</sup> Satloff, p. 63.

<sup>278</sup> Abitbol, pp. 104-105.

Oran, Algeria south toward Nigeria.<sup>279</sup> Work began with an inaugural ceremony on March 27, 1941 infused with great publicity and pomp, attended by Minister Berthelot, Marshal Pétain's official envoy.<sup>280</sup> All told, approximately 7,000 prisoners, of whom about one-third were Jewish, were sent to labor camps along the route of the Chemins de Fer du Maroc Oriental (CMO), or the Eastern Moroccan Railways, the northern segment of the illusory Trans-Saharan Railway.<sup>281</sup> More than 30 Vichy work camps dotted the border between Morocco and Algeria.<sup>282</sup> Former officers of the French Foreign Legion staffed the camps, many of whom were of German origin and were "ardently anti-Jewish."<sup>283</sup> In addition to these German former officers, Arab *goumiers* and Senegalese *tirailleurs* (troops in the French army) augmented the camp staff. The prisoners/laborers were often mockingly referred to as "volunteers" and many were furnished with contracts that proved entirely ephemeral if not purely mean-spirited.<sup>284</sup> A directive specifically geared toward addressing "refugees and undesirables in Morocco" listed a very clear agenda of repressing any political dissent and how to put the wide variety of refugees Morocco was harboring to cynical good use, treating Spanish republicans separately "who have been incorporated into the workers units for the railroad between Bou-Arfa—Kenadza."<sup>285</sup> Other refugees were to be distributed between Mogador, Safi, Marrakesh and the internment camps of Sidi El Ayachi and Azemmour following a screening process in Casablanca.<sup>286</sup> Refugees not put

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<sup>279</sup> Satloff, p. 59.

<sup>280</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff, p. 80.

<sup>281</sup> Satloff, pp. 59-60.

<sup>282</sup> Abitbol, p. 103.

<sup>283</sup> Abitbol, p. 104.

<sup>284</sup> Abitbol, p. 104.

<sup>285</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 "undesirables".

<sup>286</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 "undesirables".

to work on infrastructure projects due to their political affiliations who remained in Casablanca were foisted upon the Alliance Israélite Universelle and hosted by Moroccan Jews.<sup>287</sup> Leslie Heath wrote at length about the Spanish Civil War refugees, stuck working on the trans-Saharan railroads if they could not escape to Mexico:

Three thousand Spaniards were taken to the boundaries of the Sahara, to work under dreadful conditions, far from any inhabited spot, lodged in tents, without water and insufficient food, having to live in atmospheric conditions where the daily temperature varied from under zero to seventy degrees in the sun, and without any consideration for the hundreds of them who by a reason of academic distinctions, university studies or technical professional capacity merited a fate other than that of manipulating a pick and shovel for which they received as remuneration one franc fifty per day (fr. 1,50). The railway line from Bou Arfa to Kenadza is the result of this tiring work, ten or more hours per day, to which were subjected for many months engineers, lawyers, judges, doctors, writers, professional soldiers of all ranks, skilled metal workers from the heavy and war industries, workmen from every branch of labour who would have been better employed in work more fitting to their special capacities and professional knowledge. Later a certain number of labourers were called upon to work in the mines of Djerada and Kenadza and to complete the first portion of the above mentioned railway. Many of the labourers from Bou Arfa and also Colomb Bechar were sent to Aïn Fout near Settat to construct a dam, very hard work even for those used to manual labour. Let us leave aside penalties inflicted on our compatriots and the barbarous and unjust punishment to which they were subjected by their guards moors and senegaleses [sic].<sup>288</sup>

Many of these Spaniards had volunteered to fight for France. Many of the Jewish forced laborers along this railroad had been volunteers in the French army. Maurice Vanino-Wanikoff, an employee of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) who worked directly with the populations in these camps, wrote: “Contrary to all logic, the fact of these foreign volunteers having served France in a moment of danger was held against them. The foreigners who had stayed calmly at home and worked for profit led lives free from worry and inconvenience, while

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<sup>287</sup> USHMM 43.006-3 Reel 16 “undesirables”.

<sup>288</sup> USHMM American Friends Services Committee Refugee case files – RG-67.008 Box 1, folder 36/36 Nov 20 1942.

those who rose to defend their second-home ... were judged as suspects in Morocco and were treated more or less as pariahs.”<sup>289</sup> Berguent, the only all-Jewish camp, required at least 10 hours of hard labor each day, including Sundays and holidays with insufficient food, only occasional shelter, a complete lack of hygiene and an abundance of vermin. At Berguent, each prisoner received one liter of water per day.<sup>290</sup> In addition to such deprivations, a punishment called *tombeau* (or “grave” in French) was a unique feature of these camps. For this punishment, prisoners would dig graves in which they were to lie for a designated time and under a variety of conditions. Vanino-Wanikoff describes one unfortunate prisoner who remained in the *tombeau* for an incredible twenty-five days in a state of complete paralysis – for if he moved but a little, he would be struck by rocks or even shot. He and other victims of this particular torture spent “their days burned by the sun, their nights in the cold, and, if it rained, in a freezing bath; they were stiff skeletons dressed in French army-issue great-coats, who, their extremities frozen and requiring amputation, exited their ‘tombs’ to be sent directly to the hospital, if not to the cemetery.”<sup>291</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff poetically concludes his entry thus: “In Foum-Defla...where the *tombeau* [took place], flowers no longer grow...The camp no longer exists...there is nothing but a cement block ...that bears this inscription: ‘TO THE MARTYRED VOLUNTEERS,’ a name: KLEINKOPF, two dates: ‘1906-1942’, a symbol: the six pointed star. This is the grave of a volunteer who could not rise from his tomb.”<sup>292</sup> After the Allied landings of Operation Torch in November 1942, one might have expected these prisoner populations to be swiftly liberated and for the anti-Jewish legislation to be rescinded. Unfortunately, both of these processes took much

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<sup>289</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff, p. 80.

<sup>290</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff, p. 80.

<sup>291</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff, p. 81.

<sup>292</sup> Vanino-Wanikoff, p. 81-82.

longer, extending even several years after the last bullet of WWII was fired.

The JDC and its Moroccan Jewish representative would be instrumental in handling the cases of forced laborers and Jewish refugees. H el ene Cazes Benatar, a trained lawyer and nurse for the Red Cross, took over the leadership of the Association des Anciens El eves de l'Alliance Isra elite Universelle upon her husband's death in 1938.<sup>293</sup> Born in Tangier to a Moroccan Jewish father and an English mother, at age twenty Benatar moved with her family to Casablanca.<sup>294</sup> After France fell to Germany in 1940, Benatar established the Moroccan Refugee Aid Committee, which was declared illegal by Vichy authorities in 1941 but continued to operate, ultimately in conjunction with coordination help from the Jewish American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).<sup>295</sup> With these financial and administrative backers, Bentar and her team, including the above-mentioned Maurice Vanino-Wanikoff, toured P etain's Vichy labor camps in Morocco, responded to the prisoners' needs, sent food, and after the war, worked to arrange visas for refugees, Jewish and otherwise, to the Americas as well as employment opportunities. Benatar began to work intensively for European refugees in Morocco on July 5, 1940, when she saw a boat of refugees unload at the port of Casablanca. She reflected: "I was notified that about ten boats transporting Europeans had arrived in Casablanca, and one of them showed me a bit of bread which constituted their food. She begged me to intervene to help them in Casablanca."<sup>296</sup> Benatar noted that "among the

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<sup>293</sup> USHMM/ Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115, Reel 1, Rg-68.115M.0001.53; Rg-68.115M.0001.53.

<sup>294</sup> USHMM/ Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115, Reel 1, Rg-68.115M.0001.41.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> USHMM/ Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115, Reel 1, Rg-68.115M.0001.53.

people who disembarked at Casablanca were many military volunteers of Czechoslovakian nationality, as well as Polish nationality and French officers who left France and Belgium, believing they could continue the struggle from North Africa.”<sup>297</sup> With the help of the JDC, the AFSC and, after the success of Operation Torch by early 1943, the American military, Benatar and her team secured lodging in Ain Sebaa (most notable today for train transfers to the Casablanca airport) for refugees to work and get on their feet in the oddly named camp of Luna Park.<sup>298</sup>

In her position as President of the Association for Former Students of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Benathar orchestrated the refuge of many European Jews in Morocco. They often arrived from Marseille first to Ain Sebaa and on to Casablanca.<sup>299</sup> The Vichy authorities halted this migration in 1942, but by then hundreds of European Jewish and political refugees had streamed into ports across North Africa.<sup>300</sup> The PCF organ *l'Humanité* reported on the Moroccan refugee crisis as well as on the political prisoners of the Saharan camps, including PCF comrades Gabriel Peri and Jean Catelas, arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the Sahara.<sup>301</sup> Another issue of *l'Humanité* reported vast numbers of French prisoners in North Africa: “10,000 Frenchmen have been imprisoned, interned and have now been deported to the burning sands of the African desert. [...] In the occupied zone, the Germans hand over prisoners to Pétain and Darlan to send

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Abitbol, p. 99.

<sup>300</sup> Abitbol, p. 100.

<sup>301</sup> *l'Humanité* 25 May 1941 in Police Archives Carton II 8, 7,6,5,4.

them to Africa.”<sup>302</sup> Outraged, *l’Humanité* reported: “These men want to send honest militants, loyal to the cause of the people, to die in the desert sands. [...] Frenchmen, Frenchwomen, spread the word, denounce the torturers of the people, fight for the liberation of imprisoned communists, help their families.”<sup>303</sup> Another French Leftist newspaper, *La Vie Ouvrière*, published similar calls to arms against the deportation and internment of International Brigades volunteers and militants.<sup>304</sup> With the Allied landings and Anglo-American liberation of Morocco in November 1942, things began to change, albeit not as quickly as either Moroccan Jews, various refugee populations or political prisoners would have liked.

Léon Sultan, future founder of the PCM, collaborated with Benatar in her efforts to help refugees. Sultan represented political refugees (Jewish or otherwise) seeking visas, employment, or liberation from the work camps.<sup>305</sup> The legal and philanthropic worlds defending Moroccan Jews as well as European Jews and political refugees overlapped within a brief but catalytic time period. Following the liberation of Morocco in early 1943, it took quite a while for Algerian Jews residing in Morocco to regain French citizenship and for Moroccan Jews to obtain employment, school registration and living quarters. European Jewish and political refugees languished in forced labor camps under horrendous conditions until as late as 1945, awaiting visas or employment papers. Many were forced to re-enlist in service to British or American forces in order to escape the camps.<sup>306</sup> One prisoner wrote to Benatar as late as April 1944

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<sup>302</sup> *l’Humanité* 12 April 1941 in Police Archives Carton II 8, 7,6,5,4.

<sup>303</sup> *l’Humanité* 25 Mars 1941 in Police Archives Carton II 8, 7,6,5,4

<sup>304</sup> *La Vie Ouvrière*, April 19 1941, in Police Archives Carton II 8, 7,6,5,4.

<sup>305</sup> USHMM REEL 4: Private Collection of Hélène Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115, Rg -68.115M.0004.412- 15; Rg -68.115M.0004.413-15; Rg-68.115M.0010. 857.

<sup>306</sup> USHMM Rg-68.115M.0005.386-7; RG-68.115M.0006. 480-4; RG-68.115M.0007. 531-2.



begging for “the normalization of our situation vis-à-vis the authorities...who still consider us as Axis nationals, even though most of us are held here as Political Refugees and Jews.”<sup>307</sup> Spanish political refugees, hoping to leave for Mexico, had their hopes flatly dashed in February of 1943. They were told that they could no longer leave for Mexico and that their only way out of the camp (in this case, the camp of Beni-Oukil), was to “1. Work for the Sea-Niger [CMO trans-Saharan train] with a contract set to expire at the end of hostilities; 2. Register for the British army as soldiers; 3. Register for the British army as pioneers.”<sup>308</sup>

Letters continued to pour into Benathar’s office from the Jews of Berguent who had fought for France, only to be rewarded with the harshest of conditions.<sup>309</sup> One Jewish prisoner of Berguent wrote: “We were all volunteers and served France, which earned us two years in work camps in the most humiliating of conditions.”<sup>310</sup> When hostilities finally ended in 1945 and armistice agreements were signed, Moroccan Jews had both suffered directly and born witness to the suffering of their co-religionists. The Vichy period proved one of betrayal of French Republican ideals which would serve to push Moroccan Jews toward Zionism or toward nationalist liberation politics. For reasons that will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, those Jews seeking to join nationalist politics worked within the Moroccan Communist Party.

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<sup>307</sup> USHMM Rg-68.115M.008.236 Bou Arfa April 26 1944.

<sup>308</sup> USHMM Rg-68.115M.0010. 259.

<sup>309</sup> USHMM Rg-68.115M.0005.386-7.

<sup>310</sup> USHMM Rg-68.115M.0005.386-7.

## V. OPERATION TORCH AND THE POST-WAR POLITICAL ORDER

The first I knew that things were beginning to happen was when the air raid sirens blew before daylight November 8<sup>th</sup>. [...] At first I couldn't make out what they were blazing at. Then I saw a plane suddenly take what I thought was a nose dive and I thought one had been hit, when it suddenly started to level off and I saw some bombs drop out and start down. Then I realized it was a dive bomber attack. I looked further up and there was a whole line of these planes headed for the port. I saw one ship struck and in no time the whole port seemed covered with bomb bursts; and from the dense clouds of smoke which appeared almost immediately it looked like a tremendous fire had been started. At about the same time anti-aircraft bursts were getting higher in the sky [...] To see a ship struck that way with smoke come rolling out gives one rather a sickening sensation. [...] There were other explosions during the forenoon with planes flying over. It was perfectly clear that the Americans had very heavy forces available from the character of the attack on the port, so I was simply flabbergasted when people told me that a very small French fleet had gone out to fight them. It was worse than suicide.<sup>311</sup>

The above letter from the AFSC director in Casablanca to his wife is one of few detailed descriptions of air raids of Operation Torch, November 8-11 1942. According to Mr. Heath, Muslim and Jewish families suffered the bombing disproportionately and sustained far more physical and pecuniary injuries than did the European settlers. Politically, however, it marked a significant turning point for the Second World War and the end of Vichy rule in Morocco. It demonstrated French weakness and opening for anti-colonial political activity. European and Moroccan Jews alike praised the American-British operations, alongside political prisoners and Moroccan nationalists who pinned their hopes on the American liberator-President Roosevelt's promises to support self-determination. Liberation of the work and internment camps would prove slow, as did the restoration of Jewish rights.

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<sup>311</sup> Leslie Heath of the AFSC in Casablanca to his wife, USHMM American Friends Services Committee Refugee case files – RG-67.008, Box 1, folder 29/36.

After the Allied landings, American Jewish groups began lobbying to restore Jewish rights in North Africa in the winter of 1942 to 1943, and restored the Crémieux decree in 1943.<sup>312</sup> As Jews regained their rights and refugees began to secure passage out of the port of Casablanca, Moroccan nationalists, too, achieved an opening. As Susan Gilson Miller put it, “the war had dramatically altered the terrain on which nationalist politics were being played out. The French colossus had fallen, an American one had taken its place.”<sup>313</sup> During the war years the various Maghribi national liberation parties had been forced underground into clandestine activity. With the encouragement of a weakened France and an ascendant United States, the Istiqlal party issued its “Manifesto of Independence” on January 11, 1944.<sup>314</sup> The Manifesto proclaimed the need for “the independence of Morocco in its national entirety under the aegis of His Majesty Sidi Muhammad Bin Yusuf” and the installation of a democratic constitutional government guaranteeing the rights of ‘all elements of society.’<sup>315</sup> This manifesto came with the approval of the Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Youssef. Indeed, the Sultan had been increasingly flexing his muscle against Resident General Noguès, exemplified in his refusal to move the capital to Fez from Rabat out of fear for the Allied bombing campaign.<sup>316</sup> The Sultan welcomed the Americans, and had intimate meetings with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as well as Winston Churchill at the Anfa conference of January 1943. This occurred, of course, without the approval of the French Residency authorities.<sup>317</sup> This meeting, in addition to reports of a letter

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<sup>312</sup> Abitbol, p. 174.

<sup>313</sup> Miller, p. 143.

<sup>314</sup> Miller, p. 145.

<sup>315</sup> Miller, p. 145.

<sup>316</sup> Jamaâ Baïda, “The American landing in November 1942: a turning point in Morocco’s contemporary history,” *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19 no. 4 (September 2014), pp. 518-523, p. 519

<sup>317</sup> Baïda, p. 519.

exchange between the American President and the Moroccan Sultan, led to a potent nationalist myth: that the Americans supported Moroccan nationalist ambitions against a weakened France.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, “Roosevelt teas” and a “Roosevelt Club” sprung up in Casablanca encouraging the mingling of the nationalist Moroccan political elite and American officials in the wake of the Anfa meeting.<sup>319</sup> After the residency government severely repressed nationalist leaders in 1937, many were resilient and, emboldened by France’s obvious international diminishment. Such sentiments were only strengthened with the Atlantic Charter in 1941.<sup>320</sup> Protectorate authorities were alarmed by graffiti testifying to popular support for the United States, blossoming on the Rabat medina walls: “Long live America, Down with France, Morocco for Moroccans.”<sup>321</sup> Due to food shortages as well as bombardment, the Moroccan population benefitted economically as well as politically from the Americans. The port of Casablanca employed approximately 2,000 more Moroccan workers after the success of Operation Torch, mostly in the service of off-loading American supplies.<sup>322</sup> Pro-Vichy European settlers in Morocco, along with a gasping German propaganda machine, attempted to amalgamate American military condemnation with the Judeo-Bolshevik-American conspiracy among the indigenous Moroccan population, with little success.<sup>323</sup> The American military propaganda in Morocco countered with postcards of the Sultan juxtaposed with “symbols of American military power,” as well as anachronistic references to the eighteenth century declaration of support

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<sup>318</sup> Baïda, p. 519.

<sup>319</sup> David Stenner, “Did *Amrika* promise Morocco’s independence? The nationalist movement, the Sultan, and the making of the ‘Roosevelt Myth,’” *The Journal of North African Studies* 19, no.4 (September 2014), pp. 524-539, p. 531.

<sup>320</sup> Baïda, p. 519.

<sup>321</sup> Baïda, p. 519.

<sup>322</sup> Baïda, p. 520.

<sup>323</sup> Baïda, p. 520.

addressed from Sultan Mohammed Ben Abdallah to President George Washington.<sup>324</sup> Even before the Allied landings the Sultan had taken an increasingly direct role in dealings with the Americans, allowing American “vice-consuls [...] to circulate freely in the countryside in order to supervise the distribution of these shipments and to assure they were not being re-exported to France or Germany” between 1940-1942.<sup>325</sup> All of this, of course, occurred against continuing anti-Semitic graffiti and propaganda aimed at persuading Moroccan Muslims to turn against Jews and Americans. This “campaign” frequently took the form of graffiti and pamphlets with slogans such as “ ‘This is a Jewish business, a business of profiteers’; ‘Buying from Jews destroys French commerce,’ and ‘Worker, your enemy is the Jew; he exploits you and derives his ill-gotten gains from your misery.’”<sup>326</sup> They were also highly critical of H el ene Benatar’s work with the JDC and her leadership in local Zionist politics.<sup>327</sup>

Benatar’s work – and public visibility – increased dramatically with the Allied landings and the American occupation of Casablanca. With help from the AFSC, the Red Cross and other philanthropic groups in addition to the American military, Benatar and her team slowly began to liberate the camps and provide refugees with employment and exit visas. The process was often frustratingly slow, and prisoners were understandably vociferous and prolific in their complaints. Benatar’s personal archives are full of such letters and organizational difficulties. The transit camp for refugees called Luna Park housed many that were recently liberated from camps and

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<sup>324</sup> Baïda, p. 521-2.

<sup>325</sup> Kenbib 2014, p. 546.

<sup>326</sup> Kenbib 2014, p. 547.

<sup>327</sup> Kenbib 2014, p. 547.

were in a bureaucratic holding pen for jobs and visas.<sup>328</sup> After liberation from work camps such as Bou Arfa, many European Jewish refugees were transferred to the halfway house camps like Sidi El Ayachi to then be hosted by Moroccan Jewish families elsewhere, notably Casablanca.<sup>329</sup> The American forces in Morocco were happy to allow Benatar and the JDC to take on more of the work. As the liberation of camps was slow (persisting through the end of the war) and prisoners were not easily liberated without work contracts or exit visas, the Americans often saw “no objection to the release of these persons, provided the American Joint Distribution Committee assumes responsibility for them.”<sup>330</sup> Housing at camps such as Luna Park was ramshackle and American food and clothing supplies for refugees and political prisoners were inadequate to the challenge of cold Moroccan winters.<sup>331</sup> Many hoped for – and received – jobs working for the Americans as well as factory work (especially soap companies); others secured jobs at Moroccan newspapers.<sup>332 333</sup> Upon receipt of a “Certificate of Good Conduct,” several Jewish former members of the Foreign Legion were able to leave Bou Arfa and acquire jobs working with the Americans.<sup>334</sup> Sometimes, however, the JDC responded negatively to Benatar’s industriousness: “Our New York office has sent us a copy of a letter which you addressed to the

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<sup>328</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 443 reel 6.

<sup>329</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 476 reel 6.

<sup>330</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 reel 6.

<sup>331</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 reel 7.

<sup>332</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115, no. 601 reel 7.

<sup>333</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 697 and no. 703 reel 7.

<sup>334</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 248 reel 8.

President of the Jewish Community of Detroit on the question of obtaining visas for the refugees in Casablanca. We take it from the nature of the letter that you have sent similar communications to other communities in the United States. May we point out to you that the individual communities in the United States are not equipped to deal with the problem and generally refer such matters to our organization.”<sup>335</sup> The American military forces could be similarly harsh in the face of severe structural limitations: “In making your plans for the care of other people which you hope to have released from the camps, you should clearly bear in mind the possibility that the Americans might not be in a position to employ all these people promptly.”<sup>336</sup> Some, alternatively, sought employment in the Red Army after liberation from camps, others were “repatriated” to the Soviet Union.<sup>337</sup> <sup>338</sup> Benatar was often exasperated with the pace of liberation of the camps, suggesting that it proceeded “with lead feet,” but she remained tireless in lobbying the New York JDC offices as well as American military officials.<sup>339</sup> Benatar was not alone in such exasperation, as this note from Leslie Heath demonstrates:

There were apparently about 4,000 people in the concentration camps here in Morocco, camps being spread over quite a territory and varying a great deal among themselves as to conditions of health, food and servitude. One of the greatest needs has been and still is clothing, and it is not a matter of money here, there is simply no clothing to buy. It has been extremely difficult to visit these camps due first to lack of transportation (there being no gasoline) and the reluctance of French officials to give permission to visit them. If I had some camps which were in as poor condition as some of these, I certainly would be ashamed to have anyone visiting them! [...] All the large towns in Morocco where these people might expect to find employment if they were released from the camps are

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<sup>335</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 484 reel 8.

<sup>336</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 575 reel 8.

<sup>337</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 526 reel 10.

<sup>338</sup> USHMM Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 570 reel 10.

<sup>339</sup> USHMM REEL 10: Private Collection of H el ene Benatar, taken from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP) RG-68.115 no. 882 and no. 884 reel 10.

already full to overflowing, and jobs would have to be found for them, and that is not so simple in view of the heterogeneous population of the camps with coincident language difficulty.<sup>340</sup>

As refugee populations were augmented with influxes and outfluxes, anti-Semitism was prevalent among non-Jewish residents of transit camps. As prisoners were liberated from work camps, doctors in the transit camps were faced with ideological as well as physical woes as many forced laborers needed amputations and artificial limbs after having suffered exposure during the *tombeau* “punishment.”<sup>341</sup> Some survivors of the Moroccan forced camps, incredibly, had previously survived the death camps of Dachau and Buchenwald and lost their families before transfer to the Maghreb.<sup>342</sup> Slowly but surely, the camps were liberated, artificial limbs supplied, visas bought and passages booked. Some, like the Spanish Republicans, were considered by far the worst off, having nowhere to which they could return. Few philanthropies lobbied on their behalf. Many Spanish Republicans remained in North Africa, some managed to obtain visas to

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<sup>340</sup> USHMM American Friends Services Committee Refugee case files – RG-67.008, Box 1, folder 27/36, (Nov. 30 1942)

<sup>341</sup> USHMM American Friends Services Committee Refugee case files – RG-67.008, Box 1, folder 29/36: Nov. 7, 1942: “Anti-Jewish sentiment in Morocco is regrettably on the increase, and of course is also evident in the camps. Berguent is an example where approximately 90% of the men are ex-volunteers from the French Army. There are ill clad and subjected to the most severe rigors of heat and cold and wholly inadequate shelter and are without comforts of any kind. Recently when one of them was offered a job as a baker at Rabat the authorities refused to let him take it as he was a Jew. [...] Up until recently Sidi El Ayachi had been apparently free from any anti-Jewish bias; but a short time ago when the local Jewish Committee entered a mild protest with the camp management against the lower quality of the food, they were threatened with the statement that all the Jews would be sent to Berguent unless protests ceased. The English upon their arrival were told to keep away from the rest of the residents, who were described as ‘Jews and Bolsheviks.’” [...] “À Ain-el-Ourak, où les officiers recevaient les arrivants à coups de poings et de cravache, le travailleur SELO a eu les deux pieds gelés ayant du passer 8 jours en tombeau. Il se trouve à l’hôpital à Oujda, où les pieds lui ont été amputés.”

<sup>342</sup> American Friends Services Committee Refugee case files – RG-67.008 Box 2, folder 28/123: “Je me permets de demander le Comité de bien vouloir me dire s’il y a moyen de me libérer d’un Camp de Travail. J’ai 41 ans et j’ai été du 28 Mai 1938 jusqu’au mois d’Août 1939 dans des Camps de Concentration en Allemagne où j’ai perdu aussi mes parents, il n’y a personne qui s’occupe de moi. Je suis entré en France avec un Visa d’une durée d’un jour avec l’autorisation du Gouvernement français pour combattre comme engagé volontaire contre l’Allemagne. Interné en France dans différents Camps je m’engageais pour la durée de la guerre à la Légion et après malgré étant demobilisé, envoyé pour 18 mois à Bou Arfa. J’ai travaillé à Casablanca comme spécialiste en marroquinerie et ai fait des modèles pour les Galeries Lafayette et Maison Larde. Il y a deux mois la police m’a envoyé – comme illegal – à Bou Arfa Camp Discipline et puis à l’Hopital, alors de l’Hopital à au Prison. Du Prison je fus envoyé à BEN OUKIL et une dizaine de jours plutard à l’Hopital à Oujda où je me trouve encore aujourd’hui. Je souffre encore des blessures recues aux Camps de Concentration de DACHAU et BUCHENWALDE. Je vous prie de faire quelque chose pour moi et si vite que possible car je souffre maintenant 5 ans et je ne crois pouvoir supporter cela encore longtemps, je suis à la fin de mes forces” – WALTER BRANWEINER, Hopital OUJDA 29 Décembre 1942.



Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. Most European Jewish refugees left, along with political prisoners. The indelible legacy was one of profound French betrayal of the Republican ideal, not only for Jews but also for Leftists in Morocco whose human rights had been violated. Anti-fascist sentiment galvanized the Left, both in Morocco and in France, across the Maghrib inspired by the USSR's victories against the Germans.

## VI. THE MOROCCAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE END OF HOSTILITIES

The Moroccan Communist Party was officially founded in 1943, the same year as the historic Anfa meeting at which President Roosevelt intimated his support for Moroccan national independence. As previously mentioned, the party had its origins in the French Communist Party, which had established a branch called the Communist Party of Morocco by the later 1920s. Banned in 1934 by the protectorate authorities, it had continued to organize, but not yet for the liberation of Morocco. To be sure, from the beginning of its involvement in Moroccan politics with the Riffian war of the 1920s, the PCF had advocated against colonialism. When Vichy rule fell, however, the PCF and its Moroccan branch argued that the most urgent task was to rid the world of fascism. Concerns about national liberation should be put on hold until the more immediate task of winning the war was accomplished. Once this occurred, the nature and demographics of leftist political organizing in Morocco began to shift.

The Allied victory in the Second World War proved a boon for the spread and popularity of Communism. Many historians have recorded the surge in popularity the PCF experienced in France, particularly regarding its long-standing role in anti-Fascist activity and its strong support

for the Free French forces.<sup>343</sup> <sup>344</sup> However, it would be a mistake to understand the PCF as a radical actor in this period. Its policies hewed much closer to those of de Gaulle than to Moscow. Like de Gaulle, it sought to strengthen ties between Communist parties in the colonies to France rather than to encourage immediate national liberation.<sup>345</sup> The PCF pursued a policy of “emancipation” not entirely dissimilar from that of Alliance, and of the French colonial authorities themselves; a *mission civilisatrice*, one that would apparently take longer than expected. Morocco, too, experienced this positive turn of leftist opinion, although Protectorate authorities remained deeply suspicious of any Communist activity tinted with nationalism. The Allied liberation of Morocco in autumn of 1942 changed the terms of the national liberation game. The mainstream national liberation party – ‘Allal al-Fassi’s *Hizb al-Istiqlal* (“Independence Party” in Arabic) had grown confident with the global humiliation of France and its obvious weakness during the war, and so began to prominently, boldly organize and released its Manifesto of Independence in 1944. It had Sultan Muhammed V’s support in that same year. The Americans provided a “new game in town” and appealed to leftists, nationalists, and Moroccan Jews. American troops and diplomats ruffled protectorate feathers and represented a new hope for democratic freedoms. The PCM, too, rose on this tide of anti-fascist, pro-Soviet and even pro-American victory. It is in this period that the PCM began to shift from a largely European dominated organization to one involving more Moroccans. Not to be outdone by Istiqlal, the PCM, too, officially proclaimed support for national liberation in 1946. Despite the PCF’s outspoken resistance to the immediate colonial liberation of North Africa during the war

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<sup>343</sup> Overlooking, of course, the fateful collapse of the Molotov-Rippentrop Pact of August 23, 1939 (also referred to as the Hitler-Stalin pact). The USSR was, of course, pushed into a more antagonist stance toward Germany in 1941 when Hitler decided to attack the USSR in Operation Barbarossa.

<sup>344</sup> Quite cynically, François Furet once wrote: “the Communist idea was the greatest beneficiary of the Nazi apocalypse” (p. 358).

<sup>345</sup> Moneta, p. 149-50.

years out of a purported fear of Fascist inroads, certain members of the PCM had their own ideas.<sup>346</sup> At first, the PCM leadership embraced the PCF line that the goals for Communist parties in North Africa was to “convince the vast majority of autochthonous [inhabitants] that their best interests lie with the people of France, which is different from the official France that they have known thus far.”<sup>347</sup> However, as with interwar-era labor unions, increased indigenous membership and intervention challenged the PCF’s colonial policy.

Labor organizing began again in earnest in 1943. From teachers to dock workers, unionized labor proclaimed its support for the war effort and hence demonstrated its patriotism. In early May of 1943, Leftist labor activist Paul Durel organized a meeting of syndicalists in the Meknes municipal theater that produced a series of bold demands addressed to Morocco’s Resident General: freedom of the press, freedom of organizing, the creation of a Meknès employment office and, finally, “the liberation of all political prisoners.”<sup>348</sup> The ever-combative phosphate miners of Khouribga reprised their political activities in 1943, as did the Union of Confederated Syndicates in Morocco.<sup>349</sup> In May of 1945, the UGSCM (*Union Générale des Syndicats Confédérés du Maroc*) established a “syndical clinic” in downtown Casablanca, staffed with doctors and nurses to treat Moroccan workers.<sup>350</sup> The UGSCM, alongside the PCM, was one of the very few Protectorate era political organizations that included both Europeans as well as indigenous Moroccans. Following the war, both would increasingly distinguish themselves from

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<sup>346</sup> Fouad Benseddik, *Syndicalisme et Politique au Maroc: Tome I, 1930-1956*, (Paris: Editions l’Harmattan, 1990), p. 281-282.

<sup>347</sup> Benseddik, p. 282.

<sup>348</sup> Benseddik, p. 243.

<sup>349</sup> Benseddik, p. 244.

<sup>350</sup> Benseddik, p. 287.

and challenge PCF colonial policies.<sup>351</sup> The Vichy-era and anti-Communist Moroccan Resident General Noguès left Morocco and General de Gaulle appointed Gabriel Puaux to temporarily replace him before appointing Erik Labonne. The concomitant growth of PCF popularity permitted an opening of opportunities for European Communists in Morocco, although the indigenous population was still formally prohibited from such organizations.<sup>352</sup> As demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, “European” is a deceptive category. As Algerian Jews regained their French citizenship in 1943, individuals like Léon Sultan and the many other Algerian activists in the PCM were able to legally reprise their activities. Under Léon Sultan’s direction, alongside “French” stalwarts such as Michel Mazella, Germain Ayache and others, the PCM was formally reinstated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, 1943 in a “constitutive conference.” It grouped together laborers and left-leaning administrators in the transportation (particularly railroads), electrical, doctors, lawyers, teachers and many other industries.<sup>353</sup> Between 1943-1945, the PCM ratcheted up its propaganda and organizing to levels previously unseen in Morocco. Hundreds of meetings, in both rural and urban locations, “discreet” at first and then quite public and “massive” took place. The large cities of Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes and Fez remained the centers of activity.<sup>354</sup> The activists who breathed life into the post-war PCM were prominent figures before the outbreak of hostilities, including Michel Colonna, Charles Dupuy, Paul Durel and Léon Sultan. Sultan is credited with truly raising the party’s profile after the Allied landings in 1942, creating new cells divided into new kinds of sections (even by religion), as well as the creation of the *Amicales Communistes* (Communist Associations) in 1945 with the aim of

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<sup>351</sup> Benseddik, p 291.

<sup>352</sup> Benseddik, p. 245.

<sup>353</sup> Benseddik, p. 245. See also work by René Gallissot.

<sup>354</sup> Benseddik, p. 245.

recruiting in rural locations.<sup>355</sup> While the party remained about 80% “European,” it contained about 10,000 members between 1943 and 1946, divided into 30 sections.<sup>356</sup> In a country where the indigenous population was about 80% rural, PCM leaders such as Michel Mazella (a teacher who later worked extensively with Simon Lévy, himself a teacher), Léon Sultan and Germain Ayache sought actively to bring rural areas into the urban-dominated party politics, albeit with middling success.<sup>357</sup> Under Germain Ayache’s leadership (a literature teacher in Casablanca), the *Jeunesses Communistes Marocaines* (JCM – the “Moroccan Youth Communists) alongside the *Union des Femmes du Maroc* (UFM – the “Union of Women in Morocco”) lead by Fortunée Sultan (Léon Sultan’s wife), Lucette Mazella (Michel Mazella’s wife) and Friha Ayache (Germain Ayache’s wife) worked with the *Amicales* to expand recruitment in both the urban and rural communities.<sup>358</sup> <sup>359</sup> The PCM had its first official congress from April 5-7 in 1946 when it underwent a degree of Moroccanization. This followed Léon Sultan’s death in 1945 (an event to which this chapter will return). It changed its name, but not its acronym, ever so slightly but with political significance: having been the *Parti Communiste du Maroc* (the “Communist Party of Morocco”), it became the *Parti Communiste Marocain* (the “Moroccan Communist Party”). Ali Yata – Simon Lévy’s future brother in law – became Secretary General. The Central Committee was composed of 43 members, 15 of whom were Moroccan; a “national secretariat” composed of three members, and a Politburo (*bureau politique*) composed of 11 members, 5 of which were

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<sup>355</sup> Benseddik, p. 246.

<sup>356</sup> Benseddik, p. 246.

<sup>357</sup> Benseddik, p. 246.

<sup>358</sup> Benseddik, p. 246.

<sup>359</sup> According to Benseddik (p. 247), the UFM had plans for food programs and elementary education, but neither were successful or perhaps even didn’t launch.

Moroccan.<sup>360</sup> The subtle shift between the “Communist Party of Morocco” and the “Moroccan Communist Party” reflected the PCM’s increasing Moroccanization. No longer a branch of the (French) Communist party in Morocco, it now proclaimed itself, on the heels of its Manifesto for Independence, to be a Moroccan Communist Party, a party that included Moroccans in its leadership, with the goals of Moroccan national liberation. That said, its doctrine did not differ significantly from that of the PCF and the two parties maintained a hierarchical, complicated rapport.<sup>361</sup> Of course, as previously mentioned, none of this was legal in the eyes of the Protectorate authorities. A statement from October 31<sup>st</sup> 1943 maintained that all PCM activities were forbidden to indigenous Moroccans. However, the PCM leadership, emboldened by the weakening of colonial authorities, was more or less able to disregard this and flout authority. A few months after this and following some promising meetings with the Resident General regarding the freedom of meeting and the press, the PCM officially proclaimed a national liberation focus from August 4, 1946 onward.<sup>362</sup> By 1946, the UGSCM and the PCM had Moroccans as leaders of their organizations which dramatically helped recruitment among the indigenous population, Jews and Muslims alike.<sup>363</sup>

At this juncture, it is instructive to introduce a few activists who will prove increasingly important as the PCM intensified its efforts in the cause for national liberation. These profiles

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<sup>360</sup> Benseddik, p. 247.

<sup>361</sup> Benseddik, p. 247. Indeed, as of the tenth PCF congress from June 26-30 1945, Maurice Thorez, the PCF secretary general addressed the colonial question, proclaiming that the PCF’s role was to “creed the conditions for a free, confident and brotherly union between the colonial peoples and the French people, this should be the objective of a truly democratic and truly French political activity.” With Algeria more than Morocco in mind, Thorez went on to say: “...we have always said that the right to divorce doesn’t mean the obligation/need to divorce. We have never stopped proving that, for example, the [best] interest of North Africans likes in their union with the people of France.” (p. 248 in Benseddik).

<sup>362</sup> Benseddik, p. 250.

<sup>363</sup> Benseddik, p. 291.

come from Fouad Benseddik's fantastic 1990 labor history synthesis: *Syndicalisme et Politique au Maroc: Tome I, 1930-1956*. Many of the figures Benseddik cites were prisoners in the forced labor camp of Bou Denib as well as former soldiers in the French army (*anciens combattants*).<sup>364</sup> Many of their biographies illustrate the demographic and thematic trends explored thus far. Albert Ayache, for example, who would go on to write labor histories of Morocco, was born in Tlemcen, in Western Algeria, in 1905. It is unclear when exactly he arrived in Morocco, but he lived in the Oujda region that borders Algeria (a font of leftist activism as seen in the previous chapter). He was called up to serve in the French military in the 1939-1940 campaign and imprisoned in June 1940. He subsequently escaped but Benseddik doesn't provide detail as to where he was imprisoned and how exactly he escaped. Following the success of Operation Torch in 1942, Ayache was able to reprise his previous occupation as a teacher at the elite Lycée Lyautey (to this day it remains an elite private high school) in Casablanca in October 1943. Active in the UGSCM as well as the PCM, Ayache worked for a number of Protectorate economic commissions, particularly concerning prices and salaries.<sup>365</sup> He would later work closely with Amédé Urios, who numbered among the leadership of the Syndicate of Railroads (as of 1950), and previously worked on Moroccan railroads. Urios was also of Algerian birth, and judging from his name, Spanish in origin. Benseddik informs his readers that Urios was born in Oran (western Algeria) in 1906, and joined the PCM in 1936. He was one of many Communist prisoners in the forced labor camp of Bou Denib. After liberation he was a clandestine activist for the PCM from 1943 onward, writing for labor union flyers and papers under the pen-name "petit Lénine" ("little Lenin") while working to recruit members in

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<sup>364</sup> Benseddik, p. 325.

<sup>365</sup> Benseddik, p. 326.

Casablanca.<sup>366</sup> It is important to point out, many PCF members had been arrested in 1940 pursuant to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 (commonly referred to as the Hitler-Stalin pact) and were sent to labor camps in Algeria; upon release in February 1943, one may speculate as to changes in their colonial attitudes.<sup>367</sup> Many more Moroccan names began to emerge as well: Abdenbi ben Mekki, a cabinet maker, was appointed the head of the Syndicate for Buildings and Wood in Casablanca in 1945 and served as a “delegate of propaganda” for the PCM.<sup>368</sup> At age 17 or 18, a certain M’Hamed Tahar was recruited on a soccer field by PCM officials to go to Paris for training at the *École des cadres* (a school for forming Communist cadres). He said of life under the Protectorate: “We lived next to a kennel in 1943. I was disgusted to see that the dogs were better treated than we were. I developed a profound hatred for colonization.”<sup>369</sup> Upon his return from Paris, Tahar became the head of the dock-workers syndicate as well as the General Union from 1946 to 1950.<sup>370</sup> The list of Moroccan teachers, workers, and organizers is long. The abiding difficulty for recruitment remained language – for “few were the bilingual militants.”<sup>371</sup> Indigenous Moroccans who rose through the ranks to leadership, such as M’Hamed Tahar, Mamoun Alaoui, Lahcen Ben Maati, Tayeb Bouazza and M’Hamed Ben Aomar, were thus linguistically endowed. Of these, the highest education achieved was by Haddaoui, who had an electrician’s license. The others had completed primary school or less.<sup>372</sup> While the PCM had

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<sup>366</sup> Benseddik, p. 326-327.

<sup>367</sup> Moneta, p. 144. The first legal edition of *l’Humanité* didn’t reappear until August 1944 and Maurice Thorez didn’t return to Paris from Moscow until October 1944.

<sup>368</sup> Benseddik, p. 327.

<sup>369</sup> Benseddik, p. 327.

<sup>370</sup> Benseddik, p. 327.

<sup>371</sup> Benseddik, p. 327.

<sup>372</sup> Benseddik, p. 327.



established schools and literacy programs, they reportedly functioned mostly as conference spaces and provided only a minimal Communist theoretical education. Still it served to propel some indigenous Moroccans through the PCM and union hierarchies.<sup>373</sup>

## VII. JEWS AND THE POST-WAR PCM

And what of Jews in the PCM? One of this chapter's central arguments has been that the anti-Semitic Vichy legislation served to politicize Moroccan Jews. Building on a pre-war legacy of universalist activism against racism and anti-Semitism, as through LICA and many other groups, the PCM appealed to a wide swathe of the Moroccan Jewish political landscape. The PCM welcomed "the entire Moroccan population regardless of race, language or religion."<sup>374</sup> This held great appeal for many Moroccan Jews, particularly the urban, educated elite, often educated at Alliance schools by left-leaning teachers. Zionism, too, grew in appeal following the Vichy betrayal. While some Moroccan Jews embraced Moroccan nationalism through the lens of Communist universalism, many more embraced Zionism and its ideology of circling the wagons against those that would attack Jewish brethren.<sup>375</sup> The vast majority of Moroccan Jews remained outwardly political neutral or Zionist – the immediate post-War period proved the hey-day of Moroccan Jewish participation in the PCM. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, they represented a crucial, powerful and symbolic minority of a minority. For those Jews engaged in Morocco's national liberation movement, the PCM was the most productive and inclusive

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<sup>373</sup> Benseddik, p. 328.

<sup>374</sup> Chakib, 93.

<sup>375</sup> Chakib, 94.

avenue of participation. In addition to the PCM's less than entirely effective literacy programs (according to Benseddik), participating in the PCM's activities was itself a kind of "school," according to Simon Lévy.<sup>376</sup> Lévy wrote: "for many Jews [the PCM was] a crucible for solidarity in the struggle. The democratic appeal after the war put in motion latent forces. When Independence became a concrete goal, the PCM offered clear answers for minorities, and brought them into labor and political action."<sup>377</sup> Jewish activity in the struggle for national liberation is the subject of the next chapter, but it is clear that the PCM represented one very distinct and persuasive political option for Jews contemplating what it would mean to be a Moroccan Jewish citizen in the newly independent nation state.

Edmond Amran El Maleh spoke of his engagement in Communist politics in a series of interviews with Marie Redonnet.<sup>378</sup> In one revealing exchange, Redonnet asked El Maleh what persuaded him to join the PCM when so many other Jews began to pursue Zionism. His answer speaks volumes: "Three elements are essential to answering this question: place, time and identity. Time: this was the climate of 1945 which came with the fantastic foundation myth of Communism. I was one of the thousands of human beings swept up by this myth. I now think that the Communist experiment was something magnificent. Indeed, in terms of the imaginary and the existential, it was an explosion of all borders. We were there in a kind of aurora borealis, a kind of birth."<sup>379</sup> El Maleh refers to the boundless optimism that Communism, and the USSR as its victorious emblem, represented upon the conclusion of the Second World War. As a young

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<sup>376</sup> Lévy, p. 66.

<sup>377</sup> Lévy, p. 66.

<sup>378</sup> Marie Redonnet, *Entretiens avec Edmond Amran El Maleh* (Paris : Éditions La Pensée Sauvage, 2005).

<sup>379</sup> Redonnet, p. 109.

man, the Allied victory and the promises of Communism appealed to El Maleh and many other French-educated, philosophically minded Moroccan Jews. El Maleh would eventually abandon the PCM, but in the 1940s and 1950s, he described his engagement as a kind of “seduction.”<sup>380</sup>

El Maleh’s initial activism was located at a Fiat garage in Casablanca – a site El Maleh continually references in his semi-autobiographical fiction. Here there were “large meetings of Europeans, Frenchmen and Spaniards, excluding Moroccans. This constituted the embryonic state of the Communist Party. I went there, seduced by people that I found to be kind. The friends I had in my youth weren’t part of it. I was in the process of distancing myself from them. It was a solitary choice.”<sup>381</sup> El Maleh doesn’t intimate whether his friends are predominantly Jewish or not, but he clearly considers his political activity to be isolated. In the same series of interviews, El Maleh himself describes his life as “allegorical” for those Moroccan Jews who participated in the PCM. Somewhat isolated, a minority of a minority, but with profound optimism for their future in their home country and for the universalist messages of Communism. His language of “seduction” becomes clearer when he talks of being a “young naïve man in that Fiat garage requisitioned by the Italians ...[who] found himself surrounded by pretty, seductive young women, in an ambiance of brotherhood.”<sup>382</sup> As El Maleh became increasingly engaged in the PCM’s activities, including becoming a member of the Politburo, he switched from a seduction into a more theoretical, philosophically engaged mode with Marxist writings.<sup>383</sup> El Maleh, despite his perceived isolation, was one of many in his predicament. Many

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<sup>380</sup> Redonnet, p. 110.

<sup>381</sup> Redonnet, p. 110.

<sup>382</sup> Redonnet, p. 114.

<sup>383</sup> Redonnet, p. 116.

Jews were drawn to the PCM and this trend only accelerated following the Second World War. A certain Mr. Benchimol was prominent around Oujda, and several young Communist militants in Northern Morocco, including Jews, fought in the Spanish Civil War to defend their ideals.<sup>384</sup>

Anthropologist Mikhaël Elbaz conducted a similar series of interviews with perhaps the most famous Jewish leftist activist in Morocco, Abraham Serfaty, in 2001.<sup>385</sup> Serfaty's story will become increasingly important in the subsequent two chapters, but he too locates his leftist beginnings in the Vichy period. Serfaty was born in 1926 Casablanca to a middle class Jewish family from Tangier. Long before Serfaty's own activism, his father had supported leftist causes in Tangier, joining protests against the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 as well as against French and Spanish colonial forces.<sup>386</sup> In the family's home in Maarif, Casablanca, proximity to the shantytown Derb Ghalef as well as the predominance of Spanish and Italian communists saturated Serfaty's political consciousness.<sup>387</sup> He joined the Moroccan Youth Communists in 1944: upon embarking for France for university studies in 1945 he joined the PCF. He graduated from the École des Mines in Paris in 1949 and returned to Morocco, joining the PCM while working as an engineer for, and then heading after independence, the OCP (Sharifian Phosphate Office). Serfaty addresses his beginnings in the PCM and his relationship to Moroccan Jewry through this political lens. He reflected: "Our teachers were the Communist workers, forged in the Spanish war and in that Spanish Communism that is so distinct from that

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<sup>384</sup> Chakib, p. 92-93.

<sup>385</sup> Abraham Serfaty and Mikhaël Elbaz, *L'insoumis: Juifs, Marocains et rebelles* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2001).

<sup>386</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>387</sup> Watson, p. 387.

of the Bolsheviks.”<sup>388</sup> To his mind, the PCM failed to entirely capitalize on the surge of Jewish popular support for Communism after the Second World War: “I left for my studies in France in the summer of 1945. When I came back the next summer, in 1946, the poor Jewish areas of Casablanca were completely in support of the Communist Party ... The Communist Party, unfortunately, didn’t know how to continue this sentiment.”<sup>389</sup> Serfaty would continue to distance himself from Moroccan Jewry even more radically than El Maleh, Sultan or Lévy. It seems that as Moroccan Jews in the PCM became ever more convinced and radicalized by their political, universalist convictions, the vast majority of Moroccan Jewry was drawn to Zionism. For those inclined toward a non-ethnically or religiously based form of nationalism, Communism provided a comfortable “third space in colonial cities, one that may have been European in orientation, but remarkably inclusive.”<sup>390</sup> In addition to the liberation élan of Communism, the American occupying forces were also profoundly influential not only among Moroccan nationalists in the Istiqlal party, but also for Moroccan Jews. Many have noted the importance of American products, including chewing gum (immortalized in a sarcastic, critical song that also teaches listeners to say “bye bye!” referenced earlier) and novels distributed by the Armed Services Editions in 1943 for Moroccan nationalists.<sup>391</sup> Serfaty particularly cites Steinbeck and Hemingway, whose *For Whom the Bell Tolls* “with its story of heroic International Brigades’ fighter Robert Jordan in the Spanish Civil War, pushed him toward political engagement.”<sup>392</sup> Perhaps it was such tales of universalist, masculine heroism that pushed Serfaty to try to enlist

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<sup>388</sup> Serfaty & Elbaz, p. 28.

<sup>389</sup> Serfaty & Elbaz, p. 100.

<sup>390</sup> Watson, p. 383-4.

<sup>391</sup> Watson, p. 386.

<sup>392</sup> Watson, p. 386.

with the Free French Forces against Hitler. However at only age 17 his parents denied him the required permission. Not yet anti-French, Serfaty participated in anti-Vichy, pro-American rallies in response to Roosevelt's decision to leave the Vichy authorities temporarily in place in Morocco. At such rallies, Serfaty and others "participated in the first demonstration by the Gaullists in Casablanca against the intractability of Vichy structures. The protesters shouted 'Vive la France' [...] I shouted 'Vive la République!'"<sup>393</sup> Like many Moroccan Jews, Serfaty mentally separated the Vichy regime from "*their* France, a Republican ideal incarnated by the Popular Front."<sup>394</sup> But as Robert Watson notes, Serfaty's political imagination, and likely those of other Moroccan Jews, expanded beyond the confines of French Republicanism with the American presence in Morocco and "He remembers the leaflets dropped by US planes with the face of FDR promising imminent liberation from Vichy rule and America's commitment to Moroccan prosperity" as well as a sense of triumph with the USSR's victory at Stalingrad.<sup>395</sup> Before his departure for France to continue his studies, Serfaty worked as a night watchmen at the port of Casablanca, where he interacted with and befriended American soldiers. Meanwhile, "many North African Jews welcomed Jewish soldiers from the British or American armies into their synagogues and houses as guests of honor."<sup>396</sup> In his capacity as night watchman, Serfaty befriended a Black American soldier, apparently eschewing overtly confessional ties with the American soldiers, "the only Black American officer in Casablanca at the time, a young and cultured non-commissioned officer, a fervent admirer of Baudelaire."<sup>397</sup> Serfaty caused a scandal

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<sup>393</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>394</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>395</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>396</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>397</sup> Watson, p. 387.

in the Moroccan Jewish social scene when he invited this friend to a dance, perhaps a deliberate critique on how Moroccan Jewish women were “encouraged” to woo Jewish American soldiers at such events.<sup>398</sup> In this climate, the political fissures dividing Moroccan Jewry during the interwar period became fractures.

Despite the Allied landings and the Anglo-British occupation of Morocco, the Vichy administration remained temporarily untouched. For those Jews who would engage in Communist politics, this seemed to double the betrayal of the French Republican ideal. Further, attacks on Jews by European Vichy supporters continued in spite of the official conclusion of anti-Semitic legislation. Robert Watson quotes Serfaty on this matter: “more than one Jew was arrested by the police and thrown in prison for having invited an American soldier to his home or for only having engaged in a conversation with one in the street.”<sup>399</sup> In some respects, the political options persuasive to Jews had become more limited: Communism and Zionism appeared to be the most “realistic” in this context. In others, the political scene was infinitely more complicated and disruptive. Between the nationalists, the Americans, the French, allegiance to the Sultan, Zionism and the Communist International, the waters of Moroccan Jewish political identification and allegiance were increasingly muddied.

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<sup>398</sup> Watson, p. 387.

<sup>399</sup> Watson, pp. 392-3.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

While Moroccan Muslims and Jews attended Communist meetings and were members of the Moroccan branch of the PCF prior to WWII, the leadership as well as the vast majority of the members were European. When Léon René Sultan officially founded the PCM out of the remnants of the hitherto banned PCF-backed Communist Party of Morocco, this balance began to shift. Léon Sultan passed away in 1945, just two years after founding the party. He reportedly perished as a result of wounds sustained during the Allied landings.<sup>400</sup> Raphael Benarosh, a Moroccan Jew born in 1933, attended the Casablanca street profession for Sultan's funeral. Benarosh will feature prominently in the next two chapters, as he worked actively for Morocco's independence within the PCM and served as its lawyer when it was officially put on trial and banned in 1959. As a boy of ten at the time of Sultan's death, Benarosh was just beginning to become politically aware. According to Benarosh, Sultan's funeral was an enormous, public affair which a vast number of Jews attended.<sup>401</sup> As this chapter has demonstrated, Sultan, in addition to his continued leftist activism (he had been a member since his installation as a lawyer in Casablanca of the PCF's local branch), had himself suffered under Vichy. Out of this suffering, Sultan worked with H el ene Benatar and the JDC as well as the AFSC to represent political prisoners and Jews, European as well as Moroccan, and defend their interests. Whether the Jews in attendance at his funeral were PCM members or otherwise, this represented a moment of acceleration for Moroccan Jews and national politics. Upon Sultan's death, Ali Yata, a Muslim from Tangier of Algerian Kabyle descent, became the party's secretary general. In the immediate post-war period, the PCF enjoyed an extraordinary degree of popularity for its role in

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<sup>400</sup> Interview with Raphael (Ralph) Benarosh, 8/26/13, Paris.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.



France's liberation. The PCM, too, exited 1945 on a high note, and under Ali Yata, began to work actively for national liberation. Zionism also enjoyed renewed popularity following WWII and the Jewish Agency as well as local Moroccan Zionist groups began to agitate more aggressively. The involvement of Jews in PCM's struggle for national liberation as well as the wider political Jewish context is the subject of the next chapter. The PCM, its clashes and collaborations with Istiqlal and other nationalist parties, the monarchy and the role of Jews in a newly independent Morocco form the narrative threads, with profound, formative roots in the Vichy period.

## Chapter 3

### The Rights and Obligations of Divorce: Jews and Moroccan Independence

“The right to divorce doesn’t imply the requirement to get divorced” – Lenin

“We are Moroccans, we are not ‘foreigners’ as the Zionists would have us believe, who fuel the Colonial fire. We are deeply Moroccan.” -- Edmond Amran El Maleh in *Espoir* no. 197, 4 Dec. 1949

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The combination of quotes (above) from Lenin and El Maleh introduces the fundamental tensions for Jews in the Moroccan struggle for national liberation. The PCF initially invoked Lenin’s “right to divorce doesn’t imply the need to divorce” in order to encourage Communists in the Maghribi colonies to accept a French Union model in lieu of full independence. It also serves as a stark reminder of Jewish anxiety in Morocco on the eve of independence in 1956 – whether to divorce from Morocco, or to stay. El Maleh’s quote indicates a profound sense of Moroccan patriotism and identity. It is one model of the PCM’s attempts to remind Jews that their primary allegiance was in the homeland where they were born, and not in a far-away unknown Jewish state. However, such ardent public exhortations did not necessarily translate into persuasion. A number of tensions influenced the diverse, but increasingly centralized (both administratively and geographically in Casablanca) and urban, Moroccan Jewish community. The aftermath of the Second World War and the weakening of French power and legitimacy bolstered national liberation movements, most prominent among them the Istiqlal party, the PDI and the PCM. The international balance of power transitioned from one predicated on Allies, Axis and colonies to that of the Cold War and the Third World. Further, the establishment of the

State of Israel in 1948 greatly complicated Moroccan internal Jewish politicization in an atmosphere of increased Palestinian solidarity. Zionist organizations had already been active in Morocco since the interwar period. Following the Second World War and especially after 1948 statehood, Zionism would prove to be a considerable force of Moroccan Jewish political engagement and migration. Many Moroccan Jews participated actively in Morocco's struggle for national liberation. Most of the Jews active in Moroccan independence were part of the PCM with a much smaller minority involved in Istiqlal. Much of the historiography of Zionism in Morocco has presented Jews that migrated to Israel as passive, almost entirely rural in origin and deeply religious. While this describes a great, even predominant majority of Moroccan Jews who left for Israel, my archival work has demonstrated that Moroccan Jews located in big urban centers such as Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Mogador (Essaouira) and Marrakesh were not only active Zionist members, but also organizers and leaders. At every political and apolitical level, Jews on the eve of Moroccan independence in 1956 navigated an ever-choppy sea of allegiances.

How did Jews imagine themselves as citizens in a newly independent Morocco? How did those Jews who were committed to remaining in Morocco navigate the countervailing historical currents of Moroccan nationalism predicated on an Arab-Muslim identity; Zionism and the call to leave in addition to the pressures of friends and family migrating; and French cultural affiliations? The essential argument of this chapter, and in many ways of this dissertation, is that the Moroccan Communist Party (PCM) provided the most persuasive political option for those Jews seeking an active role in Morocco's national liberation project, and that this moment of political hope for Moroccan Jewry has been too long obscured by the prevailing scholarship of the Jewish past. However, as this chapter and the final chapter will demonstrate, Jews in the

Communist party were a tiny minority of a minority, an idealistic subsection of Moroccan political life that was increasingly out of touch with the broader Jewish community. Teleological narratives that focus on Jews who left (in some cases touching on how or why), ignore a rich, prismatic array of historical possibilities available to Moroccan Jewry before and after 1948. A further argument of this chapter is that 1948 itself, while certainly a watershed moment for Moroccan Jewry, was only one of a much wider variety of push, pull and balance factors. Indeed, more locally grounded events and developments outside of the chronology of 1948 or even Moroccan independence in 1956 influenced the political and cultural development of post-war Moroccan Jewish life. The chronology of this chapter is consequently more fluid than the previous two chapters, which were defined more easily by the Interwar Period and the Vichy Period.

One conventional path would be to place this chapter within the confines of the triumphalist nationalist narrative that would bookend this moment of Moroccan Jewish life between 1945 and 1956 – the end of the Second World War and the attainment of Moroccan independence. Another would frame it from 1945 to 1948; from the ashes of the Second World War to the triumphal establishment of the State of Israel. But the story of Jewish involvement in Morocco’s national liberation politics does not sit easily in these timelines. Rather, it sits, like Albert Memmi’s Tunisian Jewish protagonist in his semi-autobiographical *Pillar of Salt*, “à cheval entre deux civilisations [straddling two civilizations].”<sup>402</sup> One substitution must be made in this quote from Memmi: “narratives” for “civilizations.” Rather than rejecting one narrative/chronology for another, I seek to intertwine the narratives of many different transnational as well as local stories

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<sup>402</sup> Albert Memmi, *La Statue de sel* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966), p. 123.

in this chapter as the picture both expands and contracts simultaneously. For this reason, the chronology of this chapter begins with the liminality of 1942 to 1945 – the end of Vichy Morocco and the end of the Second World War. It concludes with Moroccan regime change and simultaneously *makhzan* (a term in Moroccan Arabic referring to the state and authoritarian power centralized around the monarchy) solidification from King Mohammed V to his son King Hassan II upon the former's untimely death in 1961. This time period embraces and accepts all of the countervailing narrative tensions intersecting through this story, and yet caps this penultimate chapter before a darker, more disturbing chapter of Moroccan political repression that coincided with the massive outmigration of Moroccan Jewry. This chapter is constructed in the following sub-sections: first, the end of the Second World War and the growth of Zionism in Morocco; second, the involvement of Jews in the PCM's struggle for national liberation as intertwined with the PCM's competition with Istiqlal and struggle for Moroccan "authenticity"; third, the immediate achievement of independence in 1956 and the attending establishment of *al-Wifaq* (a Moroccan Muslim-Jewish unity organization) and the place of both Jews and the PCM in what is often hailed as a Moroccan "golden age"; fourth, a meditation on the disappointments and hopes of Moroccan Jewish nationalists on the eve of regime change in the midst of the 1956 Suez crisis.

## II. THE END OF WWII AND THE GROWTH OF ZIONISM

Approximately 90,000 Moroccan Jews left for the newly established State of Israel between 1948 and 1956.<sup>403</sup> This was as immediate a legacy of the Vichy years in Morocco and the

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<sup>403</sup> Kenbib, p. 708. This was out of an approximate total Moroccan Jewish population of 300,000 noted in 1947 (see Simon Levy, *Essais d'Histoire & de Civilisation Judeo-Marocaines* (Rabat: Centre Tarik Ibn Ziyad, 2001), p. 9).

international implications of the Second World War as was the growth of Istiqlal and the PCM. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Morocco was an important transit (and resting) point for European Jewish refugees fleeing the war. Many of them, through the activities of the JDC, the Jewish Agency and other international Jewish philanthropic organizations were ultimately able to secure passage to Palestine or to the Americas. However, as Robert Assaraf has noted, “In Europe, immigration candidates had fled the Shoah and had been thrown into ‘displaced persons’ camps and were thus ‘available’ for a dangerous journey. In Morocco, [Zionism] meant uprooting families that had been in the country for centuries and who were not in any danger.”<sup>404</sup> While Assaraf’s understanding works against lachrymosity, it also glosses over too quickly the very real appeal of Zionism for Moroccan Jews, both rural and urban, North to South. “Danger” to Jews in post-war Morocco can be understood as quite real to the extent that anti-Semitic rhetoric and even violence swept some parts of the country, both before and after 1948 through Moroccan independence in 1956. Further, it is inaccurate to consider Moroccan Zionism as purely reactive. The archives give ample evidence of Moroccan Jews, particularly in large urban centers, organizing and propagandizing Zionism.

The anti-Semitic legislation of the Vichy years left Moroccan Jews shaken.<sup>405</sup> France’s Republican, emancipatory bargain had been deeply compromised and Moroccan Jews began to look elsewhere for a political future. While Algerian Jews (slowly) regained their French

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<sup>404</sup> Robert Assaraf, *Juifs du Maroc à travers le monde: Émigration et identité retrouvée* (Paris: Éditions Suger/Suger Press, 2008), p. 33.

<sup>405</sup> A common story concerning the Vichy period is that Sultan Mohammed V “saved” the Jews by confronting Vichy authorities regarding imposing the infamous yellow star. On going work by Daniel Schroeter confronts this myth and questions its rhetorical and nationalist power. See for example his forthcoming article “Vichy in Morocco: the Residency, Mohammed V and his Indigenous Jewish Subjects” in *Jewish History After the Imperial Turn: French and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Ethan Katz, Lisa Leff, Maud Mandel. Many thanks to Daniel Schroeter for sharing a draft of this piece.

citizenship and Moroccan Jews regained their employment, residency and educational rights. National liberation organizations were gaining strength and the Jewish Agency accelerated its propaganda in the country. The French Protectorate authorities adamantly opposed Zionism in Morocco during the interwar period as a potentially disruptive, destabilizing force. As French control weakened after the Second World War, Zionism was able to gain more solid ground, but not uniformly as internal Moroccan Jewish political dynamics were divisive and discordant. Protectorate authorities established a Council of Moroccan Jewish Communities (*Conseil des communautés des israélites du Maroc*) in 1945 to formally represent Jewish concerns; but as Simon Lévy has noted, it represented élite, acculturated and French assimilated concerns and not the vast majority of Moroccan Jewry.<sup>406</sup> In addition to this context, the increased blurring of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism led to an intensified political atmosphere for Moroccan Jews. Pre-existing tensions before the war were catalyzed by the Vichy period and polarizing. Moroccan Jews found themselves in a murky, unstable political atmosphere with many claims made to their allegiances and manifold assumptions heaped upon them. Mohammed Kenbib has noted: “the boost that the war gave Zionism, the creation of the State of Israel, the desire of Zionist leaders to rapidly ‘Judaize’ the zones from which Palestinian Arabs were expelled, their determination to compensate for the insufficient rates of Ashkenazi immigration with massive transfers of so-called Oriental Jews, and their interest in the veritable ‘reservoir’ that the some 250,000 inhabitants of *mellahs* represented precipitated the uprooting of Moroccan Jewish communities.”<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Lévy, p. 31.

<sup>407</sup> Kenbib, p. 653.

The official text of Istiqlal's charter, issued on January 11, 1944, guaranteed "freedom of belief and of thought for all. All Moroccans should enjoy equality before the law; they should enjoy equal rights and assume equal obligations, without discrimination on account of religion or race. The Jewish question is non-existent in Morocco because the Jews of the country are members of the Moroccan family as are the Copts in respect to Egypt; they would continue to enjoy, as before, their religious freedoms, and particularly those pertaining to the jurisdiction of religious courts, as is the case with other Moroccans."<sup>408</sup> This pledge in Istiqlal's charter became legal reality and Jews became full citizens of an independent Morocco in 1956. The palace authorities, too, staunchly supported such initiatives and attitudes toward Moroccan Jews. However, the lines between "Jew" and "Zionist" were increasingly blurred, rendering Moroccan Jewish life increasingly precarious. The same 1944 charter waxed poetic about the Spanish *convivencia* of al-Andalus and the warm reception of the Iberian Jewish exiles in Morocco. Under a section titled Foreign Policy: "The hospitality granted the Jewish expellees from Spain testifies to the liberality of the Moroccan people. These Jews were permitted to preserve their religious beliefs, their properties, and their separate religious courts; they were accorded Moroccan citizenship which enabled them on occasion to rise to the highest positions in the state. This should disprove all allegations of religious or racial intolerance and attests to the willingness of Moroccans to cooperate sincerely with other states and communities."<sup>409</sup><sup>410</sup> There is great truth to this statement, although it is a bit overblown. Daniel Schroeter's work on prominent merchants from

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<sup>408</sup> 'Allal al-Fassi, *The Independence Movements in Arab North Africa*, trans. Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1954), p. 218.

<sup>409</sup> Al-Fassi, p. 223.

<sup>410</sup> See work from Jessica Maya Marglin, *In the Courts of the Nations: Jews, Muslims and Legal Pluralism in Nineteenth Century Morocco* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University 2013), on Jewish negotiation between Jewish, Muslim and Consular courts in 19<sup>th</sup> century Morocco for a fuller picture of pre-colonial Jewish legal strategies and status.



Essaouira acting as ambassadors of the Sultan illustrates this point as it highlights Jewish ties to Makhzan power and representation in the pre-protectorate period.<sup>411</sup> Belying this equanimity and rhetoric of tolerance was Istiqlal's plan of action in 1945, which called for a unified plan of action across national liberation parties, with the distinct and express exclusion of the Communists. Points 7 and 8 of this plan seem to address a sense of a Communist-Zionist cabal: "7. There shall be no affiliation with the Communists in a common front, and there shall be no contacts with them except through the executive committee. 8. The Jews who do not carry a foreign nationality and who are not Zionists, shall be regarded as Moroccans, subjects of his Majesty."<sup>412</sup> Such rhetoric would only grow stronger after 1948, but these two points raise a common question: who was authentically Moroccan, and what parties, by extension, were authentic representatives for said Moroccans? What was considered foreign, and what was considered indigenous? Istiqlal – like most nationalist political entities – vied for liberation from colonial authorities along the lines of a modern nation-state model predicated on a nationalism defined by "essential" national characteristics. For Morocco, this meant, as stated in the 1944 charter, Arabic as the national language (indeed, Tamazight (Berber) was only recently in 2011 recognized as an official national language) and Islam as the national religion, but within the framework of a constitutional monarchy framed by "democratic precepts."<sup>413</sup> A subsequent section will treat the struggle for national liberation more overtly, but the Istiqlal statements on

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<sup>411</sup> See Daniel Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844-1886*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) as well as Daniel Schroeter, *The Sultan's Jew: Morocco and the Sephardi World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). Particularly in *The Sultan's Jew* Schroeter paints a trans-national, diplomatic and mercantile portrait around the life of Meir Macnin of Marrakesh and London.

<sup>412</sup> Al-Fassi, p. 373.

<sup>413</sup> Al-Fassi, p. 218.

Moroccanness and its vision for minorities is important to understand before launching into an elaborated account of Zionism in Morocco.

One consequence of the Second World War was a tightening of Jewish philanthropic, organizational and political bonds around the world. Even before the armistice of 1945 the Jewish Agency sent emissaries out to the Maghrib (Arab “West”) and the Mashriq (Arab “East”) to increase propaganda efforts, building on structures already in place since the interwar period.<sup>414</sup> In 1946, Prosper Cohen, a Moroccan Jew and former teacher in the Alliance Israélite Universelle, was elected in an official capacity to the World Zionist Organization (WZO) to represent Moroccan Jewry at the Atlantic City conference that formalized and publicized the WZO’s support for a Jewish state. Cohen was deeply involved in the Zionist journal *Noar* (“Youth” – also referred to in French *Jeunesse* and propagated by the Alliance Israélite Universelle after the Second World War) and the spread of Zionism in post-war Morocco.<sup>415</sup> Clandestine migrations from Morocco to Palestine via Algeria and Marseille increased after the spring of 1947.<sup>416</sup> Just months prior to Israel’s declaration of independence in May 1948, a January article in Istiqlal’s main mouthpiece, *al-Rai al-‘Am* exhorted Moroccans against any Zionist commercial enterprise, and explicitly claimed that all Jews were Zionists: “You, noble Moroccan...know that by giving a *dirham* to a Zionist you are destroying an Arab house and financing the treacherous Zionist state. You can dispense with Zionist services...So don’t buy your medication in a Zionist pharmacy, don’t go to a Zionist doctor, don’t have your photo taken by a Zionist photographer, don’t take a Zionist bus, don’t employ a Zionist, (and remember) that

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<sup>414</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 32.

<sup>415</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 32-33. See also work by Aviad Moreno.

<sup>416</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 34.

every Jew is a partisan of Zion.”<sup>417</sup> Ouezzani’s Parti Démocratique de l’Indépendance (Democratic Party for Independence, PDI – an early competitor with Istiqlal that subsequently teamed up) explicitly deemed that “mellahs were nothing but ‘*haras sionistes*’ – Zionist zones.”<sup>418</sup> ‘Allal al-Fassi’s wife along with nationalists’ wives in Fez led a donation campaign for the Palestinian cause, emulated by the women of Casablanca who “donated their jewelry for the cause. Muslims in several major urban communities were encouraged to boycott Jewish and European business firms if their representatives were known to espouse pro-Zionist sentiments or to have collected funds on Israel’s behalf.”<sup>419</sup> American goods and businesses were added to the list after the USA’s endorsement of partition and recognition of Israel’s statehood. Worried protectorate officials asked that Jews postpone their *ziyaras* (pilgrimages, literally “visits” in Arabic – to tombs of the saints and holy shrines), “fearing this might irritate the Muslims at this sensitive time and make them think Jews were celebrating the creation of Israel.”<sup>420</sup> Indeed, Morocco’s Resident General Juin implored France from recognizing the new state, which it did on January 24, 1949.<sup>421</sup>

As migrations increased, Sultan Mohammed V issued a radio broadcast on May 23, 1948 (just after Israel’s declaration of independence on May 14) that both reiterated Morocco’s formal support for the Arab League (another post war legacy founded in Cairo in March of 1945) and its

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<sup>417</sup> *Ar-Rai al-Am*, 12-26 January 1948, in Kenbib, p. 672.

<sup>418</sup> Kenbib, p. 685.

<sup>419</sup> Laskier, p. 50.

<sup>420</sup> Laskier, p. 50.

<sup>421</sup> Laskier, p. 51.

rejection of Zionism. It was widely broadcast and the text of the speech was read in all of Morocco's mosques and synagogues.<sup>422</sup> The text is worth quoting at length:

[...] The States of the Arab League have found themselves in the obligation to enter the Holy Land of Palestine to defend its inhabitants and to remove the unjust Zionist aggression. [...] We completely support the terms of their declaration, acknowledging that Arabs do not harbor any ill will toward Jews and do not consider them to be enemies; their main goal is to defend the first *Qibla* of Islam [“qibla” in Arabic refers to the direction of prayer in Islam – before Muslims prayed toward Mecca the direction of prayer was toward Jerusalem] and to reestablish peace and justice in the Holy Land, preserving for Jews the status granted them since the beginning of the Muslim conquests [*dhimmi* status – offered to other “Peoples of the Book” (*ahl al-kitab*) including Christians and Jews -- which literally means “protected” but involved a number of restrictive measures, unevenly enforced across space and time in North Africa and the Middle East].

This is why We command our Muslim subjects to not allow themselves to be incited by Jewish acts against their Arab brothers in Palestine, not to commit any act that might disturb order and public security. They must know that the Moroccan Jews that have been in this country for centuries that has protected him, where they have found the warmest welcome and who have demonstrated their devotion to the Moroccan Throne, are different from the uprooted Jews who have come from all corners of the world to Palestine, which they seek to claim for themselves unjustly and arbitrarily.

We also command Our Jewish subjects to not lose sight of the fact that they are Moroccans living under our aegis and that they have found in Us, on many occasions, the best defender of their interests and their rights. They must thus abstain from any act that might support the Zionist aggression or demonstrate their solidarity for that cause; for, in doing so, they would risk their rights and their Moroccan nationality.

We are certain that all of you, Moroccans, without exception, will respond to Our call and that you will do what We expect of you, so that public order may be respected and maintained in this dear country. May God take care of Us and of you: He is the greatest Lord and the greatest support.<sup>423</sup>

In the maelstrom of political identities, one thing was made very clear with this Royal address: Moroccan rights and nationality were conditional for Jews. Further, in an atmosphere where “supporting Zionism” could mean anything up to the interpreter (and at times, the vigilante), it was not necessarily so easy to clearly delineate between Jewish and Zionist activities,

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<sup>422</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 39.

<sup>423</sup> In Assaraf 2008, p. 38.

particularly for those not well acquainted with Jewish life and culture in Morocco during even the Yishuv period (roughly the early 1880s to 1948). This bind, of course, is familiar across many contexts in modern Jewish history and speaks to an old tension and suspicion of dual loyalties. Despite this warning, Jewish migration continued and intensified. Just after David Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence, the Moroccan nationalist press buzzed with articles blurring Zionist critique and anti-Semitism to an alarming degree.<sup>424</sup> The north eastern city of Oujda became a prime hub for Zionist migration as Moroccan Jews would cross into Algeria illegally and from there book passage to Marseille before finally reaching Israel. In the week of May 31 to June 7 1948 alone, Protectorate authorities apprehended seventy-seven illegal Jewish migrants and sent them back to their homes. Marseille was populated with transit camps in response to such clandestine migrations, supported financially by the JDC and the Jewish Agency.<sup>425</sup> The British Mandate prohibited such immigration and the French authorities formally banned migration via Casablanca, but tacitly allowed continuation from Marseille.<sup>426</sup> In response, Assaraf notes, "young local militants in Istiqlal organized patrols that, upon each train's arrival [presumably to Oujda], would arrest suspicious Jewish passengers to turn them over to the authorities. These incidents ended up creating a palpable tension in the city."<sup>427</sup> Oujda was bubbling with tension according to such reports, including local boycotts against Jewish merchants, presumed to be somehow supporting the Zionist cause. One protectorate official,

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<sup>424</sup> Arlette Berdugo, *Juives et Juifs dans le Maroc contemporain: Images d'un devenir*, note liminaire par Abraham SERFATY. Préface de Yolande COHEN, (Paris: S.N. Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner S.A., 2002), p. 83.

<sup>425</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *Israel and the Maghreb: From Statehood to Oslo*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 47.

<sup>426</sup> Laskier, p. 47.

<sup>427</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 39.

Francis Lacoste, spelled out the psychological tension reigning in the city, suggesting that the Jewish community was “anguished” and “feared generalized violence.”<sup>428</sup>

Unfortunately, these fears were realized. On the morning of June 7, 1948, a local Jewish barber in Oujda, Albert Bensoussan, was harassed by local Muslims on suspicion of “organizing departures to Palestine and hoarding a cache of grenades.”<sup>429</sup> The police intervened and the fighting intensified to the degree that a young Jewish man stabbed a local Muslim notable, a certain Ben Kiran, who had converted to Islam from Judaism.<sup>430</sup> Assaraf refers to what ensued as a “Jew hunt” carried out across the city “while the French authorities, who had been warned by the [Jewish] community president, Obadia, were unable to restore order. Knives and axes figured as weapons, and police use of firearms in an attempt to quell the violence resulted in an indeterminate number of Muslims [injured]. Here and there, [Muslims] hid Jews.”<sup>431</sup> The tally of the uprising was heavy: five dead, fifteen wounded and material damages of up to 200,000 francs.<sup>432</sup> News traveled fast. A couple of months later the mining town of Djerrada, not far from Oujda, had a strike bloodily suppressed. The Jews of Djerrada were attacked which led to 37 dead and 27 wounded.<sup>433</sup> Unsurprisingly, Zionists in the country compared these events to the massacre of 1912 in Fez, when Muslims pillaged the Jewish quarter following the Sultan’s

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<sup>428</sup> In Assaraf 2008, p. 39-40.

<sup>429</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 40.

<sup>430</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 40.

<sup>431</sup> Kenbib, p. 681.

<sup>432</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 40.

<sup>433</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 40.

signing of the protectorate treaty.<sup>434</sup> In the aftermath of these events, the rural to urban migration to Casablanca accelerated ever more dramatically as did migration to Israel. In the third and fourth quarters of 1948 alone, 8,305 Moroccan Jews left for the new state of Israel.<sup>435</sup> Completely unable to stem this tide, the Protectorate authorities tacitly allowed migration to continue pursuant to a reported verbal agreement between Resident General Juin and the French representative of the Jewish Agency, Jacques Guerszuni. He continued recruiting in the country through the aid organization *Kadima* (local offices in Morocco were run on Israeli directives) although precautions were maintained to keep such activities “discreet” so as to prevent unrest.<sup>436</sup> There is no evidence that Istiqlal or PDI leaders planned such violence, which appears, by all accounts, to have been spontaneous. However, the media and prevailing political climate to which they contributed helps explain these events.<sup>437</sup>

It is important, however, to nuance Moroccan Zionism before further addressing Zionism as bound up in the stakes of Moroccan nationalism and the movement for national liberation. Work by Aomar Boum and Yaron Tsur is particularly instructive on this score. Boum’s work deftly points to different religious and political stakes between Southern, more rural Moroccan Jews and those of the northern industrial urban zones. Boum attributes some of this difference to differing roots and understandings of messianic Judaism between the Andalusian exiles (the *megorashim* in Hebrew) and the indigenous Moroccan Jews (the *toshavim*). Boum argues “that

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<sup>434</sup> Kenbib, p. 688. The French army bombarded the mellah in an attempt to halt the violence, leading to rampant destruction. It is possible to see postcards commemorating this destruction. See also art historian Michelle Huntingford Craig’s dissertation entitled “[In]Secure Space: The Mellah of Fez, Morocco.” (UCLA 2011).

<sup>435</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 40.

<sup>436</sup> Assaraf 2008, p. 42.

<sup>437</sup> Laskier, p. 53.

Zionists appealed to an already existing and deep historical narrative of belonging among southern Moroccan Jewries...that Zionism in the case of southern Moroccan Jewry did not construct a sense of imagined community among these rural Jews. Instead, they relied on an already existing religious feeling of membership in a diasporic community forced to settle in Morocco.”<sup>438</sup> Tsur also argues for religious particularities in explaining why nearly the entire population of rural, southern Moroccan Jewry left for Israel.<sup>439</sup> Indeed, Tsur continues: “In Morocco...the rural Jews of the High Atlas, who were –by Western standards – the most backward Jews in the country, were indeed treated by their Moroccan co-religionists in the developing cities as the lower local Jewish subgroup. This treatment was not unique to Jewish society, as all the inhabitants –Muslims and Jews – of the High Atlas, who were nicknamed ‘Chleuhs,’ [Berbers] were looked down on by Moroccan town dwellers.”<sup>440</sup> For these profoundly religious Jews, the new Jewish state was not one of a long European legacy of judeophobia, anti-Semitism, romantic nationalism and socialism, but one that “fulfilled the aspirations of their faith.”<sup>441</sup> As Mizrahi studies scholars have pointed out, these hopes would be somewhat brutally dashed upon arrival in Israel, but for the time being in remote Moroccan hamlets, rural, southern Jews nourished a somewhat messianic understanding of their migration. Further, the new state promised economic and social mobility, which were persuasive in a climate where pre-colonial modes and means of production had been irreparably ruptured. This affected rural Jews as well

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<sup>438</sup> Aomar Boum, “From ‘Little Jerusalems’ to the Promised Land: Zionism, Moroccan nationalism, and rural Jewish emigration.” *The Journal of North African Studies*, 15, no. 1 (2010), p. 51-69, p. 55.

<sup>439</sup> Yaron Tsur: “The Religious Factor in Encounter between Zionism and the Rural Atlas Jews,” *Zionism and Religion*, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), pp: 312-329, p. 313-4.

<sup>440</sup> Tsur, p. 315.

<sup>441</sup> Berdugo, p. 91.



as those Jews who left other cities in the hopes of finding work in the colonial urban zones, only to be crammed into “miserable” conditions.<sup>442</sup>

Moroccan Jewry in large cities such as Casablanca were bound more directly into the international web of Jewish philanthropy and Zionism. As the previous chapter noted, Jews were understandably relieved upon the Allied liberation of Morocco in 1942. One protectorate report noted that Jews watched the landings from the ramparts of buildings in Casablanca, and that “the effervescence of the Jewish quarters amplified along with the advance of the Americans [...] they joined spontaneous demonstrations and the cry “down with France” was heard in their ranks. European women were slapped by Jewish women. In Rabat a Jew spat on an old decorated *makhzani*. Police agents were harassed.”<sup>443</sup> Mr. Boniface, director of Political Affairs in Rabat described Moroccan Jews as “jilted lovers” by France, wounded and “torn between hostility and love.” He went on that this served to “push the young Jew toward extreme conclusions which are [...] dangerous to French interests.”<sup>444</sup> Primary among these conclusions were Communism and Zionism. Mr. Boniface suggested that in order to combat these dangers, it was imperative that the Protectorate authorities act and “1. Not count too much on the Community ‘officials’ who are completely out of touch with the youth; 2. Get the schools and youth movements involved in a project for the internal dignity of the Jewish youth while rendering them useful for colonization. [...]” As part of this, the Protectorate officials urged closer ties between the *Eclaireurs Israélite*

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<sup>442</sup> Lévy explains it well: « A la destruction de l'économie ancestrale par l'intrusion des produits industriels et du capital colonial s'ajoutait un bouleversement de mentalités : les postes de travail dans les corporations naguère tacitement réservées aux Juifs étaient désormais recherchés par des musulmans, déstabilisés eux-mêmes et à la recherche d'emploi. Cette marginalisation sociale d'une partie de la communauté qui avait dû abandonner son village pour s'entasser dans la misère des quartiers populeux de Marrakech ou Casablanca avait, pour une bonne part, alimenté l'émigration vers Israël »(49).

<sup>443</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>444</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

de France (The Jewish Enlighteners of France) – a Jewish scouting organization and its chapters across North Africa.<sup>445</sup> The so-called “Jewish problem” was “evolving rapidly” and needed to be dealt with carefully.<sup>446</sup> “It would be imprudent to neglect the evolution of this segment of the population,” advised M. Botbol, the inspector of Jewish communal institutions for the Protectorate.<sup>447</sup> As part of this initiative, the Grand Rabbi of Algiers, Rabbi Eisenbeth, embarked on a speaking tour, addressing audiences in the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Despite French wishes, however, both the schools and the youth organizations would come to be increasingly oriented toward Zionism. Further, the direction of these initiatives would come to rest firmly in the hands of local Moroccan Jews, who increasingly stood on an international Zionist stage, advocating for themselves and not merely “dupes” of Jewish Agency officials as they have been so often portrayed. These local leaders collaborated with larger international philanthropic efforts backed by the JDC such as the *Oeuvre de secours aux enfants* (OSE – “Organization to Save the Children”) which provided superior health care to Jewish children than what was generally available within the Protectorate infrastructure. The Organisation Reconstruction Travail (ORT – Organization for Reconstruction and Trades) trained Jewish students in skilled labor, and was an outlet of the Jewish Agency – *Kadima* (“forward” in Hebrew). The Alliance school network and its powerful alumni society (*Fédération des Anciens Élèves de l’Alliance Israélite*), provided a stage for the conflicting ideas of the Jewish future to play out. More detailed research is required on these specific questions which cannot be done in the context of this dissertation, but Alliance teachers and administrators, in the wake of the Second World War, increasingly embraced Zionism while simultaneously individuals within that network embraced and fomented Leftist

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<sup>445</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

<sup>446</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

<sup>447</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

activism among their students. At the same time as the Alliance increased its Hebrew program and student circles encouraged its use, the Alliance also began to place emphasis on Arabic literacy as an important skill for Moroccan Jews.<sup>448</sup> The Charles Netter Association (affiliated with the Alliance schools), was one such grouping. It frequently published articles in its journal – *La terre retrouvée* (“The reclaimed land”) about the degradation of Jewish life in Morocco, the threat of Moroccan nationalism to Moroccan Jewry, and the material and spiritual gains to be made in Palestine.<sup>449</sup> Such activities gained in popularity following the events of Oujda and Djerrada (discussed above), as well as an increasingly hostile political climate blurring anti-Semitism and Zionist critique. One article was especially potent. In a June 1947 edition of *Jeune Maghrébin* (“Young Maghribi”), a certain Ahmed Bouhelal’s article entitled “LE VENIN SIONISTE AU MAROC” (“THE ZIONIST VENOM IN MOROCCO”) was widely distributed and sounded an alarm for community officials. He followed this article with an article entitled “We ask Jews to demonstrate their Moroccan nationality” in July of the same year. Officials noted this “produced a negative effect on the Jews,” prompting Jewish officials to ask for greater censorship of such papers.<sup>450</sup> Istiqlal was quick to distance themselves from Bouhelal, but regardless his article contributed to a mounting climate of agitation and mixed messages.

Meanwhile, Moroccan Jews became increasingly involved in the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Moroccan and European Jews working with the WZO often referenced the degraded living conditions of Moroccan Jewry. A June 1947 edition of *La Vigie Marocaine* qualified the *mellah* of Casablanca as a kind of cesspool, where “30% of residents suffered from tuberculosis,

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<sup>448</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

<sup>449</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

<sup>450</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

typhus, scabies, ring-worm, trachoma, conjunctivitis [this is] the typical lot of this unfortunate population.”<sup>451</sup> The correspondent added: “I know why I didn’t see a single dog during my visit. When one is a dog, free and alone, one wouldn’t live in the Mellah.”<sup>452</sup> The Jewish press, particularly of Casablanca, published articles pulling Moroccan Jewry in every possible direction. One May 1945 article entitled “CAN JEWS ASSIMILATE” argued, while various political movements might promise much idealistically to Jews, “when, then, should we revive the so-called ‘Jewish question’? After the fall of fascism, the victories of democracies, the supremacy of socialism or Communism, all is well. Jews will enjoy the same rights as their fellow citizens, and will no longer be a special minority. Indeed, Democracy can achieve and improve many things, but what it cannot do is efface existing nations from humanity. Hoping that one day all the nations of the world will form a grand international family, that’s very nice...but it has no chance of happening in the coming five hundred years. From now until a long time away there will be Frenchmen, Englishmen, Chinese and Jews.”<sup>453</sup> Shekel buying campaigns picked up in earnest, spearheaded by local Moroccan Jews, often from the Casablanca elite.<sup>454</sup> Regional meetings of Moroccan branches of the French Zionist Federation were common in the late 1940s. After presentations, all in attendance would sing both the Marseillaise and Hatikva (the French and Israeli national anthems) – the archives make no mention of the “Sharifian hymn” (Moroccan anthem).<sup>455</sup> As with Communist and other political meetings,

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<sup>451</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur. *La Vigie Marocaine*, June 10, 1947.

<sup>452</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur. *La Vigie Marocaine*, June 10, 1947.

<sup>453</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur. *La Voix Juive* May 4 1945.

<sup>454</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

<sup>455</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

Zionist organizations often held their meetings in large urban cinemas.<sup>456</sup> Leaflets often appeared in Moroccan Judeo-Arabic, French and Hebrew.<sup>457</sup> Protectorate authorities kept tabs on an impressively long list of urban Zionist centers, youth groups, organizations and Zionist affiliated activity with the Alliance, the JDC and other operators such as the OSE and ORT (this list even included contacts with a Morocco Society of America, based in New York City, which worked to promote Moroccan Jewish immigration to Palestine).<sup>458</sup> This list grew dramatically after Israeli statehood in May of 1948.

The schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle propagated the journal *Noar* (discussed above), financed jointly by the Alliance and the JDC. This publication joined an already boisterous newsprint debate discussed in chapter one, represented by *l'Avenir Illustré*, *La voix des communautés* and the official journal of Moroccan Jewry, *l'Union Marocaine* that was unabashedly pro-French.<sup>459</sup> Debates concerning the place of Moroccan Jews in world Jewry, Zionism, Moroccan nationalism and French assimilation played out on their pages, while Communist and Istiqlal publications (addressed in a subsequent section) also contributed. Moroccan Jews were thus pulled between two poles that the international and local political context rendered increasingly mutually exclusive: primacy of identification with world Jewry (Zionism) or primacy of Moroccan identity (nationalism).

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<sup>456</sup> CADN IMA/250/15a-17. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>457</sup> CADN IMA/250/15a-17. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>458</sup> CADN IMA/250/18-20. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>459</sup> Berdugo, p. 79.

This dissertation argues that those seeking to reconcile these uncomfortable poles were drawn to Communism, but the Communist press was not nearly as widely dispersed in Jewish institutions, importantly schools, as were Zionist or nationalist publications. Through *Kadima*, the Jewish Agency established itself in Casablanca and worked with the religious establishment in the urban Jewish schools, creating, in the process, “a highly effective clandestine network in every city.”<sup>460</sup> However, a further distinction between the rural and urban contexts highlights that the majority of university educated (largely in France) Jewish teachers and Jewish students supported national liberation politics in Morocco “announcing an era of democracy and equality for all.”<sup>461</sup> As the struggle for Moroccan independence intensified in the early 1950s (explored in the next section), the Jewish Agency increasingly represented Moroccan nationalists as “religiously fanatic and feudal elements.”<sup>462</sup> Thus, the case went, it was increasingly imperative to save the Jews from Moroccan nationalists and threats of violence, while delicately handling relations with the palace so as to avoid strengthening ties between the latter, the nationalists, Cairo and the Arab League.<sup>463</sup> Protectorate reports and Jewish newspapers of the time attest to a growing concern (often inflated) with Jewish well-being in the tumult of Morocco’s independence movement, “fearing that upon independence, the Jewish population would once again be confined to the Mellah, to submit to the same laws that their ancestors endured before the arrival of France.”<sup>464</sup> Given the outreach by the Istiqlal, PDI and PCM to Moroccan Jewry and the legal guarantees of the Sultan as well as each of these party’s charters, such an outcome would have been extremely

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<sup>460</sup> Berdugo, p. 79.

<sup>461</sup> Berdugo, p. 79.

<sup>462</sup> Laskier, p. 26.

<sup>463</sup> Laskier, pp. 19-26.

<sup>464</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l’intérieur.

unlikely. The Prince (and future king) Moulay Hassan often attended and supported Jewish communal functions on behalf of his father in order to allay such concerns.<sup>465</sup> Dr. Léon Benzaquen, a future minister in the first independent Moroccan government, was prominent in such Zionist organizing and vouched for the OSE's efforts in the mellahs in the Charles Netter Society's bulletins, which often featured glossy photos of cultural events and holidays in Palestine.<sup>466</sup> Some Moroccan Jews, however, responded to this climate by embracing Moroccan nationalism in the form of the Communist Party.

### III. THE PCM AND MOROCCAN JEWRY, THE PCM AND ISTIQLAL

Protectorate authorities in the late 1940s were equally concerned with Jewish engagement in Moroccan nationalism. One protectorate report was deeply skeptical: "Young Jews are drawn to the nationalists and the Sultan who promises them mountains and miracles in the event of independence (equal rights, etc...). In the face of French passivity, this nationalist action is bearing fruit. Further, Jews are being increasingly won over [...] by Communist propaganda. We must, no matter what, do something. Jews represent a considerable force for propaganda, not only in Morocco, but around the whole world. They can work with us, but also against us."<sup>467</sup> While this report is tinged with an odd sense of conspiracy and global Jewish power, it indicates that French officials were as interested in keeping Jews on their side in order to keep a hold on North Africa as they were with preventing them from politicization in any other direction. Jewish members of the PCM, however, had already represented their party and their nation at the Youth

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<sup>465</sup> CADN IMA/250/15a-17. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>466</sup> CADN IMA/250/15a-17. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>467</sup> CADN IMA/250/1-3. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur. Subfolder January-June 1947.

International Festival in Prague of August 1947, and the Youth Communists (*Jeunes Communistes*) were drawing increasing membership through social outreach, literacy programs, and working through the labor unions.<sup>468</sup> Protectorate officials blamed the spread of Communism among the Jewish youth on their living in proximity to Communist members or sympathizers, as well as the experiences of the Vichy period that served to convince Moroccan Jews that they could not assimilate to a French model. Rather, these Jews believed in an internationalist model adapted for local conditions.<sup>469</sup> Officials sounded the alarm:

Night classes, charity balls, soup kitchens and free distribution of clothing and food stuffs are effective, most often with the CGT which is completely obedient to the Communists in Morocco; the weeklies 'ESPOIR' and 'LIBERTÉ' are read in the mellahs, tracts are distributed by Jewish militants and, at political meetings as well as ceremonies and public demonstrations organized by Communists. Jews are a large number; indeed, importantly in an Islamic country, Jews frequently occupy top positions in local cells, committees and central committees. [...] In some cases, they [party officials] have had to limit Jewish participation out of fear of being perceived by Muslims as a "Jewish" party.<sup>470</sup>

The party was quick to act in the wake of the Oujda and Djerrada massacres in the early 1950s (discussed above), calling for Muslim-Jewish solidarity against the true agitator against Moroccan unity: French colonialism. In *Espoir*, the PCM Secretary General Ali Yata accused the common Moroccan enemies "American imperialists and their colonialist servants."<sup>471</sup> Prior to galvanization by the conflict in Palestine, most PCM events, especially before the turn to national liberation movement in 1946, revolved around film screenings from the USSR and policy focused on workers' freedoms and pay. At one meeting in 1944, the party's first Secretary General, the Algerian Jew Léon René Sultan, mentioned that the party's goal was to defeat fascism and mobilize the PCM's support for France and "show the true Face of the new France

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<sup>468</sup> CADN IMA/250/15a-17. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>469</sup> CADN IMA/250/18-20. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>470</sup> CADN IMA/250/18-20. Questions juives, direction de l'intérieur.

<sup>471</sup> ESPOIR July 2, 1948.



to indigenous populations” as a democratic, free nation and “friend” of the Moroccan people. He frequently called for the “Union of the French and Moroccan peoples, within distinction of religion which shall remain private and personal.”<sup>472</sup> At an event in July 1946 marking the one year anniversary of Sultan’s death, that policy had radically shifted, although the Marseillaise was still often sung at the end of meetings along with the “Sharifian hymn” and the Internationale.<sup>473</sup> The police reported record numbers of Jews at the fateful August 1946 congress of the PCM that pronounced a manifesto for liberation.<sup>474</sup> A certain Moroccan Jew, Albert Pilo, was an apparent Communist recidivist: police reports of the mid-late 1940s repeatedly document his arrest for spreading propaganda among Moroccan Jews.<sup>475</sup> Indeed, it was not mutually exclusive to be in the Eclaireurs Israelites, a member of the Youth Communists, and participate in scouting and social activities (including dances, film screenings and pool parties). Pilo was guilty for spreading propaganda equally among them.<sup>476</sup>

And what of the Jewish proletariat? How did their interests align with those of the Moroccan Jewish educated élite, with the movement for national liberation and with the ambitions of Protectorate officials? As Simon Lévy has noted, “at the time that independence was the primary political objective, the PCM offered clear answers to minorities and trained them in syndical and political action. In 1948 [the PCM] counted about 500 Jews in Casablanca, Meknes, Fez, El-Jadida [Mazagan today], Debdou, Oujda, etc. In the nationalist infused syndicates, many workers organized [toward this goal], including teachers for the Alliance Israélite and also Hebrew

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<sup>472</sup> CADN MAROC DI/200/319.

<sup>473</sup> CADN MAROC DI/200/319.

<sup>474</sup> CADN MAROC DI/200/319.

<sup>475</sup> CADN MAROC DI/200/325.

<sup>476</sup> CADN MAROC DI/200/325.

teachers in the Em Habbanim school in Fez.”<sup>477</sup> Jewish members of the PCM typically came from the more educated, bourgeois segments of Moroccan urban society, but not exclusively. In 1950, Robert Montagne and a research team for the protectorate authorities published a sociological survey and analysis of Morocco entitled *Naissance du Prolétariat Marocain: enquête collective exécutée de 1948 à 1950* (“Birth of the Moroccan Proletariat: a collective inquiry conducted from 1948 to 1950”).<sup>478</sup> Surprisingly, he devotes much space to a depiction of Moroccan Jewish urban life on the eve of Moroccan independence, particularly in Casablanca. Montagne noted the massive rural to urban migration of the interwar period to Casablanca, estimating approximately one million Muslims and about 100,000 Jews had converged on the city (as well as other large cities) for factory and other industrial-commercial opportunities. This only increased with the American presence after 1942.<sup>479</sup> Montagne’s total population estimates for 1947-1940 in Casablanca stood at 120,000 “Europeans” (a complicated category addressed in chapter two), 365,000 Muslims and 65,000 Jews.<sup>480</sup> Montagne noted that the violence in the Eastern Oujda region and Djerrada had accelerated, with the effect of Jews turning inward for protection: “In recent years – from 1945 to 1949 – [...] Jews have been the fastest migrating group [to Casablanca]. Within the walls of the old city, the number of Jews has gone up from 15.2% to 17% in the *derbs* [refers to “little streets” in Arabic]. The reason for this is that the Jews cannot live in the *bidonvilles* [as addressed in chapter one, the “shanty towns” that rapidly sprang up around Casablanca during the interwar period], or in the ‘Derb Sidna,’ or the *ville nouvelle*, because they don’t feel safe there in times of tension. They have come to transform the

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<sup>477</sup> Lévy, p. 66.

<sup>478</sup> Robert Montagne et al, *Naissance du Prolétariat Marocain : enquête collective exécutée de 1948 à 1950* (Paris : Peyronnet & Cie, 1950).

<sup>479</sup> Montagne, p. 13 and pp. 135-6.

<sup>480</sup> Montagne, p. 135.

mellah, all that they can conquer of the old city and its *derbs* [“little streets”]. They remain grouped together, even though, often living in houses with mixed tenants, they live on good terms, on the same mattress, in times of normalcy with their Muslim neighbors. But they take great care not to isolate themselves. They know all too well the danger and the recent pogrom in Djerada (1947) reminded them of this.”<sup>481</sup> Montagne characterizes Jewish political affiliations as generally looking elsewhere – especially the poor who looked to Israel – with the notable exception of “A few hot-headed Jews drawn to Marxist Communism, [who] join in the social agitation of the unions and the ‘militants’ for the Moroccan people.”<sup>482</sup> Despite a predominance of great poverty among Jews in Casablanca, Montagne depicts them as upwardly mobile although sometimes “whole families were crammed into a single room.”<sup>483</sup> By contrast the youth are described as dressing completely in the European fashion, women and men, working in elegant shops with men achieving higher degrees and even gaining entry into professional schools.<sup>484</sup> Muslims, Montagne notes, had not had nearly such a high degree of economic success or social mobility in the colonial context of early 1950s Morocco. Montagne claims that history has treated Jews in Morocco far worse than Moroccan Muslims, however he completely neglects to address the long history of French Protectorate preferential policies toward Jews as mediators in the colonial apparatus across the Maghrib.<sup>485</sup> Those “hot-headed Jews” Montagne referenced were highly cognizant of such historic and economic differences. Through the PCM, they sought to remedy these inequalities while working for Moroccan independence.

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<sup>481</sup> Montagne, p. 170.

<sup>482</sup> Montagne, p. 250.

<sup>483</sup> Montagne 1953, p. 285.

<sup>484</sup> Montagne 1953, p. 285-286.

<sup>485</sup> Montagne 1953, p. 287.

The national liberation party that counted the most Jews among its ranks was the Moroccan Communist Party. A few were members of Istiqlal and far fewer of the PDI. The PCM's universalism and appeal for Moroccan independence made it the most obvious political option for such Jews. It is important to note that Jewish membership in the PCM was not disproportionate as it was in communist contexts elsewhere in different times and places (notably Eastern Europe); they represented a highly prominent minority of a minority. Their numbers do not translate to their historical importance. Examining their participation in the liberation of Morocco uncovers a story that has been hitherto neglected in the historiography of North Africa and the Middle East, as well as modern Jewish history. They challenge historical assumptions and records that have depicted Moroccan Jewry as passive subjects rather than active agents of change. They matter not only for a fuller picture of the history of Morocco, but also for that of the region more broadly, as well as France and Israel. The Jewish members of the PCM walked an ideological and identity tightrope that sometimes left them hanging, alienated, and even pariahs in the Moroccan Jewish community.

The PCM was hardly uniformly accepted as a patron of Moroccan liberation. In his 1954 reflective text, 'Allal al-Fassi of Istiqlal decried that:

At the present moment, only one French party – the Communist – has been able to continue its activities under a Moroccan label. But the fact that the French constitute the overwhelming majority of its leadership and membership impels us to withhold recognition of it as a Moroccan party. The Istiqlal Party, therefore, has turned down the repeated appeals of this party for the formation of a national front. At the same time, the Istiqlal party is continuing its efforts to safeguard the Moroccan people from the propaganda of any foreign party, whatever its form. This is being done by training and organizing the masses and explaining to them the dangers that would accrue from the spiritual colonization which undermines the nationalist creed. We must make mention here of the facilities which the Residency-General is according to the Communists in the country, for no reason save to join with them in resisting our indomitable party; but neither the machinations or the colonials nor the defection of the traitors will undermine

the party so long as it enjoys the confidence of the entire people and the sympathy of its beloved King.<sup>486</sup>

To what extent was there any truth to such accusations? As the previous chapter demonstrated, the immediate post war period witnessed a reinvigoration and Moroccanization of both the labor unions and the PCM. Further, as of 1946, the PCM distinguished its colonial policy from that of the PCF (Algeria being the crucial sticking point – the PCF was very slow to support the Algerian independence movement while members of the PCM endorsed it), in the hopes of achieving nationalist legitimacy (and authenticity) as fully-fledged party acting for Moroccan independence from France. Its Secretary General was a Moroccan Muslim, Ali Yata (albeit of Algerian background), and Moroccans increasingly composed the party's Politburo and propaganda efforts. Certainly, many Europeans dominated local organizations and the efforts of the party, but it was no longer the purely European directed party that it had been during the interwar period. Further, the Protectorate authorities could not have been more dead set against the threats and efforts of the PCM. In April of 1943, the director of public security for the protectorate distributed a circular on “the surveillance of Communist activity.”<sup>487</sup> If anything, France's weakened status gave rise to an intensified security apparatus, as one “secret” internal document reported the need to “redouble [...] surveillance of old members and sympathizers of the Moroccan Communist Party and the recently liberated political prisoners” in addition to keeping close tabs on propaganda among Moroccan Muslims and syndical activity. Interestingly, these directives were copied from those in place in Algeria at the same time.<sup>488</sup> The rapidly intensifying political climate in Algeria catalyzed a major split between the PCF and the PCM.

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<sup>486</sup> Al-Fassi, p. 251.

<sup>487</sup> Benseddik, p. 241.

<sup>488</sup> In Benseddik, p. 242.

From 26-30 June 1945, PCF secretary general Maurice Thorez presided over the tenth party congress in Paris, which served as an opportunity to focus on the post-war question of France's colonies. It was at this meeting that the PCF formally endorsed the French colonial authorities' policy of French Union (*l'Union Française*). This would not entail fully independence of French colonies but envisioned a more ideally federated rapport.<sup>489</sup> Thorez proclaimed that the party must "create the conditions for a free union, trusting and brotherly between colonial peoples and the people of France, this is what is necessary for a truly democratic and truly French political [strategy]. [...] We have always stated that the right to divorce does not mean the obligation to get a divorce. We have never stopped demonstrating that, for example, the interest of the populations of North Africa rests in their union with the people of France."<sup>490</sup> Following the defeat of Fascism, the previous chapter demonstrated that the PCF was immensely popular along with Communist parties in many international contexts pursuant to Moscow's victory with the Allies. The PCF forced the national liberation agenda of North African Communist parties onto the backburner at this time. In this post war context the PCF proved somewhat reticent to relax its Metropole grip over Casablanca, Algiers and Tunis.

The PCM held its first national congress beginning April 5<sup>th</sup> 1946 in Casablanca. Unlike the Istiqlal or PDI, the PCM was "very heterogeneous in its ethnic composition. It brought together Muslim and Jewish Moroccans, Algerians, Frenchmen, Spaniards and even Italians."<sup>491</sup> The leadership had remained predominantly European (in the interim between Léon Sultan's death and Ali Yata's accession to Secretary General, Michel Mazella held the top post for a time in

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<sup>489</sup> Benseddik, p. 248.

<sup>490</sup> Benseddik, p. 248.

<sup>491</sup> Chakib, p. 117.

1945); 1946 marked a major turning point in both the Moroccanization of the party and its increasingly independent rapport vis-à-vis the PCF. By 1948, Moroccans outnumbered Europeans. Representation was 3,000 Moroccan Muslims, 500 Moroccan Jews and 2,500 Europeans.<sup>492</sup> The unionists were predominantly members of the PCM, but this would slowly change as the Istiqlal party realized it was losing a valuable pool of supporters. The PCM's recruitment efforts drew heavily from the unions, workers, petty protectorate employees, as well as the better-off including lawyers, doctors, business owners ("particularly among Moroccan Jews," notes Chakib), teachers, students and soldiers.<sup>493</sup> Women were scarce among the upper echelons of party leadership, but Léon Sultan's widow, Fortunée Sultan, headed the PCM's women's wing, the *Union des femmes du Maroc* (UFM: "Moroccan Women's Union") alongside Lucette Mazella – Michel Mazella's wife.<sup>494</sup> The UFM's *Femmes du Maroc* ("Women of Morocco") contributed to the flurry of PCM affiliated press organs, which now included the French language *Espoir* ("Hope"), the Arabic *Hayat ech-Chaab* ("Life of the People"), *l'Action syndicale* ("Action of Syndicates" – formally an organ of the UGSCM). Other publications included, *le Petit Marocain*, *Libération*, *Justice* and *Tablettes Marocaines*. Most publications were in French, but the Arabic press was slowly gaining strength. The UFM contained many Jewish women, most of whom had spouses or family members in the PCM (this was a structural pattern also found in Istiqlal). The 1947 National Committee of the UFM included Fortunée Sultan as the president, Zineb Benouna and Yvonne Beaupère as vice-presidents, Khadouj Bent Lhoucine and Lucette Mazella as secretaries general, organizational secretaries Aicha Bent Messaoud and Juliette Sitbon, Germaine Abitbol as treasurer, social secretaries L. Marcelle

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<sup>492</sup> Chakib, p. 118.

<sup>493</sup> Chakib, p. 119.

<sup>494</sup> Chakib, p. 119.

Sippel, Zeroual Bent Houcine, Lucette Lévy Lebhar, Milouda Bent Mohamed and Rosine Benané, propaganda secretaries Rabha Bent Mimoun, Friha Ayache (married to Germaine Ayache), Douada Bent Abed, and press secretaries Marcelle Delmas, Pierette Garcia and Evelyne Serfaty (sister of Abraham Serfaty).<sup>495</sup> While the UFM's activities were largely confined to a typically "feminine" sphere regarding children, education, and mothers, their demonstrations brought out thousands forcing the Protectorate authorities to dispatch police officers for crowd control. In addition to protests and such stereotypically feminine acceptable political causes, the UFM operated a soup kitchen.<sup>496</sup> They were careful to respect religious sensibilities and used their social welfare work to support the PCM's moral standing by arguing it was not a purely atheistic organization.<sup>497</sup>

Cracks in the anti-colonial rapport of the PCF and the PCM began to show even before 1946. PCF envoy Jacques Gresa arrived in Morocco in 1943, where he met with André Marty of the PCM. Initially, both men opposed Moroccan independence on the grounds that it "would impede the war effort against Hitlerism and allow the Americans in place to substitute French rule."<sup>498</sup> The signing of the Atlantic charter, Sultan Mohammed V's meeting with President Roosevelt and the French withdrawal from Lebanon in 1943 alongside Istiqlal's rising star pushed the PCM and the PCF to reconsider.<sup>499</sup> Following the Istiqlal's public manifesto for independence and the Sultan's endorsement of it, the PCM was compelled to distribute a tract clarifying its position:

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<sup>495</sup> Chakib, p. 219-220.

<sup>496</sup> Chakib, p. 220.

<sup>497</sup> Chakib, p. 221.

<sup>498</sup> In Chakib, p. 125.

<sup>499</sup> Chakib, p. 125.



“well before the Atlantic Charter, the PCM advocated for the right of self-determination. Without abandoning this principle, it [the PCM] thinks that the current situation, when Morocco is at the crossroads of competing interests, would make Moroccans suffer even further if they go down that path from which there is no return, perhaps through misunderstanding or even consciously of the movements that seek to draw them; it is for this reason that the PCM has stated and made very clear that it is not in the interest of the Moroccan people to separate from the French people.”<sup>500</sup> However, by the spring of 1944 the PCM was increasingly critical of Protectorate policies and officials, openly advocating for “the victims of repression” and criticizing the Metropole for leaving Vichy officers in place in the Protectorate apparatus.<sup>501</sup> In this context, the PCM shifted toward support of the Union Française model (described above), in which the PCF would continue to serve as the guiding hand of PCM activity. Nearly every issue of *Espoir* in 1945 endorsed this policy. Largely, Chakib suggests, out of an anxiety “not to compromise the victory of the Left in France by demanding independence too quickly or prematurely, which would play into the hands of the trusts, the ‘feudal lords’ [*féodaux* in French – a word that comes up frequently in PCM publications and refers to the Moroccan political elite] and the powerful imperialists that seek to cause problems for ‘Democratic France.’”<sup>502</sup> Citing the quote from Lenin with which this chapter began, even Secretary General Ali Yata supported the Union Française model:

The Communists struggle against all forms of national oppression and seek to establish equality human rights. [...] But currently, is there any utility in Morocco separating from France? The recent examples of Syria and Lebanon reinforce our position and we respond resolutely: no. Morocco would gain nothing in changing masters, if not more

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<sup>500</sup> In Chakib, p. 126.

<sup>501</sup> Chakib, p. 126 and p. 132.

<sup>502</sup> Chakib, p. 130.

ferocious oppression. On the contrary, the Union with France would lead to less national oppression, and consequently greater freedom and social progress. [...] The former tsarist colonies have become, thanks to the USSR, strong, free and happy countries. [...] The French nation, fighting against the trusts that betray her at the same time as they pillage Morocco, want to establish a true democracy that can only bring happiness to the Moroccan people.<sup>503</sup>

The Union Française policy was endorsed across all three communist parties of the Maghreb in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It was the particular relationship of Algeria to France, and thus the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) with the PCF that fomented a great deal of this tension. Building on its criticism of the remaining Vichy structures after the war, Michel Mazella went one step further by suggesting that the Union combined with the PCM were the best hopes for the future of Morocco. Together they would preserve the country's integrity:

Morocco's enemies have one goal: to pit Muslims against Jews, Moroccans against Frenchmen. They have always know how to exploit the Muslim nationalist nature and have gone out of their way to maintain, even to foster, the colonial spirit of Europeans and the Zionist movement among the Jews. Indeed, those who oppress us get along well: the feudal Moroccan lord is in agreement with the Vichy high functionary and the representative of the Bank of Paris [...] Our party advocates for the constitution of a democratic assembly of all honest Moroccans: Europeans, Jews and Muslims, Socialists, Nationalists, Communists and Syndicalists.<sup>504</sup>

This rhetoric corresponded with the activities of the *Amis de la démocratie* and the *Amicales Communistes* explored in the previous chapter.<sup>505</sup> The Union strategy became increasingly untenable, however, when the new Resident General Erik Labonne allowed exiles to return (Allal al-Fasi from Gabon, Mohammed Hassan El Ouazzani (of the PDI) from the far southern

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<sup>503</sup> Chakib, p. 131.

<sup>504</sup> In Chakib, p. 139.

<sup>505</sup> Chakib, p. 139.

reaches of Morocco and A. Balafrej from Corsica) in the spring of 1946. While this shift in the Residency also permitted greater liberty of activity for the PCM, it also meant that the nationalist groups were in a better position to compete for members. Thus, at a Central Committee meeting in August 1946, the PCM endorsed Istiqlal's bid for independence and published its own manifesto. This manifesto, published and distributed in both French and Arabic, focused on the sacrifices of Moroccan soldiers in the French army during the war, extreme national poverty and the colonial oppression of workers placed in stark contrast with the potential wealth of the country: "The crushing majority of the Moroccan people still live in poverty and misery instead of benefiting from the enormous resources of their country that could assure their well-being. Our brothers suffer from hunger, wear rags and are crammed into the *bidonvilles*, near to the rich lands which have been expropriated from them."<sup>506</sup> The manifesto left no ambiguity in its complete support and agenda for Moroccan independence in both the French and Spanish zones. It demanded universal suffrage, a national Moroccan army, the use of Arabic as an official language "in all administrations and all educational settings," the eradication of illiteracy among Moroccan school children, the "unification and modernization" of the Moroccan justice system, individual freedom, the freedom of the Arabic language press, and, very importantly: "the freedom of assembly, which includes the right to unionize and the immediate legalization of all political parties, in particular the Istiqlal party and the Party for Democracy and Independence [PDI]."<sup>507</sup> In addition to these goals, the manifesto sought fair salaries, reasonable working hours, fair land sharing, and the elimination of international trusts (particularly concerning the phosphate mines). It concluded by calling for full Moroccan sovereignty and the unity of Morocco's national liberation parties in their common struggle:

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<sup>506</sup> In Chakib, p. 294.

<sup>507</sup> In Chakib, p. 296.

Let us throw aside that which divides us and let us find all that can bring us together!

Let us gather together in a Moroccan national front bringing together the members of the Istiqlal party, the Party for Democracy and Independence, the unions, the Communists, the socialists and all progressive Moroccans, joined by the Europeans living in Moroccan territory, who consider Morocco their adopted homeland, and who tomorrow shall have Moroccan nationality.

All men, all the youth, all women who love their country and who want to see it independent in the near future must establish in every city, every tribe, and every home, Moroccan National Front committees.

[...]

Through the common struggle of all Moroccans, through their fraternal unity, Morocco will become independent and will guarantee liberty and well-being for all its sons.

More than 100 militants, most of whom were Moroccan, ratified this manifesto at the August 1946 Casablanca meeting. Importantly, the PCM proclaimed its vision for a united Morocco (French and Spanish zones) under the primary leadership of the Sultan, with a democratic parliament and a constitution. As the party Moroccanized, the leadership had grown frustrated with triangulating with the Communist Parties of France, Algeria and Tunisia; it sought increasingly to determine its own policies. Days after the publication of this manifesto, a delegation of PCM leaders met with the Sultan.<sup>508</sup> The PCF was not pleased with this development as only just a few months prior it had sent Léon Feix to persuade the PCM to adopt the Union Française policy. However, it appears it did not want to risk complete alienation from the PCM leadership and the two parties remained in close contact.

In this same period, Istiqlal shifted its activities from Fez to focus on Casablanca. It sought to recruit the ever burgeoning population of workers in the factories and infrastructure of city.

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<sup>508</sup> Chakib, p. 145.

Working within the labor unions that had hitherto been primarily the province of the PCM.<sup>509</sup> While the PCM publicly endorsed Istiqlal and the PDI, neither was willing to join forces with the PCM and answer its call for a National Front. Rather, they ultimately created a joint National Front, but one that explicitly excluded the PCM as a foreign political party that was fundamentally antithetical to Islam and to the interests of Moroccans. Colonial oppression across the board, particularly against the unionized workers, increased with the installation of a new Resident General, General Alphonse Juin, in May of 1947, just months after Sultan Mohammed V's public endorsement of Istiqlal and national liberation in a speech in Tangier, April 1947.<sup>510</sup>

The proclamation of the Republic of Vietnam on August 13, 1945 plus the bloody insurrection of May 8, 1945 in Algeria (the Sétif massacre) left the French ever more wary of political organizing in the colonies.<sup>511</sup> The Union Française model had been France's too-little-too-late mode of quelling anti-colonial agitation which proved counterproductive. The Riffian leader Abelkrim al-Khattabi (discussed in chapter one) spoke harshly against the model from his exile in Cairo alongside other Moroccan nationalists.<sup>512</sup> Moroccans fought as *goumiers* in Vietnam and popular support for Ho Chi Minh in Morocco was high.<sup>513</sup> Moroccan soldiers were not alone in this contradictory existence; France had a longstanding policy of drafting soldiers from colonies to police (and kill in) other colonial holdings. In the 1950s, this military model

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<sup>509</sup> Chakib, pp. 162-3.

<sup>510</sup> Chakib, p. 164 and also Zaki M'Barek, *Le Mouvement de libération marocain et l'indépendance inachevée, 1948-1958* (Rabat : Éditions & Impressions Bouregreg, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>511</sup> Chakib, p. 165.

<sup>512</sup> Chakib, p. 166.

<sup>513</sup> Chakib, p. 168.

increasingly turned from one of colonial soldiers fighting uprisings in other colonies to one of colonial solidarity against the French Metropole.<sup>514</sup>

The Cold War context provided yet another wedge between the PCM and other Moroccan national liberation parties. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the mainstream national liberation parties expressed increasing pro-American support, while the PCM was ever critical of American economic, political and cultural influence. The PCM was placed in further difficulty with the USSR's recognition of Israel in 1948. Discomfort intensified with the Moroccan nationalists embrace in and of the Arab League. Indeed, Cairo exerted an increasing influence on Moroccan national politics. From February 15-22 1947, representative nationalists from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco convened for the Congress of the Arab Maghreb in Cairo at which they uniformly rejected the idea of the Union Française. The Arab League (primarily Egypt) was designated to represent their nationalist causes at the United Nations, and establish an Arab bureau. As a further step, Riffian war hero Abd el-krim el-Khattabi founded the Committee for the Liberation of the Arab Maghreb in January 1948 (he had only been released from exile in Réunion in February of 1947). This organization built on the Comité d'Action Marocaine, founded in the mid-1930s by Moroccan Muslim nationalists. It was banned and subsequently reborn into the Istiqlal.<sup>515</sup> The PCM was forced to defend the USSR's recognition of Israel in this context of increased Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. In an *Espoir* article of December 1948, Driss Ben Jilali wrote:

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<sup>514</sup> See forthcoming work by Jonathan Wyrzten and his talk entitled "Global Deployment and Local Effects: Morocco's Colonial Soldiers in the 1940s" presented at the Middle East Studies Association meeting in November 2014, Washington, DC.

<sup>515</sup> M'Barek, p. 17.

Yes, the USSR was right to recognize the State of Israel, as it would have, at the same time, recognized an Arab State of Palestine, if it had been establishment in conformity with UN decisions, their economic unification preparing them for the future, their political unification, currently rendered impossible by the imperialist provocations that have divided the populations of Palestine. We must recall that Communists in all countries condemn reactionary Arab leaders as well as Zionist leaders.<sup>516</sup>

As it was difficult to overcome the USSR's recognition of Israel, the PCM instead emphasized the plight of Moroccan workers and domestic issues rather than Israel and Palestine.<sup>517</sup> The massacres of Oujda and Djerrada in June of 1948 (discussed at greater length in the first section of this chapter) allowed the PCM to rally around local incidents of violence and promote its universalist platform in a way that was more difficult for Istiqlal and the PDI. Writers for *Espoir* condemned the violence as an outgrowth of Moroccans being distracted and persuaded by events "very far away" in Israel, as well as those who spread "Hatred through racist propaganda, whether they are Jews or Muslims, have, whether voluntarily or not, played into the hands of the colonizers."<sup>518</sup> Edmond Amran El Maleh, at this point highly active in the PCM's Central Committee and Politburo, signed an editorial six months later decrying Zionist propaganda in Morocco and imploring Moroccan Jews to support the Moroccan nationalist cause wholeheartedly: "We are Moroccans, we are not 'foreigners' as the Zionists would have us think while fueling colonialism. We are deeply Moroccan."<sup>519</sup> As the PCM leadership sought to maintain the precarious balance of Muslims, Jews and Europeans in the party, it actively sought to recruit young Moroccan Jews to contribute to its campaign for national liberation and thereby condemn

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<sup>516</sup> *Espoir* no. 200-25, December 1948. In Chakib, p. 180.

<sup>517</sup> In an *Espoir* editorial of May 29, 1948, a PCM member proclaimed: « Rien ne nous fera oublier la situation dans laquelle se débattent nos khammès et fellahs [...] Rien ne détachera notre esprit des trois cents mineurs, ces fils parmi les plus braves du peuple marocain, qui moisissent dans les geôles d'Ain Moumen d'El Ader et de Casablanca [...] en agissant ainsi, nous venons en aide, et d'une façon efficace, aux masses populaires arabes et juives de Palestine. Car nous lutterons contre leurs ennemis qui sont les nôtres. » (Chakib, pp. 180-1).

<sup>518</sup> *Espoir* no. 1348, June 12 1948. In Chakib, p. 183.

<sup>519</sup> *Espoir* no. 197, December 4, 1949. In Chakib, p. 183-4.

Zionism publicly. An October 1949 *Espoir* editorial implored Moroccan Jews not to let themselves be persuaded by Zionists: “and refuse to deprive the Moroccan people of a portion of its young and vigorous population. [We] ask that you join with the whole of the Moroccan people in its struggle for emancipation publicly and resolutely. [This will] bring freedom for all, and along with it equality. [In so doing], [the young Jews] will be helping to erase the discrimination of which they have been victims.”<sup>520</sup> The same edition reported the eye-witness account of a Moroccan Jew who had left for Palestine but returned home, reporting on the ill-treatment and quality of life he had experienced there. At the same time, the PCM responded to Istiqlal’s accusations of being a “non-Muslim” and “French Party” by promoting Moroccan Muslims and Jews to more leadership positions as Europeans stepped back into secondary rank leadership roles, notably including Gaston Delmas and Michel Mazella.<sup>521</sup> This was a critical decision, as Istiqlal’s influence grew in the unions and divisions between European and Moroccan workers deepened.<sup>522</sup>

The PCM leadership alongside many other Moroccan political notables had long advocated for Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi’s release from exile in its press releases and public exhortations. When he chose to live in Cairo (he was intended to go to France but accepted the asylum offered by Egypt’s King Farouk), he allied himself with the Arab League. The PCM leadership was vexed with what they considered to be a betrayal. As chapter one explored, the origins of the PCM lie in the Riffian War of the mid-1920s when the PCF actively agitated against French fighting in the region as well as in the contemporaneous Syrian Revolt. Léon Feix, the PCF delegate in the

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<sup>520</sup> *Espoir* no. 238, October 1, 1949. In Chakib, p. 184.

<sup>521</sup> Chakib, p. 197-8.

<sup>522</sup> Chakib, p. 205.



Maghreb as well as Ali Yata, suspected that President Truman had been involved and chalked the betrayal up to Cold War machinations. It is more likely, however, that Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi's political allegiances and aspirations were not aligned with those of the PCM or the PCF. He did not see them as strong allies or at least as strong as the support he received in Egypt. There is a grain of truth, however, to such suspicions as al-Khattabi increasingly made pro-American, even anti-Communist statements as the question of Maghribi independence was pushed forward to the United Nations. For example, in July 1947 he stated for the American "United Press": "I think that the United States is becoming more and more interested in our country. [...] American politics [...] is based on two principles. The first is the principle of justice, freedom and democracy. The second is a corollary to the first and is the position it takes concerning Communism. [...] I think that Morocco, North Africa and the Arab world more broadly are of vital importance for America in its struggle against Communism."<sup>523</sup> This statement left little room for ambiguity: the hero and leader of Morocco's first major independence movement symbolized by the Riffian Republic was unequivocally anti-Communist, shattering the storied reveries that the PCF and the PCM had heaped upon him. In truth, their support had not done much to help Abd el-Krim el-Khattabi's cause. It had helped the PCF more in proving its legitimacy to Moscow. Ali Yata, as the Secretary General of the PCM, was infuriated. Abd el-Krim el-Khattabi's anti-Communism, pro-Istiqlal and Arab League activities had served to further undercut the PCM's legitimacy and "authenticity" as a party of the Moroccan people. Yata wrote a scathing editorial in *Espoir* in October 1947 in response to el-Khattabi's comments: "And so with a light heart Abd el-Krim has agreed to chain his country to the imperialism of the Dollar, hoping that the government in Washington will look favorably upon his personal views. [...] We were the first to call for the liberation and return of this old

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<sup>523</sup> *Liberté* no. 217 August 7 1947, in Chakib p. 223.

fighter, who once knew how to fight for the national cause. We are comfortable saying that the path he has followed since taking up residence in Cairo is dangerous.”<sup>524</sup> Wounded, the PCM leadership refused to have anything to do with el-Khattabi’s activities in Cairo (not that they were included), and accused his Committee of being far away, led by expatriates who were out of touch with events in Morocco.<sup>525</sup>

Ali Yata, too, was expelled on the grounds that he was Algerian and not Moroccan in June 1948.<sup>526</sup> In his absence, Edmond Amran El Maleh began to appear more and more frequently in police reports, alongside Driss Ben Djilal and Abdeslam Bourquia. Evelyne Serfaty and her more famous brother, Abraham, who began to take on increasingly heavy (and visible) party responsibilities. El Maleh often took the helm of public events, literacy classes, and rallying of the PCM for the goals of national liberation, speaking in French and Moroccan Arabic (Darija). He expounded on the importance of maintaining close ties with the unions and the CGT, and underlined the importance of abrogating the treaty of Fez: “The Communist Party fights for freedom, Moroccan sovereignty, [which are] fundamental aspirations of the Moroccan people. Morocco must become a free and sovereign country in which Moroccans take charge of their own affairs. To attain this freedom, we must abrogate the treaty of Fez, undo the regime of capitulations, do away with the colonial administration, elect a Moroccan national assembly, create a Moroccan government and sign a treaty of alliance with democratic France.”<sup>527</sup> He went

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<sup>524</sup> *Espoir* October 19 1947 no. 138, in Chakib p. 223.

<sup>525</sup> *Espoir* December 4 1948 no. 197, in Chakib p. 226-7.

<sup>526</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324. A pamphlet published by the PCM on the event of his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday argued that he was born in Morocco and was essentially Moroccan, despite his father’s Algerian origins. Therefore, his expulsion could not be legal. Yata continued clandestine activity from Algeria and France. The PCF archives 283 J/77 demonstrate he was in constant contact with PCF leaders during this time.

<sup>527</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/323. Meeting March 25, 1949.

on to push for further activity of the PCM in unions as well as wider distribution of propaganda. In addition to such efforts, El Maleh traveled to other large PCM centers in Oujda, Fez and his own hometown of Safi, coordinating with local leaders who were themselves Jews (Jacques Lévy (born in Tlemcen, Algeria) lead the Oujda section, Joseph Lévy (born in Morocco) lead that of Fez, and Isaac Lévy (also born in Morocco) led that of Safi).<sup>528</sup> While El Maleh took on the mantle of party leadership, Abraham and Evelyne Serfaty were frequently cited for transporting Communist agitators from one place to another. Abraham was repeatedly apprehended for slipping copies of *Hayat al-Sha'ab* ("The Life of the People"), the Arabic language paper of the PCM, under the doors of European, Muslim and Jewish homes.<sup>529</sup> Police reports from 1951 estimated that the main Casablanca hub of the PCM had 60 Jews, 540 Muslims and 200 Europeans active in the party. It is clear from the archives that Jews were playing a disproportionate role in the party leadership. Numbers for the PCM across the whole of Morocco (Spanish and French) cited 99 Jews, 937 Muslims and 859 Europeans for a total of 1,895.<sup>530</sup> Not only did Jews play an outsized role in the leadership of the PCM, but the PCM as a whole. While being such a small party, it represented an outsized security concern for the Protectorate. Under Djilali, Driss al Aloui and El Maleh's leadership, the PCM had established night schools, literacy programs and a political cadre forming classes to compete along with Istiqlal free schools by the summer of 1950.<sup>531</sup> Such efforts alarmed Protectorate authorities further with reports of Moroccan Communists studying in Paris. Also upsetting were the activities of a certain Ben Salem el Kohen, born in Fez 1924, who met with other Moroccan

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<sup>528</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/323. Police report of 22 December 1949.

<sup>529</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324. Report Rabat, May 1950.

<sup>530</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324.

<sup>531</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324.

students in Paris at a residence in the 5ème where Moroccan political affairs were hotly debated.<sup>532</sup> It bears mentioning that alongside such nationalist initiatives and declarations, the Serfatys and other propaganda distributors of PCM tracts would conclude with “Long live Stalin our father and our guide!” This likely did more to harm the PCM’s claims to Moroccan nationalist authenticity than it helped them.<sup>533</sup>

The PCM’s “Moroccan authenticity” increasingly became problematic. Unfortunately for the PCM, Allal al-Fassi (returned from exile in Gabon in 1946) and Abd el-Krim el-Khattabi were working together. Abd el-Krim was also working with Habib Bourguiba in Tunis and Mekki Naciri of the Parti de l’Union Marocain (PUM – “Party for Moroccan Unity”).<sup>534</sup> They presented a briefing on events in Morocco before the Political Committee of the Arab League in September, 1951. M’Barek notes that in addition to such joint Egyptian-Moroccan political action, educational exchanges were also facilitated between Maghribi countries, Cairo and Baghdad.<sup>535</sup> This prompted the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs to lobby for Moroccan independence to appear on the agenda of the United Nations.<sup>536</sup> The PCM supported this plan and co-signed it, pushed by its own members and by the Istiqlal.<sup>537</sup> Pursuant to a November 1951 meeting in Algiers of the three Maghribi Communist Parties, the PCM submitted its own

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<sup>532</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324.

<sup>533</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/324.

<sup>534</sup> M’Barek, p. 25.

<sup>535</sup> M’Barek, p. 28.

<sup>536</sup> Chakib, p. 229.

<sup>537</sup> Chakib, p. 230.

memorandum for independence to the UN Secretary General on November 8, 1951.<sup>538</sup> However, it was grasping for broader support at home.

#### IV. THE STRUGGLE FOR MOROCCAN LIBERATION, AL-WIFAQ AND JEWISH CITIZENSHIP

In addition to attacks on its authenticity as a representative of the Moroccan people, the PCM received general criticism of the Soviet Union. Ouazzani of the PDI embraced De Gaulle's language of comparing the dangers of global communism to those that had been posed by Hitler: "The danger of Communism menaces France and the world, as Hitler did yesterday. Communist Russia exploits Europe's political decadence and material misery, its moral degradation. And with an iron fist, it holds the reins of the weakest peoples, choking some, trampling others."<sup>539</sup> "They are in favor of a dictatorship of the proletariat and we are for democracy for the entire nation," said one editorial, while another grudgingly embraced the PCM's nationalism in a kind of back-handed compliment: "other communist parties are internationalists whereas the French Communist Party in Morocco adorns itself with a strict nationalism."<sup>540</sup> The PDI and the Istiqlal frequently refused to refer to the PCM as the Moroccan Community Party but rather as the "French Communist Party in Morocco," thereby denying its indigeneity and authenticity. As the previous quotes demonstrate, it was presented as both ideologically untrustworthy and inconsistent regarding its nationalism and loyalty to international Communism. It could not be trusted in a Moroccan nationalist context either. On one positive note, as both the Istiqlal party

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<sup>538</sup> Chakib, p. 230.

<sup>539</sup> *Ar-raï al-'Am* October 22 1947, in Chakib p. 231.

<sup>540</sup> *Ar-raï al-'Am* March 3 1948 and *Ar-raï al-'Am* June 7 1948, in Chakib p. 232.

and PDI penetrated the labor unions, attempting to wrest them from the PCM, rhetoric accusing Communism of atheism was diminished.<sup>541</sup> The labor unions, particularly through the UGSCM, Istiqlal and PCM members were very active and syndicalism proved to be a sphere of political rapprochement as the rival liberation organizations began to share increasingly common agendas in the early 1950s. A new publication, *Nouvelles marocaines*, appeared in 1951 with contributing authors from the Istiqlal, PCM and the PDI including Abraham Serfaty. However Edmond Amran El Maleh reported subsequently that a meeting between delegations of the PCM and Istiqlal resulted in the latter's continued policy to keep the PCM at arm's length.<sup>542</sup> In a moment reminiscent of Abd el-Krim's perceived betrayal, the Istiqlal party along with other smaller nationalist entities formally created a National Moroccan Front in April 1951, formally excluding the PCM. The PCM leadership suspected that Istiqlal's hopes for American support in the UN explained this turn evidence suggests there were many possible reasons.<sup>543</sup> This was followed in 1955 with the Istiqlal party's creation of a completely Moroccan labor union, the Union Marocain du Travail (UMT), which allowed PCM membership but had left the leadership in the dark concerning its establishment.<sup>544</sup> The UMT was publicly endorsed by Sultan Mohammed V. When violence broke out in 1952 at *Carrières Centrales*, a bidonville of Casablanca that grew around French built workers housing, the Protectorate Authorities seized the excuse to rescind previous acceptance of union activism in an effort to crush this sphere of national liberation activity. This violence was in response to a swelling street demonstration (organized by Istiqlal and PCM leaders through the General Union of Moroccan Confederated

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<sup>541</sup> Chakib, p. 234.

<sup>542</sup> Chakib, p. 235.

<sup>543</sup> Chakib, p. 240.

<sup>544</sup> Chakib, p. 268-9.

Syndicates – the UGSCM) against the murder of Ferhat Hached at the hands of colonial authorities. Hached had been the Secretary General of the General Tunisian Workers Union and prominent in the Tunisian struggle for national liberation. All told, as one PCM member later reflected: “With unheard of sadism, the tanks demolished the flimsy huts beneath their weight, pitilessly crushing those who sought a pathetic refuge in them. And so, in one single night from 7-8 December, more than 2,000 men, women and children were killed.”<sup>545</sup> In the immediate wake of this violence, several European leaders of the PCM as well as Abraham and Evelyne Serfaty were expelled to France on the grounds, as with Yata, that they were not Moroccan. While the European members were indeed not born in Morocco, Abraham and Evelyne Serfaty both had been. They were deemed “non-Moroccan” on account of their father living in Brazil for some time and thus, the Protectorate authorities had found a convenient excuse to get rid of the trouble makers by deeming them Brazilian nationals.<sup>546</sup> When Sultan Mohammed V was deposed and exiled to Madagascar in 1953 for his support of nationalist activity, Protectorate authorities continued to publish unsigned *dahirs* restricting union activism.<sup>547</sup> The nationalist struggle – across all parties – now rallied around the person of the Sultan.<sup>548</sup> It became more violent as well. The National Liberation Army of Morocco (ALN – *Armée de libération nationale du Maroc*) coordinated with Nasser, the Arab League and Abdelkrim’s Committee for Liberation of the Maghreb (*Comité de Libération du Maghreb*) in Cairo for financial, strategic and arms support.<sup>549</sup> Lévy notes that Moroccan Jews were unsure of their future at this juncture: “It was the hour of truth for the whole Moroccan people; one had to pick sides. The notables of

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<sup>545</sup> PCF archives Seine-Saint-Denis, 67 J/ 80.

<sup>546</sup> PCF archives Seine-Saint-Denis, 357J/42.

<sup>547</sup> Chakib, p. 262.

<sup>548</sup> Miller, p. 150.

<sup>549</sup> M’Barek, p. 175.

the Committee of the [Jewish] Communities remained passive. Most Jews, inert for many reasons, waited. But they were never treacherous, and their hearts remained faithful to the legitimate sovereign.”<sup>550</sup> The PCM supported the Sultan wholeheartedly, decrying the “imperialist French” in their actions, accusing them of deposing the Sultan “because, sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of the people, he opposed the attempts of the French government to alienate that which remains of our country’s sovereignty.”<sup>551</sup> The violent repression of 1952 plus the exile of the symbol of Morocco strengthened and catalyzed national liberation activism across all organizations. Clandestine resistance organizations such *al-Hilal al-Aswad* (the “Black Crescent”) and the *al-Yad al-Sa’uda* (“Black Hand”) grouped militants from all the main national liberation organizations, most notably the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN – Army for National Liberation).<sup>552</sup> The PCM had initially placed a blanket rejection of any violent activity, preferring to participate in the boycott of French goods (notably alcohol and cigarettes), but eventually joined in clandestine violence. Communists were over-represented in the leadership of the Black Crescent, which produced pamphlets and tracts festooned with machine guns celebrating the explosion of bombs in the European quarters of big cities such as Casablanca (notably in the Central Market).<sup>553</sup> The violence of 1952, sparked by protesting over the death of Tunisian labor activist and labor leader Ferhat Hached’s assassination in Tunis, resulted in the expulsion of many French and other European communists, as well as several Moroccan Jews included Abraham and Evelyne Serfaty on the ground that they were Brazilian

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<sup>550</sup> Lévy, p. 66.

<sup>551</sup> Chakib, p. 247.

<sup>552</sup> Chakib, p. 274.

<sup>553</sup> Chakib, p. 275 and p. 278.



citizens.<sup>554</sup> An efflorescence of tracts, political propaganda distribution, clandestine activity and radio broadcasts intensified the political atmosphere. Both Istiqlal and the PDI, in addition to the PCM, were outlawed. Between August of 1953 to August of 1954 alone, 1,600 had died in anti-Colonial violence, 3,431 were wounded, and 65,000 had been arrested.<sup>555</sup> Radio broadcasts from Cairo, Iraq and Damascus applauded the Moroccan resistance fighters, and the protectorate authorities feared weapons smuggling via Egypt.<sup>556</sup>

Most Moroccan Jews were neither members of the PCM, nor of Istiqlal. As Robert Assaraf has put it, “although they were inherently loyal to the Alawite dynasty, Moroccan Jews considered it more prudent to distance themselves from the political passions of the moment, out of fear that they would be used by one or another of the conflicting parties.”<sup>557</sup> Such fears were not unwarranted. On August 20, 1954, a demonstration commemorating the one-year anniversary of Sultan Mohammed V’s exile in Sidi Kacem (Petit-Jean as it was known at the time) turned violent.<sup>558</sup> At the beginning of August 1954, leading nationalist figures called for Jewish business owners to close their shops out of solidarity for the exiled Sultan. Jews in Sidi Kacem were caught in the crosshairs of allegiance and authority. At the same time the French protectorate authorities mandated that the Jews keep their shops open, promising to protect them in case of violence. However, this turned out to be fictitious as angry protestors attacked open Jewish businesses on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1954 which resulted in six deaths. The Jewish victims were

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<sup>554</sup> Most of the protesters were labor union activists, as Miller points out p. 149.

<sup>555</sup> In M’Barek, p. 47.

<sup>556</sup> M’Barek, p. 77.

<sup>557</sup> Assaraf, p. 47.

<sup>558</sup> Assaraf p. 47.

“buried with the utmost discretion in Meknes.”<sup>559</sup> Revealingly, an open letter read throughout Moroccan synagogues in the aftermath of the violence suggested that Moroccan Jews plant trees in Israel in honor of the victims.<sup>560</sup> All of this served to strengthen *Kadima*’s operations and Zionist immigration. Assaraf notes that immediately following the Sidi Kacem violence, departures of Moroccan Jews in August alone numbered 1,032. This was followed by 1,612 in September, 973 in October, 1,662 in November and 2,214 in December. In 1955 alone, 25,000 Moroccan Jews left for Israel, “and the numbers would have been higher if not for Israel’s policy of selecting the immigrants” that favored young, productive men and women, assumed to be more gifted at farming than their Ashkenazi brethren.<sup>561</sup> This vexed the Protectorate Authorities, who considered maintaining the Moroccan Jewish population necessary for the country’s security. In April 1955, Protectorate authorities complained to Amos Arbel, head of *Kadima* in Morocco, saying: “You are sending too many people. According to our information, the number of departures approaches 2,000 monthly, and we cannot allow such numbers. You need to return to the quota established in 1949, to 600, 700 maximum per month,” in addition to “reaping the cream of the crop” in the selection process.<sup>562</sup> By the beginning of 1956, monthly departures numbered approximately 3,000.<sup>563</sup> Sultan Mohammed V received a delegation of Moroccan Jews in November 1955, when he attempted to reassure his Jewish subjects of their future status in an independent Morocco: “No segregation or discrimination has ever taken place or will ever take place between Jewish or Muslim Moroccans. Moroccan Jews are citizens with full rights like

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<sup>559</sup> Assaraf, p. 48.

<sup>560</sup> Assaraf, p. 49.

<sup>561</sup> Assaraf, p. 49.

<sup>562</sup> Assaraf, p. 49.

<sup>563</sup> Assaraf, p. 50.

their Muslim compatriots.”<sup>564</sup> The mainstream Jewish communal newspaper, *La Voix des Communautés* (“Voice of the Community”) reported on the event:

The delegation reaffirmed to His Majesty the Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef their loyalty and attachment, and to confirm to him their desire to take on their part in the nationalist struggle under his aegis. It expressed its joy to the Sultan for His firm will to establish a modern democratic régime in Morocco.

His Majesty affirmed that Morocco was entering a new era where ‘all of His subjects, without any difference, would have absolutely equal rights.’ [The delegation] confirmed its intention, already publicly declared by Moroccan notables, to integrate Jews into the national life: ‘You will live in absolute equality and freedom!’<sup>565</sup>

Such professions of allegiance to the Sultan cut across all Moroccan Jewish political affiliations, whether Communist, Zionist, or Gallicist. Indeed, even among Jews that left Morocco for Israel, support for the Sultan (and the subsequent monarchy) remained ardent. Every political party, every nationalist faction, called on Jews to participate in the national liberation project and construction of an idealistic, independent Morocco. Rhetoric did not always match events on the ground, but in spite of violence and migrations, Jews had many reasons to be optimistic.

The PCM, still largely directed by El Maleh with Yata in exile, widely promoted such ideas. A November 1951 Judeo-Arabic and French tract penned by the PCM was distributed and read in synagogues, Jewish youth clubs and slipped under the doors of Jewish homes across Casablanca and perhaps other cities as well. Responding to Protectorate Police clashing with and shooting pro-independence demonstrators on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1951, it bears quoting at length:

#### UNION AGAINST OUR CHILDREN’S ASSASSINS

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<sup>564</sup> Assaraf, p. 50.

<sup>565</sup> In Assaraf, p. 50-51.

To all Jewish Moroccans of Casablanca [...] The inspiration for such violence goes far back [...] to General Guillaume, who, director of political affairs from 1941-1943, directed the application of the Vichy racial laws in Morocco. These are the people who, Jewish Moroccans, are trying to flatter you, these are the people who applaud the leaders of your Communities and of the Zionist movements, these are who promote *Noar* [the Zionist journal described above]. [...] Oppressive imperialism wants to sideline Jewish Moroccans from the nationalist movement, and hope that in doing so, with provocations like those that happened in Oujda and Djerrada, to redirect Muslim patriots away from the anti-imperialist struggle and push them toward racist demonstrations. [...] The patriots [of November 1<sup>st</sup>] [...] demonstrate that Jewish Moroccans are considered by this country's Muslims to be part of the Moroccan nation. But do Jewish Moroccans consider themselves and act like members of the Moroccan nation? Unfortunately, too many are the Jewish Moroccans who think that the Protectorate, despite the misery it has caused and its crimes, is preferable to an independence that would leave them at the mercy of Muslims. [...] The Protectorate only brings misery and oppression to Jewish Moroccans, the same misery and oppression it brings to Muslim Moroccans. Jewish children play with Muslim children in the muddy narrow streets of the Mellah, of the rue des Anglais in El B'Hira, they grow up with them in the mud of the Protectorate. [...] JEWISH MOROCCANS AFFIRM YOUR SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> – DISASSOCIATE YOURSELVES FROM THE LIARS OF THE PRESS AND THE TRAITORS WHO TRICK YOU. STRUGGLE TOGETHER, WITH YOUR BROTHERS, WITH YOUR MUSLIM COMPATRIOTS, FOR A UNITED MOROCCO, FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND FOR PEACE.<sup>566</sup>

Moroccan Jews were, in a sense commodified, pulled for symbolic purposes by nearly every national and international political interest at play in Morocco. Such interest in addressing Moroccan Jewry as players in the struggle for national liberation movement extended across the Mediterranean to Damascus. About a year before Moroccan Independence was granted, Radio Damascus broadcast (in Arabic) at least two trenchant appeals to Moroccan Jewry to support their own national cause, for their national interests did not lie with Israel but with their Arab brethren:

How Israel treats the Oriental Jews. Arab Brothers. The Zionists have grown accustomed to transferring Jewish immigrants, particularly those coming from North Africa, to far away zones of colonization located next to the borders. Just in the past week many of them have left these regions to go to the Jewish Agency in Haifa, asking to be allowed to

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<sup>566</sup> CADN DI/1MA/200/327. Distributed by PCM in Casablanca, dated November 13 1951.

return to their country. One of them stated: “The Jewish Agency claimed it was delivering us from the Arabs, but placed us on the borders to fight Arabs and to get us killed. This is how it claims to have saved us.” Another stated: “They claimed that we were leading miserable lives and that they were offering us a better life. But we were brought to a completely barren desert where we endure thirst and hunger.” Jacob Abouredjel of Casablanca said: “The clothes we brought with us from Morocco are now worn and we live like prisoners. I’ve had to sell my wife’s jewelry in order to feed my children.” Nechenred stated: “We didn’t emigrate out of fear of Arabs, but we were seduced by the Jewish Agency’s adept propaganda that promised us a better life. Our Arab neighbors,” he concluded, “cried when they said goodbye.”<sup>567</sup>

It was unclear how Radio Damascus had access to these interview subjects, but the broadcast is fascinating for the narrative of harsh life in the transit camps and racism North African Jews experienced upon immigration to Israel. Another broadcast, one month later, lionized Syria. It was sheltering North African Jewish migrants on their way to return to their home countries while emphasizing Israel’s supposed ephemeral and dysfunctional nature:

Jew from the Arab Maghreb, watch out for Israel. Every passing day indicates that Israel is a state that won’t last, and if it lasts one year longer it’s doubtful it will endure one year after that. It lives from day to day. We are not saying this lightly and we are not twisting the facts. What we say is but a reflection of the harsh reality that surrounds Israel. Hunger grips the Jews of Israel, poverty is widespread [...] What does Israel want from you, Oh Jews of the Arab Maghreb? Many things. It wants to exploit you, it wants to take your money and lump you with the tens of thousands of poor and needy. It wants to make you into scapegoats in order to provide for its own existence and place you on the front lines if war breaks out. It wants to make you slaves to work the land and extract wealth so that Western Jews can benefit from your labor. Here are your Jewish brothers from the Arab Maghreb – who were lured by this legend that is the State of Israel. These are those who are leaving the Israeli hell in groups today. Syria alone has welcomed dozens of Jews from the Arab Maghreb who have suffered racial discrimination in Israel. It has repatriated them to their native countries. Jews of the Arab Maghreb, don’t be lured by this ridiculous legend that calls itself Israel. Don’t let yourselves be taken in by the trap into which your comrades have fallen, for they have only found poverty, hunger and persecution in Israel.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> CADN D1/1MA/250/24-26a. Broadcast March 3, 1955 via Radio Damascus, transcription and translation in Protectorate police report.

<sup>568</sup> CADN D1/1MA/250/24-26a. Broadcast April 6, 1955 via Radio Damascus, transcription and translation in Protectorate police report.

Such broadcasts, however, were not credible to the vast majority of Moroccan Jews, and emigration numbers continued to rise. The Jewish community was increasingly fracturing along political lines. As Zionists and family members of Zionists left, those Jews who were politically committed to the independence movement found their numbers shrinking and increasingly alienated and out of touch with the Moroccan Jewish community. Violence against Jews in Petit-Jean in 1954, characterized as a “pogrom” by Kadima and officials in Tel Aviv, did not help put Moroccan Jewry at ease.<sup>569</sup> Other attacks followed on Jews in Debdou (1954) a once predominantly Jewish city. Insults to the effect of “Get out of here, Jew!” were reportedly shouted out of passing cars.<sup>570</sup> One article in *Les Voix des Communautés* (“Voices of the Community”) in April 1955 put the question in stark, moral and economic terms:

Live, live, live, I hear this everywhere [...]. But what economic fate awaits these [Jewish] children? The most intelligent and the wealthiest go to the *Facultés* [university in France]. Others become rabbi-judges. But everyone else? [...] A generation is growing up that will no longer endure the servitude of the Mellah and economic inferior conditions, that seeks its place in the sun. [...] Morocco is your land, your ancestors have been here for twenty centuries. I have felt the heavy concern about the future among you. Barely adults, you the elite must confront and accept the heaviest fate. Your Westernization, the material and intellectual situation you have achieved [...] Even if you wanted to, you couldn't escape [the Mellah]. The Mellah exists outside of history. You, you are inside history, and you have the unique opportunity to effect its course. Don't say that you don't have any power. The political, legal and judicial conditions that rule Morocco are your boundaries. But these boundaries allow a margin of decisive action that you can fulfill. Life is lived through risk. You are presented with many tasks. [...] Here is what is possible and what is impossible in the present situation. What is possible is uninterrupted social aid for the mellah, in all forms. What is possible is a tight bond with French Jewry. [...] What is possible, finally, is a role that you can take on linking you to the diverse groups in Morocco. Through your minority status, your knowledge of the West, your deep roots in the East, without a doubt you are the only ones in Morocco, the best able to understand the other, to maintain or create a place of dialogue, to ensure an unfurling of the present situation without clashing, without brutality, without explosion. You know how to do it. You must do it. For Morocco. For the Jewish community, most

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<sup>569</sup> CADN IMA/250/22a-23.

<sup>570</sup> CADN IMA/200/331.

of whom are destined to remain in this country. You say you're only 250,000? So what? You constitute the largest and most concentrated Diaspora community, not including the Jewish quarter of New York City. You cannot remain passive before the unfolding of events. The current situation is progressing so rapidly that even the smallest change can mark the course of the next fifty years. And so, you want to know what I think? It's no longer time for you to question yourselves. Fate is calling you. It's only a matter of courage.<sup>571</sup>

Protectorate authorities, for all of their surveillance sophistication, were under the impression that the Istiqlal party was Communist. Interestingly, reports of Communist participation suggested that numbers had shot up dramatically to 50,000 in 1956.<sup>572</sup> Such ideas came in the context of increased anxiety for France's colonial holdings. By the early 1950s, nearly every French colonial territory "was on fire" agitating for independence.<sup>573</sup> As the bloodletting raged in French Indochina and Algeria, French troops hardened from these other battlegrounds participated in the "massive and brutal military response from the French side, who used airplanes, tanks and ground troops to subdue a resistance that left 500 Moroccans dead."<sup>574</sup> France soon adjusted priorities began to loosen its grip over the protectorates as emphases shifted to the maintenance of its integral "departments" such as Algeria. Sultan Mohammed V returned to Morocco on November 16, 1955, "greeted by delirious crowds."<sup>575</sup> Morocco subsequently secured its independence from France in March of 1956. The immediate aftermath of independence would quickly devolve into political infighting as the Sultan (King as of August 15, 1957) Mohamed V successfully "captured and manipulated powers delegated to the government. He assumed control over the military and eventually, over the security services, as

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<sup>571</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives. Article is by "Rabi" in *Voix des Communautés* no. 50, April 1955.

<sup>572</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.

<sup>573</sup> Miller, p. 150-151.

<sup>574</sup> Miller, p. 152.

<sup>575</sup> Miller, p. 153.

well as the ministries of justice and the interior” by 1959.<sup>576</sup> In the face of the *makhzan*’s skillful cooptation, “the pre-independence atmosphere of unity quickly dissipated, and jockeying for position rather than institution-building became the main business of the political élite. [...] To the monarchy’s satisfaction, a multiparty system was taking shape, diluting and weakening the monolithic power structure and influence of Istiqlal.”<sup>577</sup> With the Istiqlal party defanged, the PCM was formally outlawed pursuant to a trial in 1959. Oppression of political opposition will make up the bulk of the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation.

Before the beginning of such political repression, however, the initial independence period seemed to be a “golden age” for Moroccan Jews.<sup>578</sup> One expression of this was Istiqlal’s creation of the group *al-Wifaq* (in Arabic, “Understanding”) in February 1956, with the backing of the *makhzan*. Al-Wifaq’s goal was to create mutual understanding between Muslims and Jews “for the national interest.”<sup>579</sup> It advocated for the common understanding that Moroccans should not conflate Moroccan Jews with Zionists and Israelis, which, especially in public discourse was widespread.<sup>580</sup> Several Jewish members of Istiqlal were instrumental in the establishment of al-Wifaq, including Marc Sebbah, Albert Aflalo, Armand Asoulin and David Azoulay.<sup>581</sup> The future eminent historian of Moroccan Jewry, Haïm Zafrani, was also a member.<sup>582</sup> These individuals represented, arguably, an even smaller minority of a minority for Moroccan Jews

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<sup>576</sup> Miller, p. 156.

<sup>577</sup> Miller, p. 155-6.

<sup>578</sup> Assaraf, p. 51.

<sup>579</sup> Assaraf, p. 55.

<sup>580</sup> Assaraf, p. 56.

<sup>581</sup> Laskier, p. 73.

<sup>582</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.



than the Jews in the PCM. “They were portrayed as slavish acolytes of Mehdi Ben Barka, the noted left-wing Istiqlali leader” and out of touch with the wider Moroccan Jewish community.<sup>583</sup> It did, however, enhance Jewish membership numbers, as did the UMT and the student union, UNEM.<sup>584</sup> The suddenly emancipated Moroccan Jewish population (numbering approximately 300,000 upon independence) faced an almost universal conundrum for Jews across many nationalist contexts in many time periods: how to maintain communal identity and institutions while making Moroccan nationality their priority?<sup>585</sup>

Jews had reason to be optimistic. Upon independence Mohammed V appointed Dr. Léon Benzaquen, a Jewish member of Istiqlal, a minister in the new government. The Jewish press in Morocco brimmed with optimism and enthusiasm for the new Morocco, and for the place of Jewish citizens within it.<sup>586</sup> In addition to the prominent ministerial appointment of Dr. Benzaquen, Mohammed V nominated Jews into government posts within the ministries of finance, agriculture, commerce and industry, as well as public works.<sup>587</sup> In addition to such political posts, Jews were named to semi-public/private posts crucial to the Moroccan economy, such as the Sharifian Office of Phosphates (OCP), the Moroccan Navigation Company, and the Bureau for Mining Research.<sup>588</sup> The Jews that occupied such positions were typically educated in

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<sup>583</sup> Laskier, p. 73.

<sup>584</sup> Lévy, p. 50.

<sup>585</sup> Assaraf, p. 55.

<sup>586</sup> Berdugo, p. 81.

<sup>587</sup> Berdugo, p. 81-82.

<sup>588</sup> Berdugo, p. 82.

French universities and had returned to “take part in building the new Morocco.”<sup>589</sup> Abraham Serfaty is a prime example: as a student in the Paris School of Mines, he had been a staunch member of the PCF’s operations and committed to Moroccan independence through the PCM upon his return. For his nationalist dedication, he was rewarded with the prestigious OCP appointment. Both Istiqlal and the PDI openly embraced Jews. The national consultative assembly for the creation of a Moroccan constitution included 39 Jews.<sup>590</sup> Jews wrote for Moroccan publications across the political spectrum.<sup>591</sup> Al-Wifaq hosted numerous social and cultural events aiming to create Moroccan harmony that cut across faiths. In this spirit, Abraham Serfaty and many other Moroccan Jews not involved in Leftist politics could say: “I am an Arab Jew and I am Jewish because I am an Arab Jew.”<sup>592</sup> This context gave Jewish militants in the PCM more confidence to publish strong criticism of Zionism in Morocco, and directed particularly to those Moroccan Jews who worked actively with the Jewish Agency. Such Moroccan Jews, in the eyes of the PCM, sought to impose “a permanent obstacle in the path of true integration for Jewish minorities in their respective countries.”<sup>593</sup>

Further, the negative characterization of al-Wifaq’s Jewish leadership as being somewhat “out of touch” with the majority of Moroccan Jews is not strictly accurate and demands greater examination. Al-Wifaq events were supported by the palace, Istiqlal the PCM and every major political and social group on the Moroccan stage. The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC),

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<sup>589</sup> Berdugo, p. 81-82.

<sup>590</sup> Berdugo, p. 82.

<sup>591</sup> Lévy, p. 67.

<sup>592</sup> *France-Pays Arabes*, December 1961.

<sup>593</sup> Berdugo, p. 90.

*Oeuvres de secours de aux enfants* (OSE – “Children’s Aid Society”), Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades (ORT – acronym based on the Russian) and Alliance all had members and directors attending and participating in al-Wifaq events. The group’s national call for solidarity is indicative of Morocco’s place on a broader global stage, as well as the place of Jews on that stage. Crown prince Moulay Hassan (future King Hassan II) presided over a meeting of al-Wifaq consisting mostly young Muslim and Jewish students in January 1956. The title was billed as “Jewish Moroccans and the New Morocco.”<sup>594</sup> Dr. Léon Benzaquen and other prominent ministers attended the event, as well as prominent religious and political leaders:

The prince Moulay Hassan and those with him were greeted with an immense ovation, took their seats that were reserved close to the stage while the Cherifian anthem was sung. There were about 1,500 people in the room, for the most part Jews. [...] M. Aflalo, who spoke first, thanked SAI prince Moulay Hassan and the government ministers for attending. “We have often asked ourselves [...] who we are and what we represent. We are just a group, a group of Muslims and Jews, essentially composed of students from across the country. While politics differ and we are from different religions, we are not any less united by a sincere friendship and understanding, as well as our love for our country and for our Sovereign. It is perhaps this unity that is at the heart of our group and allows us to hope fervently for the unity of the Moroccan masses that tomorrow we would like to see working together to form a powerful block, without cracks, for the new Morocco.” [...] The crowd stood when SAI the prince Moulay Hassan took the microphone and, in a brilliant improvised speech, made with great ease and humor a remarkable synthesis of the questions raised during the meeting. “Two substantial populations have been rubbing shoulders in Morocco for centuries: Jews and Muslims. It must be stated without blushing, without shame: they have often been called upon to hate one another, to turn their backs on one another. That must not continue today. I know very well that there isn’t a single Muslim who doesn’t look toward Cairo. I know very well that there isn’t a single Jew who doesn’t look toward Palestine. Is that a good reason to be divided?” (No! said the crowd, applauding frenetically). Next SAI the prince Moulay Hassan alluded to the tasks that awaited every citizen of the country. Everyone must know his rights in a sovereign and independent country.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives. Cited from January 6, 1956 edition of *l’Echo*.

<sup>595</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives. Cited from January 6, 1956 edition of *l’Echo*.

The central political bureau of al-Wifaq was composed of M. Nekrouf as president (he was also an appointee in the Cabinet of the Ministry of Public Instruction); M. Ali Bargach (a journalist), was the first vice-president; M. Charles Cohen (a lawyer), served as the second vice-president; M. Mezzour (also in the Cabinet of the Ministry of Public Instruction), served as secretary-general; M. Albert Aflalo served as the adjunct secretary (he worked in the American Center of Information); M. Léon Abitbol (a pharmacist) was the treasurer; aided by adjunct-treasurer M. Tahar Cherkaoui (who worked in the “General Secretariat of the Government”).<sup>596</sup> The president of the Jewish community, M. David Berdugo, was emboldened to make strong statements against the Protectorate with the safe backing of al-Wifaq and the government. Istiqlal, the PDI and the PCM all sought the “complete integration of Jews in the Moroccan community.”<sup>597</sup> Jewish communal leaders spoke more openly against Jewish emigration to Israel, enforcing the call to remain and build the new nation. In Rabat, 11 February 1956, the Palace sponsored an enormous, lavish gala organized by Al-Wifaq, held in the Cinéma Royal. Once again, SAI (“his imperial highness” – *Son Altesse Impériale*) the prince Moulay Hassan II presided over the event, which showcased the country’s prime Jewish and Muslim entertainment personalities in an exuberant show of unity. This billing included Moroccan Jewish pop superstar Samy El Maghribi and his Orchestra,<sup>598</sup> the variety artist and impersonator Habib El Kadmiri, Pierre Kichy’s miming talent, new songs from Abdelwahab Agoumi, a comedy in one act, an auction of a signed portrait of SM the Sultan, illusions and slights-of-hand by a certain Farrez, and belly

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<sup>596</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.

<sup>597</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.

<sup>598</sup> See forthcoming dissertation from Chris Silver for more detailed information on North African Jewish pop stars, the music industry, and the tumult of the twentieth century. This dissertation is tentatively entitled: "Of Harmony and Discord: Jews and North African Music in the Twentieth Century" (UCLA).

dancing by Naima Cherki.<sup>599</sup> Prominent government ministers and their wives in addition to the princely entourage, including his sister, princess Lalla Aicha, embodied a common “theme” of the night: “la belle famille” (the beautiful family) that was Morocco.<sup>600</sup> The celebrations went late into the night, concluding at about 1:30am. Such a “beautiful family” still had cracks, however, and not all Jews supported all of al-Wifaq’s efforts. An exhibit put on by the group in the same month in Marrakech entitled “The Jews before, during and after the French Protectorate,” met notable opposition for its criticism of Jewish emigration to Israel. A certain M. Assor, attending the exhibit, voiced his complaints with the official recording the event: “Mr. Assor notably declared that the AL-WIFAQ movement must remain apolitical and that it shouldn’t get involved with Jewish emigration to Israel. It’s worth noting that up until today, only fifty Jews have paid their membership dues, which cost 500 francs annually.”<sup>601</sup> Exuberance might not have been consistent or universal, but for a moment, emigration paused.

The “Tri-Partite Aggression” of October 1956 in response to the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the rise of Nasserism once again put Jewish Moroccans in a delicate position.<sup>602</sup> Moroccan Jews had “believed in the dawning of a ‘new Andalusia,’ an idea that was swiftly negated by events in the Middle East.”<sup>603</sup> King Mohammed V received a delegation of Moroccan Jewish dignitaries in the wake of the crisis, making a common call for calm out of fear of retaliatory violence:

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<sup>599</sup> CADN IMA/250/30-32. Questions juives.

<sup>600</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.

<sup>601</sup> CADN IMA/250/3. Questions juives.

<sup>602</sup> Assaraf, p. 55-6.

<sup>603</sup> Assaraf, p. 55.

I would [...] ask of you to undertake persuasive, decisive action among the Moroccan Jews in order to persuade them not to leave Morocco, because their place is here. Morocco needs all its children, whether they are Muslims or Jews. It [Morocco] needs all its doctors, all its engineers, all of its lawyers. We must convince all of our Jews that they must not leave Morocco, that they should stay. Morocco needs all of its children. We must work together. We must consider ourselves to be in service to the country. Those who leave the country must be considered deserters.<sup>604</sup>

Despite this speech, however, the King did not ban the migration of Jews from Morocco. This lack of legal interdiction raised the hackles of those in favor of pan-Arabism and against any migration to Israel. An article in *Al-Rai al-'Am* highlights this:

We cannot tolerate that imperialist Zionists recruit among Moroccan Jews, who are citizens of the kingdom, the future colonizers of an Arab land that belongs to the Palestinians. We cannot be complicit in this injustice. That is why the minister of the Interior must take immediate action: no longer allow Jews to have passports and to not allow those who want to go to Israel to leave.<sup>605</sup>

Emmigration of Moroccan Jews to Israel was made illegal in July 1957, after King Mohammed V responded great popular pressure to do so.<sup>606</sup> This was lifted in December of the same year, pursuant to the King's meeting with Jewish supporters in New York City. This would prove a temporary, and somewhat cyclical measure that would map onto the Israeli-Arab conflict and, in the shorter term, Nasserism.<sup>607</sup> Indeed, it was not truly legal for Jews to migrate to Israel until 1961, largely out of the Makhzan's concern for its own Arab League legitimacy: "to avoid criticism from the Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis and Jordanians that it was handing over to the

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<sup>604</sup> Assaraf, p. 58.

<sup>605</sup> Assaraf, p. 58.

<sup>606</sup> Assaraf, p. 59-60. Assaraf notes the King saying: "Jews are also my children and I love them. I don't know why they want to go, but, if it is their desire, may God pardon them!"

<sup>607</sup> Assaraf, p. 63.

Jewish state the gift of vital manpower for nation building and military service; to halt the exodus of a much needed, experienced labor market of Jews who could replace the departing Europeans; and, finally, to control the illicit transfer of capital to Israel or the emigrants' other countries of destination.”<sup>608</sup> Moroccan Jews were increasingly suspicious of Istiqlal and the personage of Allal al-Fassi in particular as the Israel-Palestine conflict context gave rise to popular anger, undermining the ephemeral strength of al-Wifaq. Simon Lévy lamented: “We had never lived so well as we were then ... and we were leaving!”<sup>609</sup> Moroccan law had granted Jews full, equal citizenship to Moroccan Muslims, and no infringements had been made on religious communal autonomy or educational institutions. Yet, the exogenous political climate and local popular context made sharper the distinction between political ideology and on the ground reality. Further, the Jewish Agency accelerated its propaganda, both in Morocco and to financial backers abroad, “accentuating the dangers” facing Moroccan Jewry following the departure of French colonial authority.<sup>610</sup> Al-Wifaq attempted to intervene with the following document in French, Judeo-Arabic and Arabic. This was poorly received by its core devotees:

#### A Call from WIFAQ to the Moroccan Nation

Despite all international laws, the British, French and Israelis have declared war on Egypt. The Moroccan people, in its entirety, rises up against this aggression and condemns this premeditated act of war by the imperialists in order to subjugate the Egyptian nation and to strip it of its freedom and independence. Current events demand, therefore, dear brothers, to maintain and reinforce among us, Muslims and Jews, cohesion, friendship, unity and understanding which alone can ensure the independence of our Country. The colonizers are trying to divide us as they always have and will use all provocations to turn us against one another. Here in Morocco, there are only Moroccan citizens: Moroccans of the Muslim faith and Moroccans of the Jewish faith, but all Moroccan. All Moroccans without distinction of religion must consider themselves as

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<sup>608</sup> Laskier, p. 70.

<sup>609</sup> Lévy, p. 49.

<sup>610</sup> Lévy, p. 134.

mobilized in order to assure calm and order. Moroccans, dear brothers, we must be united, we must be vigilant. From our Union, from our Vigilance and our Confidence without any reservation in SM the King and his Government, on which the future of our country depends. Don't listen to those who would disassociate us. On the contrary, denounce them! Thus mobilized, you will participate in the most glorious activity there can be, the preservation of our Independence. All of this is in support of King SM Mohamed V's words. Long live the King! Long live Morocco!<sup>611</sup>

Emigration to Israel had picked up once again in earnest, as did popular rhetoric and agitation that vacillated (unevenly, unclearly) between criticism of Zionism and anti-Semitism. All of this served to undercut the persuasiveness of al-Wifaq, Istiqlal, the PCM and even the King in sustaining the Moroccan Jewish population. Edmond Amran El Maleh, who remained largely in charge until Ali Yata's return from exile and still a decisive member of the PCM Central Committee, began to question the PCM's universalist commitment as well practical ability to effect change in an increasingly Arab Nationalist climate. Just three years after independence, El Maleh would leave the PCM (1959) and eventually left Morocco altogether for self-imposed exile in France in 1965 (he returned to live in Rabat in 1999 under the new King Mohammed VI until his death in 2010).<sup>612</sup> His semi-autobiographical work of fiction, *Parcours immobile*, provides insight not only his growing disaffection with the party, but also a broader sense of what the PCM came to mean in a newly independent Morocco, as well as the precarious identity politics of Jews within in the country. El Maleh's 1980 novel *Parcours immobile* speaks directly to his involvement in the PCM, telling the story of a young assimilated Moroccan Jewish man's experience and growing dissatisfaction with the PCM, under the tutelage of the PCF. In several sections, El Maleh discusses the PCM as if it were a religion, full of hypocrisy. El Maleh repeats the phrase "Les Juifs marocains c'est entendu ne font pas de politique" ["it is understood that

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<sup>611</sup> Titled "Appel du WIFAQ à la Nation Marocaine" – many thanks to Emily Benichou Gottreich for sharing this document.

<sup>612</sup> Bouazza Benachir, *Edmond Amran El Maleh: Cheminements d'une écriture* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 19.



Jews don't do politics"] in several sections, though the protagonist joins the PCM in defiance of his family.<sup>613</sup> The novel is deeply syncretic, in the sense that the protagonist, Josua/Aïssa (depending on the section and the identity adopted), as well as his family in Essaouira/Asilah is constantly in transition, from one mode of dress to another, one language slipping into another, until they are gone.

El Maleh, like Aïssa/Josua, grew increasingly weary of the duplicitous nature of the PCM, the reverence of Stalin and the blind acceptance of principles from texts that few party members bothered to read.<sup>614</sup> El Maleh successfully evokes the atmosphere of revolutionary meetings and clubs in Casablanca. At the Moulin de la Gaieté, which he describes as having (coincidentally) red, lush velvet curtains and where the group sang the "Song of the Partisans" and in honor of Lenin: "here comes the Red Army!"<sup>615</sup> Slowly but surely, the "myth" of "transcendental" internationalism disintegrates for Josua/Aïssa as devotion to the USSR supplants the liberation struggle.<sup>616</sup> Duped by the call of Lenin, writes El Maleh, the PCM as beholden to the PCF came to symbolize "independence in interdependence, the French Union, chanting scraps of the triumphal fresco of theory."<sup>617</sup> Herein lies the semi-validity of al-Fassi's critique and Lévy's rejection: the controversy of the opaque relationship between the PCM and the PCF, a relationship which must be further investigated for a comprehensive understanding of Jewish involvement in Maghribi Leftist movements. As previously noted, the PCF had a somewhat colonial relationship with the PCM, as the PCM received its directives and policy cues from the

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<sup>613</sup> Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Parcours Immobile*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1980), p. 55.

<sup>614</sup> El Maleh 1980, p. 62.

<sup>615</sup> El Maleh 1980, p. 71.

<sup>616</sup> El Maleh 1980, p. 79.

<sup>617</sup> El Maleh 1980, p. 82.

PCF Paris Metropole. This rapport changed as the PCM embraced a policy of national liberation from France in the late 1940s and the PCF only slowly endorsed it. The PCM, in many ways like the Moroccan Protectorate as a whole, inhabited an uneasy space of theoretical autonomy within an oppressive Empire, directed from Paris until it declared its independence.

El Maleh frames the entire novel through the story of Passover. Josua/Aïssa is born on the first night of Passover in 1915 either in Asilah or Essaouira (this is left ambiguous for the sake of the protagonist's multiple personalities). This is understood by the protagonist's family to be an auspicious omen of liberty, as the Passover story relates the exodus of Israelite slaves from Egypt to the Promised Land. As in the El Maleh novel *Mille Ans, un jour* discussed in the previous chapter, the protagonist's family and social circles are all *évolués* ("evolved"): the French acculturated Jews of Morocco's urban centers, attending Alliance schools, and dressing in the European style. While as the characters discussed in chapter two are largely interested in Zionism, Josua/Aïssa becomes a Communist, initiated and influenced by his left-leaning teachers. In the Communist social world of the Moulin de la Gaïeté (a real place in Casablanca, mentioned often in the police archives as a hotbed of leftist activity), Josua/Aïssa left the Jewish bourgeois Zionist-leaning world of home to work among the dock workers and organize activism at Roches-Noires (another area of Casablanca) at night (where, indeed, El Maleh himself had met with Serfaty, Simon Levy, and others), feeling a kind of religious zeal and righteousness according to his own description. He references the *Amicales Communistes* and the same Fiat garage manned by leftist Spaniards that Serfaty described as instrumental to his own politicization. However, Josua/Aïssa's Jewish background becomes more relevant as the novel progresses:

Things must be stated appropriately, summons, searches, a brutal violation of a calm, dignified Jewish family closed in its traditions that do not support either politics or revolution. ‘Your son, madame, is working against the French. This will cost him dearly,’ and the mother didn’t understand anything, anything except the agony that gripped her heart ‘he does politics’ and the distance, the margin that was widening between him, Josua Aïssa, and his parents, his friends from youth. [...]

Josua Aïssa , a Jewish Moroccan assimilated down to his toes, at least he saw himself in a myth, or perhaps he lived it without seeing it, becoming in the ‘50s a Moroccan patriot, demonstrating with his comrades for national independence, as is said in well-crafted stories, he left his wife and kids, his family and friends with a joyous heart, serious and serene, so join the grand crusade of its time and the margins implied across his familial horizon anticipating the pages in the beautiful story to come.<sup>618</sup>

As Moroccan Jews left in record numbers, in what El Maleh would refer to as a sudden “hemorrhage,”<sup>619</sup> the story of exodus that frames the novel comes into play. Alienated from family and friends, rootless and adrift in a struggle that would come to be co-opted by the monarchy (discussed in the last dissertation chapter), a sense of regret and betrayal permeates El Maleh’s work. As the international political situation intensified, in the context of Israel and Palestine, Nasserism, and the Cold War, those Jews involved in national liberation politics increasingly found themselves working against the prevailing political trends of their country and the Jewish community from which they came. When King Mohammed V died unexpectedly from complications in minor surgery in 1961, his son Hassan II became king and an era of profound political oppression opened.

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<sup>618</sup> El Maleh 1980, pp. 103-4.

<sup>619</sup> Ronnie Scharfman, “The Other’s Other: The Moroccan Jewish Trajectory of Edmond Amran El Maleh.” *Yale French Studies*, no. 82, vol. 1 (1993): pp. 135-145.

## V. CONCLUSION

Anthropologist Aomar Boum aptly summarized, “After World War II, and in light of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and in the independence of Morocco in 1956, national leaderships in both Morocco and Israel competed for the allegiance of the Jewish communities of Morocco. The story of North African Jewish communities became predominantly a narrative of integration and migration. During the late 1950s, southern Moroccan Jewry had to decide whether to migrate to the Land of Israel or to continue settlement in ‘little Jerusalem.’”<sup>620</sup> Moroccan Jewry during the interwar period embraced a dizzying variety of political options and allegiances, none of which were ideologically or practically mutually exclusive in this particular Moroccan context. The Second World War and the application of anti-Semitic Vichy legislation in Morocco compromised one of those options and allegiances, that of French assimilation. This chapter has demonstrated how the prismatic variety of political options available to Jews during the interwar period steadily narrowed to two predominant courses that were increasingly mutually exclusive. As the quote above from Aomar Boum points out, these were the options of “integration and migration,” in other words, to stay or to go. Remaining apolitical was not an option. Whether Moroccan Jews actively subscribed to a given political party or movement or not, they were often assumed and regarded as being part of one or another. As the fourth and final chapter will demonstrate, the concurrently interweaving stories of Moroccan Jewry and political engagement will begin to unravel in an increasingly repressive, polarized national and international political context.

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<sup>620</sup> Boum 2013, p. 66.

## Chapter 4

### Absence and Counter-Narratives: The Years of Lead and the Moroccan Jewish Exodus

“My father – may God keep his soul – always told me: ‘Morocco is a lion that must be guided with a leash. It must never feel the chain.’ [...] When it pulls too much, I let go a little, and when it lets up, I pull a little. It’s a constant compromise, collective and unconscious. We are immersed in the same bath, a bath of love and a bath of conflict. This relationship transforms into perfect solidarity when the nation is in danger.” -- King Hassan II <sup>621</sup>

“Pst, pst! In the nocturnal silence, the deserted street of the former *mellah*, pst, pst! The prostitutes call out to a dawdling client. Pst, pst! Here and in all the mythical places the Zionist streetwalkers point out. The great myth set the sky and earth ablaze, uprooted the ancient tree, precipitated men and women to the edge of the end of times.” -- Edmond Amran El Maleh’s 1983 novel *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit*<sup>622</sup>

#### I. INTRODUCTION

During the bloody Casablanca uprising of March 1965, Simon Lévy was arrested by the police. He was tortured for eight days in prison, while his wife, Encarnacion, was stricken with anxiety. She had no idea where her husband was, but feared the worst. She waited at home with their two sons until, finally, Simon was unceremoniously dumped at the doorstep of their building, broken and bruised. Simon’s mother implored the family to go to France, but Simon was adamant. The Communist Party in Moscow, in a gesture of kindness toward their sympathizers abroad, paid for the family to tour several Soviet domains and for Simon to heal in a Russian sanatorium. Notably, Encarnacion hated the food.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Eric Laurent, *Hassan II : La Mémoire d’un Roi*, (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1993), p. 104.

<sup>622</sup> Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit* (Paris: Maspero, 1983), p. 86.

<sup>623</sup> Interview with Encarnacion Lévy and Jean Lévy, December 23, 2013, Casablanca.

The 1960s and 70s proved a crucible for state formation in independent Morocco. The state was dominated by the monarchy, helmed by Hassan II after his father's death during a relatively minor medical procedure in 1961. The state experimented, sometimes resulting in violent and repressive outcomes, with the balance of parliament, the constitutional monarchy, state of emergency and back again. Political parties splintered, recombined, and challenged each other and central authority in a manner that was deeply disturbing to the palace. The main efforts of the palace were, as the quote above from Hassan II indicates, to guide the "lion" of the state without it feeling the guiding hand of the *makhzan* and so quell, control, and ultimately co-opt any political opposition. In the absence of political collaborators, the state tortured, exiled, imprisoned and "disappeared" unruly political forces. Some parties, such as Istiqlal and the PCM, fractured from these reprisals. The Istiqlal's left-leaning sect, under the leadership of Mehdi Ben Barka (kidnapped in broad daylight Paris 1965 then secretly assassinated, by, it is speculated, King Hassan II's right hand man General Oufkir who would himself lead a coup-d'état in 1972), would form the UNFP (Union Nationale des Forces Populaires). The PCM, after being legally disbanded by court order in 1960, would resurface as the PLS (Parti de Libération et Socialisme) in 1963 to become its current iteration, the PPS (Parti du Progrès et Socialisme) in 1974.

In 1970, Abraham Serfaty and others, disgusted with what it viewed as a betrayal of Communist ideals on the part of the PCM/PLS, broke with the party to found a farther left, Marxist-Leninist (and Maoist) group Ila al-Amam ("Forward" in Arabic), taking most of the students with them. This move caused permanent, lasting ire between Serfaty and Lévy, who remained staunchly

loyal to the PLS.<sup>624</sup> These political fractures and fusions indicate a critical choice that lay before party leaders and their members, almost regardless of political platform and orientation: whether to work with the regime and maintain legal status, or to go underground. The efflorescence of prison literature and work on human rights in Morocco attest to the dire consequences of the latter decision, demonstrated toward the end of the chapter.<sup>625</sup>

At the same time, Morocco's Jews continued to leave in record numbers responding to a complicated issue that changed from month to month. Most left for Israel, but many migrated to France, Canada, and Latin American countries such as Argentina and Brazil. This was in part due to internal anxieties and threats of violence as well as economic boycotting, linked, to the far away and yet deeply consequential Israeli-Arab conflict. Morocco hosted an African Summit and joint Arab League meeting including Gamal Abdel Nasser of the United Arab Republic in January 1961, and played a delicate international diplomatic game among the Cold War and Non-Aligned powers. The wave of Jews leaving Morocco accelerated for many reasons, largely to do with economic incentives, kinship ties and security concerns. As the Arab-Israeli conflict intersected with Cold War politics and internationalism, Moroccan Jewish members of Communist parties found themselves increasingly alienated from the broader Moroccan Jewish community. Devoted to Communism in its many guises during the 1960s and 1970s, Moroccan Jewish leftists were ideologically very consistent with their positions of previous decades, if not even more devoted as their nationalism was increasingly pitted against the aspirations of their Jewish families and friends.

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<sup>624</sup> Somewhat ironically, they are today buried next to one another in Casablanca's Ben M'Sik Jewish cemetery.

<sup>625</sup> See, for example, work by Susan Slyomovics on human rights in Morocco. Tahar Ben Jelloun has written a number of semi-fictional accounts of brutality in Moroccan prisons, as did Abraham Serfaty and many others.

This final dissertation chapter covers the period of the 1960s through the Green March to claim the Western Sahara for Morocco in 1975. It traverses Moroccan Jewish leftist attempts to reconcile Jewish and Moroccan identities, nationalism and internationalism, cooptation and post-independence dreams of revolution. It is by far the most troublesome of the chapters: despite an increasingly murky, hopeless Moroccan political context, Jewish members of Leftist parties remained staunchly devoted to their Moroccaness and their hopes for their country in the face of massive Jewish migration and political repression. The first section explores political splits in the mainstream Moroccan political parties and the *makhzan*'s ability to control or co-opt them before 1967, discussing the bloody violence of 1965 that opened this chapter as well as the assassination of Mehdi Ben Barka. The second section examines Zionism, clandestine migration, and Hassan II's complicated relationship to Israel and the Jewish Agency. The third section addresses the break between the PLS and the foundation of Ila al-Amam (and their approaches to understanding the Jewish past), and Jewish leftists in response to the 1967 Six Day war and the migration of Moroccan Jews. The fourth section addresses the two failed coups d'état of 1971 and 1972, as well as the Green March of 1975. The Green March, in the wake of much domestic political turmoil, served as a Moroccan nationalist rallying cry, part of the *makhzan*'s attempt to unify the country around a single cause that would bolster its own authorities, while thousands rotted in Moroccan jails and torture centers. The final section juxtaposes the fates of the PLS and Ila al-Amam, and their Jewish leaders, Simon Lévy and Abraham Serfaty, respectively, as well as the voluntary exiles Edmond Amran El Maleh and Ralph Benarosh. This is a chapter about failed hopes, accommodations, migrations and collaborations; it is also about persistence. After Simon Lévy and his family returned from healing in the USSR, the activist family (it will be



remembered that Encarnacion's sister, Rosalie, was married to Ali Yata – Secretary General of the PCM) returned to its previous activities. Their stories are at once exceptional and emblematic, shedding light on Morocco's political history and that of its Jews in the relief available from the margins. In short, this chapter argues that despite the overwhelming evidence that Jewish life in Morocco was increasingly precarious, Moroccan Jewish Communists remained ideologically firm, even firmer than before, acting in good faith for a Morocco that could be rather than the Morocco that surrounded them.

## II. INCREASING OPPOSITION AND REPRESSION

The roots of post-independence political repression extend to before Hassan II's regime. Soon after independence, Abdallah Ibrahim formed a new national government in 1958, the first official new government after independence. As Susan Gilson Miller has noted, however, this flirtation with democracy was short lived: "In May 1960 the king [Mohammed V], weary of the endless political back-and-forth, summarily dismissed the government of Abdallah Ibrahim and seized the reins of power, anointing himself his own Prime Minister."<sup>626</sup> This parliamentary wrist-flicking was bred in the context of political turmoil as the parties that had worked for national liberation from France transitioned into post-independence existence. Now that Morocco was officially free of the colonial yoke, "to the monarchy's satisfaction, a multiparty system was taking shape, diluting and weakening the monolithic power structure and influence of Istiqlal."<sup>627</sup> Meanwhile, prince Hassan II put was in charge of the Royal Armed Forces. The new national army fortified the bond between the palace and the military forces, with the prince

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<sup>626</sup> Miller, p. 159.

<sup>627</sup> Miller, p. 156.

as commander and the king Commander of the Faithful. Before his death on February 26, 1961, King Mohammed V had successfully made the monarchy “the main pillar of stability in the state. King Mohammed V captured and manipulated powers delegated to the government, keeping for himself control over the military and eventually, over security services, as well as the ministries of Justice and the Interior.”<sup>628</sup> Hassan II continued his father’s policies and solidified state structures with the monarchy at the top, although not uncontested. Under pressure from Istiqlal (split in 1959 between conservative and left-leaning tendencies represented by the UNFP), the king presented the nation with a constitution in December 1962 that “was written behind closed doors by Hassan’s appointees, not by a representative body.”<sup>629</sup> Parties of the left, spearheaded by the UNFP, boycotted the constitution while the mainstream Istiqlal party, hedging its bets on maintaining the monarch’s favor, was essentially alone in supporting it. The PCM circulated a tract, calling for a firm boycott of this constitution that would officially confirm the monarch’s grip over essentially all government operations.<sup>630</sup> The PCM (officially now the PLS) declared:

### CASABLANCANS!

The government is accelerating its plan to achieve its goal: to impose, against popular will, a prefabricated constitution, prepared by foreign specialists. They [the government] are refusing to allow the people a say in the Constitution through the intermediary of a national elected assembly.

### WHAT KIND OF CONSTITUTION DOES THE GOVERNMENT WANT?

[...] to serve the interests of colonizers, collaborators and reactionary bourgeois. [...]

### THE CONSTITUTION THE PEOPLE WANT

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<sup>628</sup> Miller, p. 156.

<sup>629</sup> Miller, p. 164.

<sup>630</sup> Bouaziz, p. 112.

Concerning the people, they want a constitution that will open the way of emancipation and progress, a constitution that stipulates:

1. The separation of powers
2. The election of a sovereign Legislative Assembly to which the government will be accountable
3. The nationalization of the country's natural resources
4. The expropriation of lands from colonizers and feudal owners and its distribution among the country's poor and the granting of credits for the exploitation of such land
5. The improvement of living conditions for workers, particularly concerning salaries and compensation
6. Every citizen's right to work, education, health care, and social security
7. The granting of democratic freedoms: freedom of speech, the press, association, meeting, demonstrations; guarantee of the right to unionize and strike without restriction.

[...]

#### CITIZENS OF CASABLANCA!

It is for this case that the Casablanca Communists call you to action. From now on, let's organize public meetings, write petitions, seize all opportunities to take all initiative for the election of a Constitutional Assembly that will give power to the People. This struggle to which the Casablanca Communists call you must unite all progressive and democratic organizations. Let's act to realize the hopes of the people for a DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION!<sup>631</sup>

The educational leftist, Communist-affiliated review, *La Nouvelle Garde* which Simon Lévy worked for and distributed among the schools, echoed such rhetoric. The disappointment and disillusionment with this failed democratic moment would resurface in the bloody riots of 1965, particularly among the student population. The PLS actively churned out pamphlets urging Moroccans to boycott the referendum, alongside other leftist groups, primary among them the UNFP.<sup>632</sup> Of course, the constitution passed nearly unanimously. The PLS called upon Jews in the earlier 1960 elections to prevent such a slide against democracy. The PLS, with Jewish

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<sup>631</sup> From Simon Lévy's private papers, courtesy of the Lévy family.

<sup>632</sup> Copies of *La Nouvelle Garde*, founded in 1960, Simon Lévy's private papers.

members Simon Lévy, Abraham Serfaty, Ralph Benarosh, Joseph Lévy and others on board, implored Moroccan Jews to vote for Ali Yata:

CALL to Moroccan Jewish Citizens

[...]

On May 17 [1960] you will choose a deputy for the first chamber of representatives. Several candidates are seeking your vote. Your choice is highly important.

NOT A SINGLE JEWISH VOICE FOR THE REACTIONARY FDIC

The coalition called the Defense for Constitutional Institutions Front (FDIC) [*Front de Défense des Institutions Constitutionnelles*] solicits your votes in favor of Mr. Meyer Obadia, hoping his Jewishness will make him an appealing candidate. The FDIC is an assemblage of disparate and reactionary elements that seek power. Among them is the “Popular Movement” which recently distinguished itself through its anti-Semitism. Didn’t this party’s newspaper publish the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” this false, racist document used by the Nazis? The FDIC offers no guarantee of democracy, nor even stability. Having no real platform, no history of activism, it threatens to break apart at the first test. It shouldn’t even be a question whether you would link your welfare, or that of our community, for a anti-democratic, accidental coalition.

WHAT ROLE DOES M. OBADIA FILL?

Mr. Obadia’s candidacy under the FDIC banner is an act against nature. His supporters would like to present him as a proof of democracy, but this won’t fool anyone. He is a “court Jew” good for collecting votes along confessional lines and opportunistic enough to change parties for each election.

[...]

THE JEWISH MINORITY NEEDS DEMOCRACY

Only a true democracy can guarantee the rights of the Jewish minority. History bears witness to this. The reactionaries cultivate racism to trick the people. The Democrats are fighting for unity, equality of citizens across all religions and fighting prejudice. Does Mr. Obadia represent democracy just because he’s Jewish? And what political allies has he chosen? Democracy is the deep, liberating tie across the masses, Muslim and Jewish.

[...]

VOTE FOR ALI YATA, CANDIDATE OF THE DEMOCRATS

We must vote as citizens concerned for the interests of the Jewish minority as much as for the Moroccan people as a whole. This is why we ask you to vote for Mr. ALI YATA. [...] In supporting the candidacy of Mr. ALI YATA, we are sure to defend the interests of Moroccan citizens, Jewish and Muslim. In voting for a democrat, regardless of his religion, you will be contributing to the unity of the nation, you will be demonstrating that the Jewish minority is mature, conscious of its own problems as well as those of the national interest.<sup>633</sup>

Signatories of this slightly scolding plea to the Moroccan Jewish community included prominent leftists with their professions listed. This list gives a good insight into an aspect of Jewish leftist political engagement explored in previous chapters: they were relatively well-to-do, well educated, and held relatively prestigious positions. The list included: “Doctor Jo BENDELAC, former member of the Community Committee; Léon ELMALLEM, legal license, former member of the Community Committee; Marc SEBBAH, teacher, former vice-president of the Community Committee; Ralph BENAROSH MAOUDY, lawyer; Sam BENSOUSAN, a public employee; Jacques COHEN, commercial representative; Isaac LEVY, teacher; Simon LEVY, teacher; Isaac MELLOUL, middle-school director; René OHANA, legal intern; Abraham SERFATY, engineer; Evelyne SERFATY, secretary.”<sup>634</sup> Jewish Agency officials and representatives of the World Jewish Congress were also skeptical of Mr. Obadia. In a rare moment of confluence between PLS and Zionist politics, both agreed the man was a “token candidate.”<sup>635</sup> A subsequent section of this chapter considers the growth of Zionism alongside national and international political developments, however this document serves to highlight the growing gulf separating leftist Jews from the vast majority of the Moroccan Jewish population, inclined not to risk its neck for the political opposition. Maintaining the support of the palace

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<sup>633</sup> Simon Lévy’s private papers.

<sup>634</sup> Simon Lévy’s private papers.

<sup>635</sup> Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Z6/1885 1961.

was critical for this stability. The vast majority of Moroccan Jews were anti-Communist and anti-democratic out of loyalty to the king.

The Moroccan-Algerian border war of 1963 (“War of the Sands”) on top of Ben Barka’s growing popularity and calls for Third World solidarity threatened the palace. As Ben Barka’s rhetoric became more revolutionary, the palace began instigating arrests and violent suppression of the UNFP and its supporters. Two-hundred UNFP members were put on trial in 1963-1964, “during which eleven prominent leaders of the party accused of participating in the alleged plot against the king were sentenced to death, including Ben Barka.”<sup>636</sup> The Moroccan National Students’ Union (UNEM – *Union nationale des étudiants marocains*), which had close ties to the UNFP, went on strike, even calling for the “abolition of the regime,” leading many to face the same fate as UNFP members.<sup>637</sup> It was UNEM, in fact, that spear headed the March 1965 uprising in response to legislation that would place age limits on high school students forcing non-traditional high-school aged students were to receive a “technical [vocational] education.” Simon Lévy joined this fracas working closely with UNEM and student unions across the Casablancon high school network. A teacher at the prestigious Mohammed V lycée in Casablanca, he organized student Marxist circles and wrote for and distributed *La Nouvelle Garde* keeping student concerns at the forefront.<sup>638</sup> This joint PLS - UNEM press campaign served to prime a young, politically frustrated and motivated student population imploring the

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<sup>636</sup> Miller, p. 167.

<sup>637</sup> Miller, p. 168.

<sup>638</sup> Interview with Jean Lévy, December 22, 2013, Casablanca.

government to make good on its pre-independence promises.<sup>639</sup> Through *La Nouvelle Garde: Bulletin des lycées et collèges de Casablanca*, Simon Lévy and others within the PLS cultivated criticism by the high school and even middle-school aged youth. Although they were too young to vote, they were entered into a political critical, leftist discourse that would bear fruit in subsequent years.<sup>640</sup> UNEM members and sympathizers interpreted the regime's position as an outrage in the face of the widespread illiteracy in the country, since education (and the lack thereof for Muslims during the Protectorate) had been a cornerstone of every national liberation platform.<sup>641</sup> In fact, it is estimated that 70% of the Moroccan population was illiterate upon independence in 1956.<sup>642</sup> Casablancon students went on strike on March 22, 1965. The next day, the protests turned to riots from all dissatisfied segments of Moroccan society, including "parents who asking for the release of their imprisoned children, unemployed demanding work, students looking for scholarships and others simply venting their anger."<sup>643</sup> The rioting spread to Fez, Rabat, Marrakesh, Settat, Khouribga, Meknes and Kenitra and lasted for several days.<sup>644</sup> Following the bloody suppression of the uprising, the constitution (faulty as it was) was suspended and the King inaugurated a state of emergency. Hassan II defended the violent suppression of the time, citing his father's inherent distaste for "disorder."<sup>645</sup> He also claimed to have been taken by surprise when the riots broke out, although "one could sense something was

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<sup>639</sup> See examples of *La Nouvelle Garde*, in Simon Lévy's private papers. For this point I am refereeing the February-March 1963 edition of *La Nouvelle Garde: Bulletin des lycées et collèges de Casablanca*.

<sup>640</sup> Simon Lévy private papers, *La Nouvelle Garde* no. 9 December 1962.

<sup>641</sup> Bouaziz, p. 143. See also Mohammed El Ayadi, "Les Mouvements de la jeunesse au Maroc: L'émergence d'une nouvelle intelligentsia politique durant les années soixante et soixante-dix." In *Émeutes et mouvements sociaux au Maghreb: Perspective comparée*, eds. Didier Le Saout et Marguerite Rollinde, (Paris: Karthala, 1999).

<sup>642</sup> Sefrioui, p. 30.

<sup>643</sup> Bouaziz, p. 143.

<sup>644</sup> Bouaziz, p. 143-144.

<sup>645</sup> Laurent, p. 46.

brewing, although not something like this.”<sup>646</sup> Press censorship, already high, shot up and at least fourteen leftists, many affiliated with the UNFP, were condemned to death on March 27.<sup>647</sup> King Hassan II addressed the Moroccan people two days later, on March 29, and sharply criticized the “intellectuals” of the left who encouraged such protesting. Famously, he said:

So why didn't they go out in the streets, instead of the students? Where is their bravery, their courage, their common sense? Allow me to inform you that there is nothing so dangerous to the State as a so-called intellectual. It would be better if you were illiterate.<sup>648</sup>

The King formally disbanded parliament and declared a state of emergency on June 7, 1965. This was “legal” pursuant to article 35 of the King’s constitution.<sup>649</sup> Secondary literature concerning the next several years is unanimous. The palace tightened its grip on all state institutions and apparatuses, increased surveillance, arrests and imprisonment. The national movement “weakened” and fractured into ever more competing factions, undirected as to how or whether they could work within the state’s limitations. The number of victims of the violence is still unknown although beginning in the early 2000s the *makhzan* began taking more public stock of such events.<sup>650</sup> According to the opposition, hundreds were killed and more than 3,000 arrested, with “many victims buried at night, in secret.”<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Laurent, p. 23.

<sup>647</sup> Bouaziz, p. 144.

<sup>648</sup> Quoted in Bouaziz, p. 144.

<sup>649</sup> Sefrioui, p. 56.

<sup>650</sup> Sefrioui, p. 56.

<sup>651</sup> Sefrioui, p. 56.



The PCM struggled to maintain ideological unity in this context. The party had been put on trial in 1959 and formally banned by Court Order in 1960. It resurfaced as the PLS (Party for Liberation and Socialism) with the same structures, membership and leadership as the PCM. But it was increasingly controlled by the *makhzan*. Ali Yata and others in the party leadership – including Simon Lévy and Abraham Serfaty – remained while Edmond Amran El Maleh formally left the party in 1959, and the country all together for self-imposed exile in France. There is much speculation as to why El Maleh left, but it is certain that the Party’s ideological “sclerosis” (his word) and the brutal oppression of Casablanca in 1965 represented a shattering of what he had worked toward as a de-facto leader of the party during the struggle for national liberation. Internal Moroccan Communist permutations reflected the broader communist world. Any supposed global cause of Communist momentum broke down in the early 1950s as leftists of other Third Worldist, anti-Colonial stripes took up the Revolutionary mantle. As François Furet put it, “The Communist idea had gained in dimensions what it had lost in unity.”<sup>652</sup> Since the 1955 Bandung Conference and the growth of the non-Aligned movement, international political jockeying among Cold War rivals intensified. De-Stalinization of the USSR and an ascendant Chinese Communist Party challenged the international leftist status quo, as Maoism became increasingly popular worldwide.<sup>653</sup> The famous Paris protests of May 1968 reflected these shifts as the New Left distanced itself from the old. This spoke directly to Moroccan students both in France and at home. This was reflected in the new Marxist-Leninist Moroccan parties of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the 23 Mars movement (March 23<sup>rd</sup> – named after the date of the 1965 protests) and Ila al-Amam. Members of each saw the PLS as having bent to the *makhzan* having become delegitimized and defanged. Of course, for those who remained in the

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<sup>652</sup> Furet, p. 487.

<sup>653</sup> Furet, p. 463.

PLS such as Ali Yata and Simon Lévy, the best opportunity to effect change was through working legally, publically, and not underground.

King Hassan II also participated in the non-Aligned movement, although under his guidance Morocco drifted slowly to the pro-American camp. He attended the 1961 non-Aligned summit in Belgrade during the first year of his reign, defending Moroccan sovereignty above all else to make its own choices. Hassan II mentioned, “I always [...] emphasized with my friends, including certain Arab countries, such as Egypt, which tried to force my hand.”<sup>654</sup> In the same year, perhaps hoping to exert more influence in the Arab League, Casablanca hosted Egyptian president Nasser which led to tremendous anxiety and disruption within the Moroccan Jewish community. He toasted Tito and Nehru, and said of listening to Castro speak at the UN General Assembly in 1963, “I listened to him insult the Americans for four hours.”<sup>655</sup> He rubbed shoulders with President Kennedy, and sustained correspondence with Israeli officials. Moroccan officials positioned themselves as at once pan-African, pan-Arab, anti-Zionist and pro-American. The leaders of leftist organizations in Morocco were similarly linked into the sweeping global and regional currents of the time, with meetings of unions across continents and oceans.<sup>656</sup> Such connections fed the palace’s increasing fear of political opposition legitimized by the 1965 uprisings, arrests multiplied astronomically.<sup>657</sup> This fear was predicated on the left’s strong grip on Moroccan youth, as well as leftist constitutionalism. Hassan II, in order to allay popular

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<sup>654</sup> Laurent, p. 77-78.

<sup>655</sup> Laurent, p. 198-99.

<sup>656</sup> Abdeltif Menouni, *Le Syndicalisme ouvrier au Maroc* (Casablanca : Les Editions Maghrébines, 1976), p. 149-50.

<sup>657</sup> Menouni, p. 249-250.

anger, also announced the creation of a Common Fund for Agrarian Reform and distributions of state lands in April 1965, although little was done for this initiative in practice.<sup>658</sup>

It was in this political ferment that Edmond Amran El Maleh formally exited the PCM and left for France. The 1965 riots are one of the many open wounds of his historical memoir fiction. His 1983 novel *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit* circles prominently around the violence of 1965, and disappointment after liberation from France of Morocco's political left. *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit* is a tale of failed idealism, including the Casablanca protests (1965) and the 1968 student riots in Paris.<sup>659</sup> The book features the stories of former revolutionaries who have "sold out" to work for "Big Brother," namely, Moroccans who had supported the insurrection in Paris and later ridiculed riots in Los Angeles and New York.<sup>660</sup> For El Maleh, these characters represent the soured aftermath of squelched revolutionary dreams, cynical pragmatism in the absence of political potential. The inability of the PCM and Istiqlal to collaborate for Morocco's national liberation ultimately resulted in the oppression of both, giving rise to an absolutist monarchy: "The great machine had been launched: power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely!"<sup>661</sup> Throughout *Aïlen*, El Maleh's protagonist writes copious notes in his red notebook from China—an expression of his Maoist sensibilities—and reflects back to a time when he wore all the accouterments of radicalism, including an "authentic" Mao jacket.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> Will D. Swearingen, *Moroccan Mirages: Agrarian Dreams and Deceptions, 1912-1986*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 176.

<sup>659</sup> Parts of this sub-section have been previously published in a Literary Encyclopedia article on Edmond Amran El Maleh's work. "Edmond El Maleh" by Alma Rachel Heckman. *The Literary Encyclopedia*. 18 April 2013. [<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=13227>]

<sup>660</sup> El Maleh 1983, pp. 24-26, 30.

<sup>661</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 39

<sup>662</sup> El Maleh 1983, pp. 71-72

On 1965 he writes: “A bullet in the forehead, the wounded writhing in pain in the hospital, the police at the foot of the bed, shot, Sunday, the voices agree, it was beautiful that day, in March 65, bloody days under an ardent sun or cold death, dissolved and merges in the diaphanous light, from below they shot: remarkable precision, the elite sharp-shooters.”<sup>663</sup> El Maleh describes a grotesque, vomitous soup of leftist activism crushed by the *makhzan*. The story of Moroccan Jewish flight from Essaouira in the 1950s and 1960s intertwines with this narrative of political disappointment at the peak of Leftist activism in Morocco. El Maleh writes: “they left, no one named anyone, as if they had lost their names, their identity in leaving, sinking into the deepest anonymity, a slow hemorrhaging, people discretely sold a few pieces of furniture, a few objects, they had told them not to bring anything, absolutely nothing, the first signs of fever, homes abruptly emptied from one day to the next, abandoned, tableau of desolation.”<sup>664</sup> Aïlen, the personified, feminized narrator after whom the book is titled, takes the reader by the hand, and leads her through vignettes of social life and political promise, only to reveal the abrupt rupture, oppression, and disappointment of the present day. The last chapter takes place between two airports as the protagonist leaves Morocco and arrives in an undefined elsewhere. Upon landing, the passengers disembark from the airplane to collect their baggage, and their fates. The last sentence of the novel is one of muted despair: “The travelers lined up like pawns along the counters, the wheel of destiny turned, bags advanced in jolts on the turning carousel, greedy hands swooped in like vultures, he entered into the rite, he looked at this caravan, the faceless

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<sup>663</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 15.

<sup>664</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 97

faces of docile shadows, each one awaiting his lot.”<sup>665</sup> Pacified and neutralized, the broken promise of Moroccan utopian independence has fallen into lockstep with global currents that crush the collective in favor of the individual, rapaciously grabbing her or his destiny from an impersonal baggage claim. As El Maleh’s work circles around 1965; the Six Day War in Israel proved another pivotal moment.

### III. ZIONISM AND MOROCCAN JEWS

The events in the Levant and Egypt exacerbated and made even more public the ongoing debate on Moroccan identity and Jewishness extending from the national liberation struggle. As the previous chapters explored in detail, Moroccan public political debate and nationalist activism increasingly conflated Judaism and Jewish identity with Zionism and criticism of the actions of the state of Israel. This was despite official political platforms and statements issued by Istiqlal, al-Wifaq, the PCM, the palace and other political groups. As of King Mohammed V’s visit to New York in late 1957, Moroccan Jews were allowed free circulation and passport access – as long as such travel “would not benefit the Zionist enemy.”<sup>666</sup> This liberty of circulation didn’t last, however, and Zionist organizing of Moroccan Jewry continued, despite devotion to the nationalist cause the initial post-independence years. Jewish educational institutions now established much stronger Arabic language education in their curricula adhering to the demands and ideologies of the post-independence goals. The international context of pan-Arabism and

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<sup>665</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 201

<sup>666</sup> Assaraf, p. 63.

Zionism rendered such efforts relatively impotent.<sup>667</sup> French university educated élites returning to Morocco in particular championed leftist, nationalist Moroccan causes. In July 1961, perhaps as a response to the *Pisces* sinking (discussed below, involving the shipwreck of a clandestine Jewish emigration operation to Israel that resulted in Moroccan official public embarrassment), Moroccan Jewish graduates of French universities established the Cultural and Social Association of Moroccan Jewish Students in Paris. They resolved to affirm their commitment as full and equal Moroccan citizens to the Moroccan nation-building project.<sup>668</sup> In addition to prominent figures such as Dr. Léon Benzaquen and others from Al-Wifaq serving in government, Communists too held official posts. Abraham Serfaty was one of these. Following independence in 1956, Serfaty was appointed to the Economic Ministry and worked in mining development from 1957-1960; his success there led him to being named the director of Research and Development at the Sharifian Phosphate Office (OCP) until his resignation in 1968 in solidarity with the miners of Khouribga.<sup>669</sup> The vast majority of Moroccan Jewry, however, remained outside of the political limelight, and intentionally so.

January 1961 was a particularly tense month for Moroccan Jews due to three critical events. First, the Egyptian pan-Arabist president Gamal Abdel Nasser visited Casablanca in the context of Morocco hosting a regional summit. In addition to Nasser representing the United Arab Republic (the short lived union of Egypt and Syria), representatives from the Algerian FLN, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Libya and Sri Lanka descended on Casablanca. The police “out of

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<sup>667</sup> Berdugo, pp. 81-83.

<sup>668</sup> Berdugo, pp. 84-85.

<sup>669</sup> Kenza Sefrioui, *La revue Souffles 1966-1973: Espoirs de révolution culturelle au Maroc* (Casablanca: Éditions du Sirocco, 2013), p. 87.

excessive zeal,” penalized and threatened the Moroccan Jews of Casablanca.<sup>670</sup> Michael M. Laskier has written of Moroccan Jews in reaction to the conference and police pressure: “For the Jews of Morocco, the conference was a nightmare, serving as a pretext for numerous arrests and unwarranted beatings administered by the police.”<sup>671</sup> Leading members of the World Jewish Congress took note, referencing the “convulsive course of Moroccan developments in 1961.”<sup>672</sup> The March 1961 report went on:

The winds of change were strongly felt in this first quarter of the year. [...] Serious repercussions of Nasser’s visit were felt not merely with regard to international affairs, but in the domestic arena as well. The Jews of Morocco have lived in the country since times immemorial, and Casablanca alone today has a Jewish population of 75,000 more than any other city or country in the Moslem world. During the five years of Moroccan independence, their physical safety had never been in jeopardy. That situation underwent an alarming change during the ‘African Summit Conference.’ At no time was there mob violence, but numbers of Egyptian security specialists came to Casablanca and availed themselves of the opportunity to incite their Moroccan colleagues against the Jewish community. In Casablanca, anti-Jewish incidents had never occurred under police auspices. Now, during the first two weeks in January, police excesses became common and their random brutality increased from day to day. It started out with the confiscation of clothing in which a blue and white color combination could be detected (blue and white yarmulkes, later white shirt and blue tie or a girl’s blue dress worn with a white collar or white gloves). The excesses gathered momentum with the confiscation of black articles of apparel (the allegation being that a black skullcap, a black suit, or a black dress were signs of mourning on account of Nasser’s visit) and ended with large-scale arrests followed by night-long beatings and other brutalities.<sup>673</sup>

The PLS and members of the Casablancon Jewish community loudly decried the anti-Semitic violence during Nasser’s visit in a tract entitled “NO TO ZIONISM! NO TO ANTI-SEMITISM!”, and condemned Nasser’s inflammatory remarks: “the context in which these arrests occurred was outside of any judicial authority, as well as the authorities’ silence on the

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<sup>670</sup> Berdugo, p. 92.

<sup>671</sup> Michael M. Laskier, “The Instability of Moroccan Jewry and the Moroccan Press in the First Decade after Independence” *Jewish History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 39-54, p. 42.

<sup>672</sup> CZA Z6/1544.

<sup>673</sup> CZA Z6/1544.

matter concerning police activity and the brutality experienced by some of the arrested children, has aroused profound concern among our Jewish compatriots.”<sup>674</sup> The PLS tract went on to decry Zionist exploitation of the event. André Azoulay, Special Advisor to the current King Mohammed VI (r. 1999 – present) and his father, Hassan II (r. 1961 – 1999), also experienced persecution during this period, as a direct result of Nasser’s visit. Born in Essaouira in 1941, Azoulay had been politically active from a young age, and had even flirted with Communism (he was a member of the PLS from 1961-1963). He met Ali Yata in 1958 after he “climbed over the walls” of his high school in El Jadida (formerly Mazagan) in order to hear Yata speak alongside Simon Lévy. He had appreciated the “rational component” of Marxist thought, but was put off by the PLS’ Stalinism. He joined the 23 Mars movement and was arrested in 1964 choosing self-imposed exile to France in 1966. During the Casablanca summit, Azoulay worked for the newspaper *Maroc Information* reporting on the events and Nasser’s speech. While reporting on the summit, he became a victim of police repression against Jews. Police officers arrested Azoulay and ripped apart his press pass in front of the newspaper employees, as public punishment for the “arrogance of a Jew writing about Nasser and the Arab Summit.”<sup>675</sup> Azoulay exemplifies just one case of anti-Jewish activity in this period, and he was active in national liberation and opposed to Zionism. Only days after the Summit concluded, a ship bearing the illegal cargo of Moroccan Jews heading to Israel sank in the Mediterranean.

The sinking of the *Pisces* was the second critical event in January 1961. On January 10, the Mossad arranged Zionist emigration ship *Pisces* sank off the coast of Tangier – all 42 (43 or 44 –

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<sup>674</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers. Signed Abdallah Layachi, Casablanca, January 25 1961.

<sup>675</sup> Interview with André Azoulay in his villa in the Rabat Palace Complex, December 24, 2013.



numbers vary) on board perished.<sup>676</sup> Those bodies that could be recovered were buried, secretly, “in a reclusive corner of the Al-Hoceima Spanish cemetery.”<sup>677</sup> <sup>678</sup> World Jewish Congress leaders were worried about the aftershocks of such exposure. After all, while emigration was technically illegal, it had been tacitly tolerated. Coming on the heels of the Nasser visit,

[W]hich had given rise to despondency and near-panic in the community, Jewish leaders sought an audience with Crown Prince and Chief of Government Moulay Hassan. On the day before it was granted, Moroccan Jewry suffered a terrible blow; the SE ‘Pisces,’ a small yacht of 11 tons under Honduran registry, sank into the stormy Mediterranean sea just outside Moroccan territorial waters. Its more than 40 passengers, Moroccan ‘illegal’ emigrants being smuggled to Gibraltar for later aliyah, were all drowned. They had to resort to such dangerous and desperate means because Moroccan authorities did not countenance legal emigration and considered as subversive all contacts with Israel. This maritime disaster caused world-wide shock. Dr. Nahum Goldmann and the World Conference of Jewish Organizations, whose chairman he is, voiced protests that – because they showed understanding of the position of the Moroccan government as a member of the Arab League and yet reflected the realities of the Moroccan situation – led Morocco’s policy-making circles to re-think the problem. Important measures were taken in an effort to reassure Moroccan Jews that their status would be safeguarded.<sup>679</sup>

As part of such measures, King Mohammed V just prior to his death had promised to ease passport and travel restrictions. It was unclear at the time of the report whether Hassan II intended to carry this through, and “The Jewish community is itself deeply split about the policies to adopt.”<sup>680</sup> While this was true for the vast majority of Moroccan Jews, those on the left had a very clear vision of what needed to be done. The same tract cited above in reference to Nasser’s visit discussed the sinking of the *Pisces* as well. It argued that the wave of anti-

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<sup>676</sup> Berdugo, p. 92

<sup>677</sup> Agnès Bensimon, *Hassan II et les juifs: Histoire d’une émigration secrète*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>678</sup> Bensimon reports that in the 1980s, the Begin administration made a national holiday of the *Pisces* sinking, on 23 tevet (corresponding to early January on the Hebrew calendar), “the day of remembrance for the clandestine networks from North Africa.” Quoted in Bensimon, p. 17.

<sup>679</sup> CZA Z6/1544, March 24 report 1961.

<sup>680</sup> CZA Z6/1544, March 24 report 1961.

Semitism currently experienced in Morocco was antithetical to Moroccan “tradition” and identity, inflamed by Zionist propaganda saying:

The Pisces shipwreck that resulted in the death of forty clandestine Jewish emigrants is a tragic illustration of the result of such an intoxication [with Zionism]. This is why, while protesting against the arrest of young children as an anti-democratic measure that can only further the divisions enabling the enemies of our people, we also condemn the passivity of the authorities with regard to notorious Zionist agents, Moroccans as well as foreigners, who, with all ease, are carrying out criminal activity by denationalizing an important community within our people. Anti-Semitism, that most abject form of inhuman stupidity and racism, is not part of Moroccan tradition or that of its people. [...] In fact, since independence, Jews have been called upon, to the same degree as their Muslim compatriots, to participate in public life. Many have joined the political parties of their choosing and have participated alongside their Muslim brothers in union struggles. Jewish participation in the elections of 1960 was important, which gave rise to the municipalities and a chamber of commerce where the Jewish population was equally represented. On this matter, we would be remiss not to remind you that in the municipal elections, several Jewish candidates were elected by Muslims, often instead of Muslim candidates. No, anti-Semitism is not a Moroccan tradition. [...] It is up to conscious, patriotic Jews in particular to organize and courageously denounce Zionist efforts, leading them to fail. It is also up to all Muslim patriots to participate in this fight and at the same time to struggle without fail against any anti-Semitic demonstration. It is all together, patriots of all political stripes and all faiths, that we will build a completely independent, democratic and prosperous Morocco.<sup>681</sup>

Several prominent intellectual Jews, mostly on the left (including Serfaty, El Maleh and Lévy), “proclaimed the right of Morocco Jews to the Moroccan nation. [They] condemned Zionism, as well as the anti-Jewish blunders that sought to deny the right to emigrate. The declaration rapidly got more than 250 signatories. The press and radio assured it would have great impact. The agitation quieted down.”<sup>682</sup> This document, held in the personal collections of both Simon Lévy and Ralph Benarosh, decried anti-Semitic statements in the Moroccan nationalist press – notably *El Fajr* and *El Oummal*, and denounced the harsh police action against Moroccan Jews during

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<sup>681</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, signed Abdallah Layachi, Casablanca January 25, 1961.

<sup>682</sup> Lévy, p. 51.

Nasser's visit. The tone of this document is imploring; its audience is unclear. It is not addressed particularly to Moroccan Jews, but to the Moroccan public at large:

#### DECLARATION [...]

If conscientious patriots, if influential voices do not rise up to break the infernal cycle in which mistrust begets mistrust, with the end result of Zionism and anti-Semitism enforcing one another, our country may find itself faced with a situation that works against its vital interests.

This is why, we the undersigned Moroccan Jews, conscious of serving the higher interests of our Country, do not separate ourselves from the true interests of the Moroccan Jewish community, which is our own, we publicly and unequivocally condemn Zionist propaganda as an instrument of imperialism and a weapon of division used against the entirety of the Moroccan people.

We rise to action against the Zionist agents, who, speculating on the deep hopes of Moroccan Jews for dignity, well-being and security, push the latter to expatriate themselves, while Muslims and Jews must unite their efforts to achieve national liberation and to create in their country conditions for a good life, guaranteeing democracy, well-being and security for all.

Anxious to defend our country against all calumny, we denounce the international campaign against Morocco led by imperialist hypocrites who are trying to create a racist climate here in order to discredit our country and tear away the Jewish population from the national community.

Our position is not an act of kindness made out of any interest to please anyone. It comes from citizens who, well before independence, recognized Morocco as their sole country and so their attitudes reflect this. We equally consider it our duty to denounce all manifestations of anti-Semitism with the same energy.

We declare that, on strictly patriotic grounds, we will fight against all discrimination concerning the rights and freedoms of citizens, persuaded as we are that this Country is ours and that no one will be able to deprive us of it.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> Personal papers of Ralph Benarosh, consulted during interview in Paris with him on August 26, 2013. Also in personal papers of Simon Lévy. The list of printed signatories is as follows (as the petition circulated, it garnered further hand-written signatures referenced for the 250 number): "Abraham SERFATY, Ingénieur Civil des Mines à Rabat; Joseph LEVY, Fonctionnaire du Ministère de la Fonction Publique à Rabat; Roger COHEN, Chargé de Mission à la BNDE à Rabat; Charles ELALOUF, Docteur en Médecine à Rabat; David COHEN, Docteur en Médecine à Khemisset; Jo BENDELLAC, Docteur en Médecine à Khouribga; Samuel BENAROSH, Directeur à l'Office Chérifien des Phosphates à Rabat; Evelyne SERFATY, Secrétaire à Casablanca; Ralph BENAROSH MAOUDI, Avocat à Casablanca; René OHANA, Attaché au Parquet à Casablanca; Judah AZUELOS, Adjoint au Chef du Service des Finance Extérieures à Rabat; Léon ELMALLEM, Inspecteur des Finances à Rabat; Simon LEVY, Professeur à Casablanca; Amram [Edmond] ELMALEH, Professeur à Casablanca; Isaac LEVY, Professeur à Casablanca; Elie GABAY, Directeur d'Ecole à Casablanca; San ZRIHEN, Instituteur specialize à Casablanca; Huguette RUIIMY,

The paper *Al-Tahrir* seized upon this document and reprinted it, “written and signed by thirty Jewish supporters of the UNFP and the Moroccan Communist Party.”<sup>684</sup> Among these signatories were: Simon Lévy, Abraham Serfaty, Ralph Benarosh and Roger Cohen (from the Moroccan National Bank).<sup>685</sup> The other signatories were largely professionals, teachers, engineers, doctors and administrators.<sup>686</sup>

Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir painted a picture in stark contrast with that of the Moroccan Jewish leftists; where they decried Zionism as a primary cause of Jewish trouble in Morocco, Meir saw Nasser’s visit and the sinking of the *Pisces* as hallmarks of Moroccan anti-Semitism, to be rectified by emigration. For example, Meir stated in the Knesset in the wake of the *Pisces* sinking: “the Jews are driven into the corner of despair, given the discriminatory atmosphere and persecution which presently reigns in Morocco.”<sup>687</sup> Newspapers such as *al-Tahrir* and *al-Fajr* argued that the mass exodus of Moroccan Jewry was enabled by the state, under pressure from Israeli, American, and European governments, and were guilty of undermining the cause of Palestine.<sup>688</sup> The newspaper of the PLS, *Al Moukafih*, had presciently published an article just weeks prior to the sinking of the *Pisces* entitled: “ON THE DEPARTURE OF JEWISH MOROCCANS.” In it, the undisclosed author argued that French planes and even, “perhaps

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Institutrice à Casablanca; Albert OIKNINE, Agent de la SMD, Membre de la Fédération de l’Eclairage à Casablanca; Armand ATTAR, Ingénieur à Casablanca; Meyer ALBO, Inspecteur des Télécommunications à Casablanca; Samuel AMAR, Ingénieur à Casablanca; Alain FYMAT, Ingénieur à Casablanca; Jacques SEBAG, Ingénieur à Casablanca.”

<sup>684</sup> Laskier, p. 45.

<sup>685</sup> Laskier, p. 45.

<sup>686</sup> Laskier, p. 46.

<sup>687</sup> In Laskier, p. 47.

<sup>688</sup> Laskier, p. 48.

Royal Air Maroc” were transporting Moroccan Jews to Marseille who from there would travel on to Israel.<sup>689</sup> The article bluntly accused the *makhzan* of helping the WJC and Zionist agents’ activities in the country. It cited, albeit skeptically, a “rumor” on the street that “the Moroccan government would allow the emigration of Moroccan Jews in exchange for American wheat.”<sup>690</sup> Whether this was true is one matter. The rumor continues to live today in Moroccan public consciousness. Jean Lévy, Simon Lévy’s son, when generously allowing me access to his father’s personal papers mentioned the rumor, maintaining that UNFP activists had scrawled on walls across Casablanca, “*Hassan alqr’aa bai’aa alyehud bZR’aa*” – “Hassan the bald [King Hassan II – indeed was bald] has sold the Jews for wheat.”<sup>691</sup>

In the third major event of 1961, Prime Minister Abdallah Ibrahim (discussed above) pushed Morocco into the Arab postal union, which resulted in the immediate cutting of all postal communication with Israel.<sup>692</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, in touch with Léon Benzaqen and other WJC activists, had personally implored Mohammed V in 1959 when postal communications were restricted to lighten this policy, to no avail: “Your Majesty: I have been asked to find out whether it would be possible for you to permit an exchange of letters between people who have gone to Israel and their families remaining in Morocco. It seems to be a very great hardship to allow no communication and if it could be permitted at certain stated intervals, I think it would be of great importance to these harassed and troubled people –Mrs F.D. Roosevelt.”<sup>693</sup> In the same file at

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<sup>689</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, *AL MOUKAFIH* published December 22, 1961.

<sup>690</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, *AL MOUKAFIH* published December 22, 1961.

<sup>691</sup> Conversation with Jean Lévy, December 22, 2013, Casablanca.

<sup>692</sup> Berdugo, p. 92.

<sup>693</sup> CZA Z6/1431, letter from Eleanor Roosevelt to King Mohammed V, dated November 11, 1959.

the Central Zionist Archives, Senator Jack Kennedy as well as American WJC members intervened to implore both Kings Mohammed V and Hassan II to facilitate Israeli-Moroccan communication. But this did not change and letters made their way to Israel via France. However, the WJC officials were hopeful regarding their future relationship with the new King. They felt he was “modern-minded and disposed, by education and outlook, to consider Moroccan Jews as full-fledged citizens. [...] Each Yom Kippur that he is in Morocco, he visits a Casablanca synagogue to convey a message of greeting and good will. Also, Jews are included among his intimate friends.”<sup>694</sup> However, the year 1961 counted at least 11,478 illegal emigrants – 1962-1963 combined for 72,632.<sup>695</sup> Most of the elite, well-educated Jews remained, but they were the distinct minority. But this group felt it had the most to lose by migrating and sought to stay in place.

Just a few short years after the enthusiasm of Al-Wifaq, Istiqlal and other political parties began to openly publish increasingly anti-Semitic tracts catching Jews in the crosshairs of political activity despite their official protection by the King.<sup>696</sup> Istiqlal electoral slogans in 1961 stated: “To vote for a Jew is to betray the country,” and in an edition of *al Alam*, “Even the word ‘Jew’ should be forbidden in Morocco.”<sup>697</sup> Allal al-Fassi, the Istiqlal leader turned Minister of Islamic Affairs, declared before Parliament in 1962: “Whoever says Moroccan, means Muslim. Jewish Moroccans are nothing but *dhimmi*s. In the past, no foreigner could acquire Moroccan nationality without converting to Islam.” Two years later, al-Fassi addressed Parliament: “Morocco is a

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<sup>694</sup> CZA Z6/1544, letter from Paul W. Freedman to WJC members, dated March 24, 1961.

<sup>695</sup> Berdugo, p. 92.

<sup>696</sup> Berdugo, p. 97.

<sup>697</sup> In Berdugo, p. 98.

Jewish State. It is led by Jews and foreigners.”<sup>698</sup> In this same period, some Jews (children and particularly women) were kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam.<sup>699</sup> The main Jewish Moroccan newspaper, *La Voix des Communautés*, published the photos of the kidnapped and demanded an end to this.<sup>700</sup> In an interview with a journalist of the paper, the Minister for Islamic Affairs denied any involvement in the affair, stating that “discrimination has never existed and never will exist in Morocco.”<sup>701</sup> The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were published and distributed. The Istiqlal press called for the rooting out of all Zionists, and *Al-Akhbar al-Dunia* proclaimed that “a Jew is a Jew even if he’s been Muslim for forty years.”<sup>702</sup> Enraged, Abraham Serfaty responded: “Does the editor suggest substituting a concept of nationality based only on religion for the Moroccan concept of nationality, deeply rooted in our country?”<sup>703</sup> Shortly before his death, King Mohammed V met with Jewish notables of the Council of Jewish Communities of Morocco (*Conseil des Communautés Israélites du Maroc – CCIM*), at which the following demands were made:

1. Unconditional and unrestricted freedom of movement
2. Action to stop forcible abduction and conversion of Jewish girls to Islam
3. A new, fully legal status for the Jewish communities and the CCIM, suitable to independent Morocco<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> In Berdugo, p. 98.

<sup>699</sup> Berdugo, pp. 98 -99. See also Vanessa Paloma and Aomar Boum.

<sup>700</sup> Vanessa Paloma El Baz, “They Should Act with Similar Strength: El Romance de Sol, the virgin tsadekkt venerated for her stance against women’s intermarriage,” unpublished article draft (2012). Many thanks to Vanessa Paloma El Baz for sharing this draft with me.

<sup>701</sup> In Berdugo, p. 99.

<sup>702</sup> In Berdugo, p. 99.

<sup>703</sup> In Sefrioui, p. 216.

<sup>704</sup> Quoted in Boum, p. 116.

As Vanessa Paloma has noted, the May-June 1961 issue of *La Voix des Communautés* addressed the kidnapping and conversion of Jewish young women, and subsequent forced marriage. This issue dwelled on the technicalities of the Moroccan penal code and “the conclusion was that any conversion done by a minor, established at below 20 years of age, was null and void according to Jewish law.”<sup>705</sup> Moroccan law held that age 12 was valid for young women.<sup>706</sup> The photos of the kidnapped were emblazoned on the pages of *La Voix des Communautés*, and the Romance Haketía song about Soulika (an early nineteenth century Jewish woman from Tangier who chose death rather than convert to Islam after being kidnapped) was invoked to warn Moroccan Jewish women of the peril.<sup>707</sup> For a time restrictions on movement were eased, but Morocco’s political agendas at home and internationally were not always in sync, to the detriment of Morocco’s Jews. Articles in *La Voix des Communautés* attempted, somewhat vainly, to convince Moroccan Jews that their place was not in Israel, but in their true home of Morocco.<sup>708</sup> The élite minority, often in the left such as Lévy, El Maleh and Serfaty, proclaimed the Moroccanness of Jews above all, but this was not persuasive to the critical majority.<sup>709</sup> Moroccan Jews, having long been pulled in many countervailing directions, were funneled increasingly into one: out. This does not mean that Moroccan Jewry was ideologically unified; it is important to remember that leaving Morocco did not necessarily mean embracing Zionism or France. It could mean following ones family, friends, job opportunities, or hopes of improved quality of life in addition to or separate from Zionist or Gallic acculturation and conviction.

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<sup>705</sup> Paloma, p. 12.

<sup>706</sup> Paloma, p. 12.

<sup>707</sup> Paloma, pp. 13-14.

<sup>708</sup> Boum, p. 117.

<sup>709</sup> Boum, p. 117.



Interviewees have referenced Moroccan Communist Jews who left the party and the country for such reasons. For stalwart Moroccan Communist Jews, however, remaining in Morocco was the only politically viable, ideologically consistent option.

Even the Jewish members of al-Wifaq, such as Marc Sebbagh, David Azoulay and David Amar, were attacked in the national media for attending a meeting of the World Jewish Congress in 1961.<sup>710 711</sup> The PLS endorsed criticism of these figures: “The [PCM] organ stated that it was pointless to debate whether Jews attended the Geneva Meeting as delegates or observers. The mere fact that they *attended* a pro-Zionist meeting was bad enough.”<sup>712</sup> Jewish members of the PLS in a tract entitled “OPEN LETTER TO MISTERS MARC SEBBAH AND DAVID AZOULAY” accused the aforementioned of treason as “The World Jewish Congress [...] pursues policies contrary to the national interest. Its activity [...] is founded on false theory that would have all the Jews of the world be considered as one, singular people, whose duty it is to support the State of Israel by any means necessary, a state they consider the land for all Jews.”<sup>713</sup> The tract called for Moroccan Jews to work to integrate themselves politically, economically and socially as integral components of the country, calling on Muslims to fight against “any manifestation of racism” and on Jews to fight against Zionism.<sup>714</sup> The tract criticized Sebah and Azoulay’s self-defense that they attended the WJC meeting “out of a concern to understand the true condition of Moroccan Jewry. Your activity would have been much more productive,

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<sup>710</sup> Boum, p. 118.

<sup>711</sup> Laskier, p. 44.

<sup>712</sup> Laskier, p. 45.

<sup>713</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, signed Ralph BENAROSH, Roger COHEN, Joseph LEVY, Simon LEVY and Abraham SERFATY. Dated September 25, 1961, Casablanca.

<sup>714</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, signed Ralph BENAROSH, Roger COHEN, Joseph LEVY, Simon LEVY and Abraham SERFATY. Dated September 25, 1961, Casablanca.

without a doubt, on the national soil.”<sup>715</sup> However, most Moroccan Jews were not persuaded, or perhaps didn’t read or listen to such public calls for Moroccan patriotism.

In the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War, Jewish businesses were boycotted, public Jewish political support diminished, and the slippage between “Jew” and “Zionist” became ever more common.<sup>716</sup> The UMT publically called for boycotting Jews and Jewish financial ties in commerce, but also “in the liberal professions [...] lawyers, doctors and architects.”<sup>717</sup> Mahjoub ben Seddik, leader of the UMT, addressed a telegram to the King, claiming he was “protecting Zionists and their acolytes, the Jews of Morocco [...] Zionists dressed in djellabas.”<sup>718</sup> The King defended Moroccan Jewry and urged Moroccans to distinguish between loyal Moroccan Jewish subjects and Zionists, but reminded his Moroccan Jewish subjects in 1967: “The government of His Majesty the King reminds Moroccans of the Jewish faith that their rights as enshrined in the Constitution are completely contradictory with any support or aid they might provide Zionism. Consequently, the government won’t hesitate to apply, in all its rigor, the law against those who have been convinced to collude with Zionism and reminds [you] that such collusion will lead to the stripping of one’s nationality. [...] The State alone has the ability to assure public order and protect the rights of all nations [...] it will not tolerate any kind of provocation and will not permit anyone taking justice into their own hands.”<sup>719</sup> In 1961, 162,420 Jews remained in the

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<sup>715</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, signed Ralph BENAROSH, Roger COHEN, Joseph LEVY, Simon LEVY and Abraham SERFATY. Dated September 25, 1961, Casablanca.

<sup>716</sup> Berdugo, p. 99. Work from Joel Beinin addresses this issue in Egypt while Orit Bashkin’s work addresses it in the Iraqi context.

<sup>717</sup> Berdugo, p. 100.

<sup>718</sup> In Berdugo, p. 100.

<sup>719</sup> In Berdugo, p. 106.

country; by 1967, that number was down to 53,000.<sup>720</sup> The ensuing boycotts and newspaper declarations against “Zionist citadels” in and out of Morocco made Jewish life in Morocco ever more tenuous. Lévy writes: “Nothing long-lasting, no tidal wave, no financial exaction, but something had broken. The Jewish community, reduced to 40,000 members, would remain isolated, turned inward, apart for many years, living normally, enjoying full respect for their rights, without really participating in public life.”<sup>721</sup> Hassan II and his ministers entertained audiences with Zionist leaders and corresponded with them, including Nahum Goldmann (President of the World Jewish Congress) and Alexander L. Easterman, who “visited Morocco on several occasions during the middle and late 1950s in an effort to convince the authorities to liberalize education policies.”<sup>722</sup> Such work was corroborated by North African Jewish elites involved in Zionist immigration, including the WJC’s North African delegate Jacques Lazarus of Algeria, and the Moroccans J.R. Toledano, Vitalis Altun, Meyer Toledano and Zeide Schulmann “an illustrious Eastern European Jew who had settled in Casablanca in 1913 after first living in Palestine for a number of years.”<sup>723</sup>

The 1967 Six Day War spelled the swan song of Jewish life in Morocco. After the vast majority of Jews migrated, those remaining members of leftist organizations were increasingly alienated from Moroccan Jewish life. Jewish members of the PLS issued a public declaration following the Six Day War, urging, perhaps in a political and social vacuum, the Moroccan Jewish community to cease their support of Zionist activities. The usual suspects signed this tract, including: Ralph

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<sup>720</sup> Berdugo, p. 108.

<sup>721</sup> Lévy, p. 51.

<sup>722</sup> Laskier, p. 44.

<sup>723</sup> Laskier, p. 44.

Benarosh, Joseph Bendellac, Haïm Benisty, Léon Elmallem, Joseph Lévy, Simon Lévy, René Ohana, Isaac Sebbagh and Abraham Serfaty. The tract was repetitive of so many others issued by Jewish Communists. It criticized Israel as an imperialist enterprise, chastised Moroccan Jews for not engaging more in the country's political and social climate and implored Muslims not to conflate anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.<sup>724</sup> They reflected:

The Moroccan Jewish minority finds itself today at a crossroads. Its future on the land of their ancestors, in their own country, is at risk. [...] In this time of crisis, the Moroccan Jewish population has meanwhile remained, in the vast majority, isolated from the people. The chasm has only widened between Jews and Muslims, lack of understanding and mistrust have developed dangerously, public opinion conflates Judaism and Zionism on the one hand, and on the other hand to distort the essentially anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist nature of the struggle for the liberation of Arab peoples. [...] We the undersigned consider Morocco to be our one and only Country, inspired by this intangible principle in our behavior as active citizens, consider it our duty to express our point of view as Moroccan Jewish patriots, imbued with democratic ideals. Jewish citizens have the same rights as Muslims, but these rights also imply obligations. [...] The most important and at the same time the most elementary of these obligations is to maintain solidarity with one's people in the tragic hours of its history. Being Jewish does not mean any fashion, neither politically, morally, nor religiously, being Zionist actively or ideologically. We deny Zionism the right to decide the politics of global Judaism, to declare itself the representative and defender of our interests. Far from helping resolve the Jewish Question, as it claims, Zionism has, on the contrary, gravely compromised the future of Jews in the world. [...] Based on racial criteria, Zionism has put up an obstacle for the integration of Jews within their respective nations. [...] We remain convinced that in this critical hour when Morocco needs all its children, the duty of every enlightened Moroccan Jew is to maintain solidarity in any way possible with their people, to fight the ideology and politics of Zionism rooted in the [communities] of the Jewish minority in order to instill within them a complete national consciousness. This is the path of reason and wisdom, that of honesty and loyalty. It is the only way for our community to fully integrate in its true Nation.<sup>725</sup>

After the 1967 war, King Hassan II stated: "The Jew has fulfilled all his obligations towards Arabism and Islam but the sentiments of the population have unfortunately been exploited by

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<sup>724</sup> Simon Lévy's personal papers, dated July 1967.

<sup>725</sup> Simon Lévy's personal papers, dated July 1967.

some elements whose only concern is to sow confusion and disorder and to brand Jews with treacherous slogans.”<sup>726</sup> As Aomar Boum elegantly demonstrated, Hassan II positioned himself as the inheritor of the old Alawite dynasty’s legacy of protector of the Jews – the *dhimma*. He simultaneously pivoted toward the United States in a counter-balance effort. He also embraced pan-Arabism and Nasserism, as well as homegrown intense Leftist activity.<sup>727</sup> Indeed, Hassan II maintained close ties with Israel and the Moroccan Jews of Israel – working with the Jewish Agency to, at times, facilitate Zionist efforts to bring Moroccan Jewry to Israel.<sup>728</sup> This friendly rapport was not without hitches. In New York City, local Jewish grocers boycotted selling Moroccan oranges in February 1968 as a gesture of solidarity as “some of the Jewish buyers began to complain about supporting Arab governments in view of the reports of ill-treatment of Jews living in Arab lands.”<sup>729</sup> Meyer Toledano traveled to New York City to speak publically conveying that Morocco was not like Iraq or Egypt and that Jews were well treated. Meanwhile, WJC officials defended the King’s good actions. As one report from Dr. Nahum Goldmann maintained: “There has been no looting and no burning down of Jewish properties in Morocco [...] He [King Hassan II] did his best to protect the Jews and although being in a very difficult political situation he succeeded even if not always and not completely.”<sup>730</sup> Goldmann related that while the King “would probably be pleased with a word of appreciation from the Jewish world, [he] would only accept it if it were conveyed to him discreetly, personally and orally, either directly or through one of his close collaborators [...] If the Jews thank the King it means that the

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<sup>726</sup> Quoted in Boum, p. 118.

<sup>727</sup> Boum, p. 118-119.

<sup>728</sup> Boum, p. 119.

<sup>729</sup> CZA Z6/1180/2.

<sup>730</sup> CZA Z6/1180/2 letter dated Jan 19 1968, Geneva to Mr. J Barnett WJC in London.

King did something in their favor, and the Arabs, whether Moroccans or in the Arab world, will resent it. The King is tired to be called ‘the King of the Jews.’ Therefore we should avoid any expression of gratitude which might be known as it is bound to be.”<sup>731</sup> Meanwhile, Fatah (a reverse acronym of the Palestine National Liberation Movement in Arabic) operated offices in Rabat and a Memorandum from the WJC in October 1970 noted that taxes from movie tickets and tobacco products went to supporting Fatah operations.<sup>732</sup>

Israeli officials and their liaisons in the World Jewish Congress and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS – an American Jewish organization established in the nineteenth century to aid Russian Jewish refugees, operating across the world) were cautiously optimistic about the new king. A Mr. R. Spanien of the HIAS visited Moroccan in the summer of 1964 and concluded that Jewish life in the country was precarious at best, as “The King and his Government are always friendly to the Jews but how long will the regime last? The political situation is not stable and few people think that the Moroccan mixture of monarchy and democracy, of personal power and freedom can prevail for a very long time. If the regime changes the Jews may have reasons for fear. They seem to live just for the present and the present is secure. Emigration is satisfactory and may reach this year 12,000. The total Jewish population being under 90,000 the percentage of emigration is very high. Those responsible for the various forms of emigration that the important thing is to get out the greatest numbers as quick as possible lest the situation changes for the worse.”<sup>733</sup> The report cited that the demographic composition of emigrants had shifted

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<sup>731</sup> CZA Z6/1180/2 letter dated Jan 19 1968, Geneva to Mr. J Barnett WJC in London.

<sup>732</sup> CZA Z6/1180/2.

<sup>733</sup> CZA Z6/1165, Geneva, 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1964, letter between André Jabès of the WJC and Mr. R. Spanien.

from the poor, largely Arabic speakers to more middle class and élite French speakers, dressed in “European clothes.”<sup>734</sup>

The position of the Alliance Israélite Universelle was similarly complicated. Pursuant to the Arabization policies in education and government, the Alliance began to Arabize its curriculum in earnest beginning in 1960, coincidentally in line with the organization’s centennial celebrations (Arabization in this sense is distinct from simply the teaching of Arabic, which the Alliance had been doing with a greater or lesser degree of success since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). In June of 1960, the state officially required that the Alliance integrate its schools into the state educational system (*Ittihad* – “Union” in Arabic – this is still today the framework in which Casablanca Alliance schools exist, notably lycée Narcisse Leven).<sup>735</sup> As part of the Arabization program, “their entire teaching staff was taken over. This includes some 150 regular and 70 substitute teachers, and about 40 teachers or directors of Sephardic stock who came to Morocco decades ago from the Alliance schools in Turkey, Greece or the Balkans. They now hold French citizenship and should have been offered one-year renewable contracts on the pattern of those concluded with teachers or directors brought to Morocco by the French Cultural Mission, but in fact administrative ineptitude has left those and many other matters dangling in mid-air.”<sup>736</sup> The report went on, cynically, to praise such “administrative ineptitude” as Muslim students had not yet overwhelmed the schools. Moroccan Jewish Communists supported the Arabization policy, even when directly and negatively affected by it.

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<sup>734</sup> CZA Z6/1165, Geneva, 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1964, letter between André Jabès of the WJC and Mr. R. Spanien.

<sup>735</sup> CZA Z6/1885

<sup>736</sup> CZA Z6/1885

Ralph Benarosh, the lawyer who had represented the PCM before the government in 1959 as well as Simon Lévy in 1966, left the country pursuant to the Arabization of the judicial system. His Arabic was not fluent enough to continue working. He had had a law practice with a friend in Casablanca, but had to close it 1966, when he also quit the Moroccan bar. He recounted that one day he went to see a magistrate and all of the signs in the building were in Arabic and he couldn't read them. Despite this, he supported and actively advocated for the Arabization policy, and signed a PLS petition in favor of it.<sup>737</sup> Simon Lévy's own brother, also a Casablanca lawyer, left the country pursuant to the Arabization of the judicial system. According to Levy, his brother was by all accounts "an ardent Moroccan patriot," but he was out of a job and like most Moroccan Jews had been educated in a thoroughly Francophone system.<sup>738</sup> This Arabization policy was not intended to alienate Moroccan Jews, but rather to shed the linguistic remnants of French colonialism. This policy was hardly isolated to Morocco. Across the decolonizing globe during the 1960s and 1970s similar policies were instituted by independent governments. The collateral damage of this policy, however, was the shedding of many Francophone Jewish elites. Meanwhile, King Hassan II maintained highly cordial relations with the WJC and HIAS representatives, and via intermediaries with the state of Israel itself. As the next subsection demonstrates, reports on fears of political instability were not unfounded. The King did, however, remain a friend to Israel. Dr. Nahum Goldmann of the WJC personally met with King Hassan II in 1970 (as well as in subsequent years). The 1970 meeting was held in the palace of Rabat and called at the request of the King. Correspondence between then Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, and Dr. Nahum Goldmann addressed the latter's meeting with the King along with his (Goldmann's) concerns about Yugoslavian, Russian, Hungarian and Romanian Jewry.

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<sup>737</sup> Interview with Ralph Benarosh, Monday August 26, 2013 in Paris.

<sup>738</sup> Interview with Simon Lévy, May 7, 2010, Casablanca.



Goldmann wrote that he met in the palace gardens of the King in Rabat, who was dressed “quite informally,” attended by various ministers. They discussed the feasibility of peace in the Middle East, and Goldmann reported: “Although he did not say so, I immediately understood that this was the main reason for his inviting me. He is, by the way, a most intelligent and charming man, fully informed about the problem of the area and somehow eager to play a role. The name of Nasser was not even mentioned (I understand that Hassan’s relations to him are not too good).”<sup>739</sup> The King suggested he knew Yasser Arafat of the PLO quite well, and indicated his potential as an intermediary. Notably, the two did not discuss Moroccan Jewish outmigration. A subsequent interaction (unclear if in person or by letter) in 1973 maintained: “The King did not discuss with me Israel’s immigration policy. He said he will continue to allow every Moroccan Jew to emigrate [sic] to Israel, but asked me to convey to them that they would be welcome to return to Morocco if and whenever they wished to return. I told the king that I did not think many would avail themselves of this kind offer.”<sup>740</sup> Goldmann was correct – the rate of migration continued apace. The King would remain favorable to the outmigration of Moroccan Jews, as political repression intensified within Morocco’s borders in the early 1970s.

#### IV. THE YEARS OF LEAD

As 1967 proved a watershed moment for Moroccan Jews, so too were the late 1960s and early 1970s for Moroccan domestic politics. As previously noted, the leftist UNFP broke from Istiqlal in 1959; the PLS split into a further left faction with Ila al-Amam in 1970. Ila al-Amam, UNEM, 23 Mars and the UNFP represented the growth of the New Left in Morocco, largely composed of

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<sup>739</sup> CZA Z6/2396. Correspondence between Dr. Nahum Goldmann and Golda Meir, dated June 30, 1970.

<sup>740</sup> CZA Z6/2441, Nahum Goldman 1973 WJC General Correspondence.

university students. The PLS and Istiqlal had come to represent sclerotic “sell-outs” to the makhzan, although this was really a matter of differing political strategies for viability in a political fragile context. As Susan Gilson Miller has noted, government controlled university departments of history, philosophy and sociology were “ ‘Arabized’ by fiat, changing the curriculum in fundamental ways, in a crude and obvious attempt to foster a more conservative atmosphere within academia and to dampen enthusiasm for the radicalizing influences filtering in from Europe.”<sup>741</sup> This Arabization program (previously discussed in regard to Jewish institutions) also sought to limit access to French revolutionary literature, particularly in the wake of the events of 1968 and 1965. It also put a number of Francophone Jewish professionals out of work. This included Simon Lévy’s brother and Ralph Benarosh, as they could no longer practice their respective professions before government in French.<sup>742</sup> Tahar Ben Jelloun, one of the *Souffles* authors and perhaps most widely translated and available current Moroccan novelist has said that this academic Arabization program was “a way to eradicate subversion [...] in getting rid of Nietzsche, Freud or Marx in academic programs, and in teaching it its place Islamic thought.”<sup>743</sup> It was in the midst of this political program that a new Francophone review was founded by far leftists revolutionaries, that itself was symptomatic of a break within the Moroccan left.

Ila al-Amam (Forward) was founded by Abraham Serfaty and Abdellatif Laâbi, a Moroccan poet and activist. Laâbi had also founded the New Left arts and literature journal *Souffles* (roughly “Breaths” but the word is heavy with multiple inferences) in 1966, which Serfaty joined later and

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<sup>741</sup> Miller, p. 169-70.

<sup>742</sup> Interviews with Ralph Benarosh, August 2013 in Paris and Simon Lévy in Casablanca, May 2010.

<sup>743</sup> Sefrioui, p. 56.

pushed into a further leftist political direction. Laâbi and Serfaty met while both were members of the PLS, at the critical juncture after 1965 when the UNFP split into a more extreme left wing represented by the 23 Mars movement. Ultimately, Serfaty and Laâbi would spearhead the Ilal Amam break with the PLS, taking most of the active student members with them in 1970.<sup>744</sup> As Kenza Sefrioui has elegantly written, “For *Souffles*, another Morocco was possible, and one had to work to build it.”<sup>745</sup> The lifespan of *Souffles* (and *Anfas* – its Arabic language version begun in 1971) was short in Morocco. It disbanded in January 1972 in the context of intensified political repression following the second failed coup. It resumed again in exile in Paris, but lasted only until 1973.<sup>746</sup> The PLS had a leftist political and artistic review as well – *Lamaalif*. For Serfaty and Laâbi and other contributors to *Souffles*, it didn’t go far enough.<sup>747</sup> While *Lamaalif* similarly addressed global issues of national liberation and Third Worldism, *Souffles* had a decidedly more revolutionary tone.

Instigated by intense political repression at home, Third Worldist optimism offered a hopeful direction for far left Marxist-Leninists in Morocco. Algeria’s independence in 1962 plus the swath of successful African and Asian independence movements in the 1960s and 70s, including global appreciation for Maoism and the Non-Aligned movement encouraged the political opposition in the face of domestic oppression.<sup>748</sup> The Cuban revolution of 1959, the war in Vietnam and Civil Rights movement in the United States all informed the activities of the PLS,

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<sup>744</sup> Sefrioui, p. 17.

<sup>745</sup> Sefrioui, p. 23.

<sup>746</sup> Sefrioui, p. 17.

<sup>747</sup> Sefrioui, p. 18.

<sup>748</sup> Sefrioui, p. 23.

eventually Ila al-Amam, and 23 Mars.<sup>749</sup> If another world was possible, so too was another Morocco. Palestine was one of the central causes for the PLS, Ilal Amam and 23 Mars alike.<sup>750</sup> *L'Opinion* (journal of the Istiqlal party) felt confident publishing in 1970 that “real Moroccans,” and not Jews, should occupy political posts pursuant to the era of Arabization and Moroccanization, leftists such as Simon Lévy, Abraham Serfaty and Sion Assidon loudly protested the “amalgam of Judaism and Zionism,” claiming their rightful place in Moroccan politics.<sup>751</sup> Pan-Africanism represented by luminaries such as Ahmed Sékou Touré and Kwame Nkrumah were widely cheered, and until the War of Sands in 1963 (pursuant to which, Ali Yata was arrested for three months) between Algeria and Morocco, a Maghribi Union was even dreamt of.<sup>752</sup> <sup>753</sup> The PLS ventured to argue publicly against the 1963 war in a widely distributed tract urging: “End the fratricidal struggle! [...] The Moroccan Communists, who have always worked without any reservation toward the creation of a United Arab Maghreb, anti-imperialist and democratic, renew their call for popular vigilance and the reestablishment of ties of close brotherhood, which unite [us] with the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria.”<sup>754</sup> Until his kidnapping in broad daylight Paris on October 29, 1965 (and subsequent assassination), Mehdi Ben Barka of the UNFP had spearheaded such international connections, even meeting with Che Guevara just before the former’s death.<sup>755</sup> Ben Barka, too, opposed the “War of the Sands,” a major political difference with the Istiqlal party. Ali Yata, too, traveled to Moscow frequently,

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<sup>749</sup> Sefrioui, p. 49.

<sup>750</sup> Sefrioui, pp. 49-50.

<sup>751</sup> Sefrioui, p. 50.

<sup>752</sup> Sefrioui, p. 51.

<sup>753</sup> Ali Yata, *Luttes derrière les barreaux*, (Casablanca: Editions Al Bayane, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>754</sup> In Yata, p. 396-7, dated October 11 1963 printed in Casablanca.

<sup>755</sup> Sefroui, p. 51.

along with making formal appearances at Communist gatherings in Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and elsewhere. These visits frequently resulted in arrests upon return home on the grounds that they helped to reconstitute the illegal Moroccan Communist Party. In defense, Yata would cite scholarly works about how Islam and Communism were not antithetical (demonstrated best by the Soviet Republics of Central Asia) maintaining that such connections and political activities served Morocco's national interest.<sup>756</sup> The bloody riots of 1965 did not quell this enthusiasm. On the contrary, it was strengthened with many members of the PLS and the *Souffles* team studying in Moscow.<sup>757</sup> Notable authors as Tahar Ben Jelloun and the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui also wrote for *Souffles* and worked with Serfaty.<sup>758</sup> Ali Yata, the Secretary General of the PCM turned PLS (formally established in 1968), actively traveled between Moscow, Cairo, Khartoum in addition to Paris and other leftist bastions of the 1960s.<sup>759</sup> Representing *Souffles*, Serfaty and Laâbi traveled to Algiers as part of the 1969 Pan-African festival, where they met with the American Black Panthers among other international revolutionaries. In an interview with anthropologist Mikhaël Elbaz, Serfaty mentions the Pan-African Cultural Festival of 1969: "In July 1969, the entire *Souffles* team went to the pan-African cultural festival in Algiers. I spent all afternoon meeting with the Black Panthers, where they spoke of their beliefs, read poems and sang."<sup>760</sup> He continues:

At a certain point, we found ourselves in Algiers, Laabi and myself, and everyday I went to the Black American meetings, the Black Panthers. We would discuss American

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<sup>756</sup> Simon Lévy's personal papers. "DECLARATION DE ALI YATA A L'AUDIENCE FINALE DE LA COUR D'APPEL DE RABAT, LE 14 JANVIER 1970."

<sup>757</sup> Sefrioui, p. 63.

<sup>758</sup> Sefrioui, p. 116.

<sup>759</sup> Yata, p. 451-3.

<sup>760</sup> Elbaz, 144.

négritude and seriously considered the merits of Bundism. I remember the first time I heard the Black Panthers speak [...] they said : we return to Mother Africa to greet you as American militants. The distinction is important, acknowledging historic roots without denying rootedness. In my own way, I can claim Kabbala and Spinoza, I am part of a millennial history with its distant roots which we have lost, the Holy Land.<sup>761</sup>

Admiring Black Panthers' organizational techniques and ideological foundations, Serfaty compared his predicament as a Sephardic Jew in Morocco to African Americans in the United States. Like the Panthers, Serfaty acknowledged his family's diasporic roots and history, without denying Moroccan patriotism and investment. Oddly enough for this ardent anti-Zionist and Palestinian activist, Serfaty elides the Black Panthers' reference to "mother Africa" with the Jewish diaspora from the "Holy Land." Rooted and thoughtful of origins as distinct from national allegiance, this radical Moroccan Jew shared much in common with leaders of the Black Panther Party.

The trip to Algiers was one of Serfaty's last as a PLS member. Upon founding Ila al-Amam in 1970, the new Leftist organization immediately faced tremendous government pressure. Serfaty went underground in 1972 escaping arrest. He was apprehended two years later and imprisoned in Casablanca's Derb Moulay Cherif where he was tortured and interrogated along with many other leftist political prisoners.<sup>762</sup> He and other political prisoners were transferred to the Kenitra prison in 1977 after a very public "show trial." Serfaty was sentenced, as Susan Gilson Miller puts it, to life in "a Golgotha of suffering kept hidden from the rest of society" -- (he ultimately served 17 years).<sup>763</sup> Five years after it was instituted, King Hassan II ended the state of

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<sup>761</sup> Elbaz, 213.

<sup>762</sup> Miller, p. 169.

<sup>763</sup> Miller, p. 169.

emergency in the summer of 1970 and established a new constitution. This constitution was boycotted by the PLS, the Istiqlal and UNFP.<sup>764</sup> Miller argues that boycotting the referendum left “the way open for the makhzan to fill the seats of the parliament with its own, hand-picked members. Meanwhile, Ila al-Amam organized on the far left, and a new group of religious extremists, the Shabiba Islamiyya (Islamic Youth) quietly congealed on the right, but both were beyond the bounds of political give and take.”<sup>765</sup> Hassan II’s regime suffered two failed military-led coups d’état (1971 and 1972), which led to an increased crack down on the left and any political opposition not hand-picked by the palace. The first was staged in the royal palace in Skhirat – an ocean-side city between Rabat and Casablanca. On July 10, 1971, military officers attempted a violent, bloody coup at the palace and King Hassan II, as well as the future King Mohammed VI, escaped unharmed. In an attempt to mollify the masses, the King announced another land redistribution plan than never quite reached its stated goals.<sup>766</sup> The second coup attempt took place in the air, as King Hassan II returned to Morocco from a diplomatic visit to Paris on August 16, 1972. His royal jet was riddled with bullets but somehow landed safely.<sup>767</sup> This episode, too, led to land distributions and promises of greater equality, as well as many more activists behind bars. The issue of Western Sahara (formerly Spanish Rio de Oro) became a nationalist unifying cause as well as a point of major fissure on the left. This movement culminated in what became known as the Green March on November 6, 1975: “a massive wave of 350,000 Moroccan volunteers armed ‘only with their Qur’ans’ and their red and green banners

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<sup>764</sup> Miller, p. 175.

<sup>765</sup> Miller, p. 175.

<sup>766</sup> Swearingen, p. 177.

<sup>767</sup> Swearingen, p. 177.

of Morocco and Islam.<sup>768</sup> Ila al-Amam proved to be the only group in support of the Sahrawi claims for Western Saharan independence (under the aegis of the Polisario Front), while every other party heartily embraced the Moroccanness of the territory.<sup>769</sup> Morocco and Mauritania won joint administrative control over the territory, but Mauritania ultimately conceded its claim to Morocco.<sup>770</sup> As 1975 proved a year of political consolidation for the King, the PCM emerged under yet another new legal guise – this time the PPS (*Parti du Progrès et Socialisme* – Party for Progress and Socialism established formally in 1974). Even the UNFP splintered into a further radical group, the USFP (Socialist Union of Popular Forces).<sup>771</sup> Leading members of UNEM, Ila al-Amam and 23 Mars were already imprisoned or exiled, largely disappeared from public life. Much of their activity went into exile with them, most often to France. While most far left leaders were imprisoned, PLS reincarnated as the PPS working through the labor unions and student groups effecting strikes by teachers and students.<sup>772</sup> UNEM was formally dissolved in January 1973 pursuant to the death of a Rabat police officer during a demonstration under somewhat murky circumstances.<sup>773</sup> Ideologically, 23 Mars was more Maoist and Ila al-Amam more Leninist. The former was very active in rural settings and the latter almost entirely in urban centers. From the palace's perspective, such ideological nuance hardly mattered as both were brutally crushed and their leaders imprisoned (largely with the excuse of perceived threats to the

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<sup>768</sup> Miller, p. 181.

<sup>769</sup> Miller, p. 181.

<sup>770</sup> Miller, p. 181.

<sup>771</sup> Miller, p. 187.

<sup>772</sup> Menouni, p. 109.

<sup>773</sup> Bouaziz, p. 152.



security of the state as well as their positions on Western Sahara).<sup>774</sup> As Susan Slyomovics put it, “By 1973, all the constituent elements for widespread abuse were in place: the criminalization of political opinion, arrest without warrant, detention without reason, unlimited extensions of time spent in garde à vue or preventative detention, the creation of secret prisons, and the institutionalization of torture.”<sup>775</sup> Ali Yata would later commemorate the imprisoned, describing them as “militant patriots of the left.”<sup>776</sup> By the late 1970s, Moroccan student groups in France, working in concert with organizations such as Amnesty International, began what would become a thirty years long campaign against political repression in Morocco.<sup>777</sup> The vast majority of Moroccan Jews had left the country. Those who remained typically had significant assets invested in the country by 1975 were too poor or old to leave, or were devoted leftists. Of the devoted leftists, they splintered into three parallel political tracks: legal activism, prison, or exile.

## V. A COMPARISON OF TRAJECTORIES

El Maleh once said: “I often think that I’m the only existing Moroccan Jew. There are a few of us who think this way, Serfaty, Simon Lévy [...] We swim in antonyms, in contradictions: an absence of physical presence on the land and at the same time the permanence of something.”<sup>778</sup>

The intertwining and diverging stories of El Maleh, Benarosh, Lévy and Serfaty round out this

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<sup>774</sup> Sefrioui, p. 119. Sefrioui notes on p. 130: “L’organisation Ilal Amam était pour l’autodétermination du peuple sahraoui, tandis que le mouvement du 23 Mars était plus nuance [...] Sans contester la marocanité historique du Sahara, il prônait une union volontaire, sur une base démocratique, entre le peuple marocain et les populations sahraouies. C’est la position de l’organisation du 23 Mars à l’intérieur, mais ici, à l’étranger, dans la section où j’étais, la grande majorité était pour une unité territoriale, sous la forme d’une annexion pure et simple du Sahara.”

<sup>775</sup> Slyomovics, p. 21.

<sup>776</sup> Yata, p. 476.

<sup>777</sup> PCF archives 357J43 has ample evidence of this material, spreading across continents.

<sup>778</sup> Redonnet, p. 81.

last chapter. During the 1940s political options available to Moroccan Jews had narrowed to Zionism, Alliancism and migration to France, or Communism; in the post war period, prevailing options for Jews loyal to the left were exile to France, integrationism via a legal political party, or rejection of the regime. The lives of El Maleh, Benarosh, Lévy and Serfaty represent these post-independence narrative threads and Moroccan Jewish political avenues.

The late 1960s proved a major cleavage between Leftist movements and their relationships to the government. Before forming Ila al-Amam, Serfaty had resigned his prestigious post at the OCP out of solidarity with the miners at Khouribga in 1968.<sup>779</sup> Two years later, he would co-found Ila al-Amam along with Abdellatif Laâbi and another Jewish member of the PLS, Raymond Benhaïm.<sup>780</sup> Jewish defectors from the PLS to Ila al-Amam hoped to create “a tribunal that surpassed the religious tensions of the era, a tribunal anchored in the continuity of a nationalism in which Moroccans, Muslims and Jews together, would work together against French colonial policy.”<sup>781</sup> Serfaty’s wife, Christine Daure, who sheltered Serfaty when he was initially arrested and went into hiding in 1972, worked as a teacher at Lycée Mohammed V alongside Tahar Ben Jelloun.<sup>782</sup> Laâbi and Serfaty were both arrested in January 1972 and released pursuant to loud UNEM protest; their freedom did not last long and both were arrested again shortly thereafter. Laâbi was caught, but Serfaty managed to evade capture for two more years by hiding in his wife’s apartment.<sup>783</sup> At a trial in Casablanca on July 31 1973, Serfaty was tried and condemned

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<sup>779</sup> Sefrioui, p. 87.

<sup>780</sup> Sefrioui, p. 97.

<sup>781</sup> Sefrioui, p. 87.

<sup>782</sup> Sefrioui, p. 65.

<sup>783</sup> Sefrioui, p. 123.

to life in prison in absentia, alongside Laâbi and others from UNEM, Ilal Amam and 23 Mars. Notably, the UNFP and PLS maintained silence on the affair.<sup>784</sup> In November 1974, Serfaty was caught and arrested alongside other notables across the opposition movements. About 120 militants altogether were arrested in this particular cull.<sup>785</sup> Serfaty and many others were first detained at the infamous torture and prison center of Derb Moulay Chérif in Casablanca, “where they were savagely tortured. Abdellatif Zeroual died of this a few days later.”<sup>786</sup> He was not alone in this tragic fate. Serfaty’s sister and fellow militant Communist Evelyne Serfaty died pursuant to torture in 1972; Saïda Mnebhi of UNEM, UMT and Ilal Amam died in 1977 aged 25 in prison on the 34<sup>th</sup> day of a prolonged hunger strike.<sup>787</sup> Sion Assidon of 23 Mars was arrested in 1972, “condemned to fifteen years of prison for publishing leaflets and newspapers.”<sup>788</sup> Serfaty’s wife, Christine Daure, was expelled from Morocco in 1976 while awaiting her husband’s verdict and she became very engaged in the struggle from exile in France.<sup>789</sup>

The official verdict finally came on Valentine’s Day, 1977, years after the initial arrest, torture, and solitary confinement at Derb Moulay Chérif. Serfaty and several others were condemned to life in prison. The condemned spontaneously sang *The Song of the Partisans* in Arabic; many were subsequently transferred to the Kenitra prison to serve their life sentences.<sup>790</sup> Many,

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<sup>784</sup> Sefrioui, p. 124.

<sup>785</sup> Sefrioui, p. 133.

<sup>786</sup> Sefrioui, p. 133.

<sup>787</sup> Sefrioui, p. 272. Susan Slyomovics has also written on Mnebhi.

<sup>788</sup> Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>789</sup> Sefrioui, p. 135.

<sup>790</sup> Sefrioui, p. 133.

including Serfaty, would not exit what Susan Gilson Miller has called the “Golgatha” of Moroccan prisons during the “Years of Lead” for nearly two decades. Serfaty would become one of the most “celebrated” of Morocco’s political prisoners. Upon his release in 1992, he became an enemy to the old Left, notably with Simon Lévy. Prior to the break with the PLS in 1970, Serfaty had published an article in the wake of the 1967 war that sharply split Jewish leftists. This article, entitled “BEING A JEWISH MOROCCAN AND FIGHTING AGAINST ISRAEL” was published in the PLS mouthpiece, *al-Kifah al-Watani* in July 1967.<sup>791</sup> The article takes an even harsher chastising tone than the signed tracts addressed to Moroccan Jews that the PCM/PLS had circulated concerning the need for Moroccan Jewish patriotism. After describing Zionism as a “Golden Calf” meant to tear Moroccan Jews away from their home, Serfaty chided:

Everyone who understands this reality and, whatever his beliefs, thinks that the life of the Patriarch Abraham, Moses’ sermon and the justice of King Salomon were important to the development of humanity, blushes with shame and anger in thinking that upon these places that symbolize this past, a Nazi General and one of the heads of international Capitalism, the Baron de Rothschild, meet. But anger and shame are not enough. The Moroccan Jews who understand things must act. As Moroccans participating in the country’s struggles, as Jews denouncing the monstrous corruption that is Zionism. [...] To those who ask: isn’t it too late? Isn’t it irreversible? It isn’t the author of these sentences who must answer, but his Arab brothers. This tradition of religious and social tolerance, the experience of a common struggle, the fact that the struggle of the Arab peoples [deliberate plural] is not racial but national, and tied to the liberation of humanity from racism and imperialism, allows me to think that the response will be positive.<sup>792</sup>

Two years later, as Serfaty was just about to leave the PLS and found Ila al-Amam, he wrote again on the matter in a special issue of *Souffles* devoted to Palestine. He opened the piece: “I will be asked, I have been asked: why should anyone continue to be concerned with Moroccan Jewry today? Let this community dwindle down with emigration, the last holdouts will no longer

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<sup>791</sup> PCF archives 357J/42, *Al Kifah Al Watani* no. 125 July 7, 1967.

<sup>792</sup> PCF archives 357J/42, *Al Kifah Al Watani* no. 125 July 7, 1967.

pose a problem.”<sup>793</sup> His essay is historical in scope, addressing the tropes of a slow Moroccan Jewish deracination at the hands of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, colonial policy and Zionism. The motivations for the essay, in Serfaty’s words were: “We would like to summarize this process [of one hundred years of “uprooting”] in order to share our conviction – a conviction that has only grown stronger with the study of documents past and present – that this mystification will inevitably become known, that Jews from the Arab world, prisoners of Zionism, will gain consciousness of their solidarity with the Arab revolution and will help to shatter the last historical attempt to lock Jews up in a ghetto – and what a ghetto...of global proportions!”<sup>794</sup> As Serfaty lost friends in the PLS leadership and established stronger ties with the 23 Mars movement, UNEM and *Souffles*, he ultimately co-founded Ila al-Amam. Ali Yata accused Abdellatif Laâbi and his “acolytes,” named in the text (Abraham Serfaty, Ben Addi, Robert Benhaïm, Hajj Nassar and Berdu [Berdugo] and Abitbol) of “having betrayed their political base and joining the bourgeoisie. [...] this constitutes treason. The people and history will judge you.”<sup>795</sup> It was a *fait accompli*, and the left fractured into the far left and the legal left. The Jewish members fractured along with it. Serfaty and those who left the PLS to join Ila al-Amam felt, however, that there was no other ideological option for them: the PLS was working with the *makhzan* and, to their minds, no longer upheld the revolutionary ideals sweeping the world from Cuba to China in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>796</sup> Despite these growing ideological differences, Serfaty had profound respect for the militancy of his fellow Moroccan Jewish Communists. He admired Simon Lévy’s work with the labor unions and the student

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<sup>793</sup> Many thanks to Lia Brozgal and Olivia C. Harrison for providing me with their translation of Serfaty’s piece. *Souffles* 15 (Third Trimester, 1969): Special Palestine Issue, pp. 24-37. Translated by Lia Brozgal and Olivia C. Harrison.

<sup>794</sup> *Souffles* 15 (Third Trimester, 1969): Special Palestine Issue, pp. 24-37. Translated by Lia Brozgal and Olivia C. Harrison.

<sup>795</sup> Simon Lévy’s personal papers, signed Ali Yata, dated January 11, 1971, Casablanca.

<sup>796</sup> Serfaty and Elbaz, p. 30.

unions in particular recognizing Lévy's 1965 arrest and torture from which "he barely survived."<sup>797</sup> Speaking in a "we" of solidarity with Lévy and Moroccan Jewish leftists as a group, Serfaty reflected upon 1965: "The *makhzan* cannot and has not tolerated us having a citizen's voice. The *makhzan* doesn't just go back to Hassan II. You know, the first *mellah* of Fez was founded by the Merinids in 1438. This was the model that Jews shouldn't be heard, except for the court Jews that served it [the *makhzan*]. A Jew in the political opposition, that's unimaginable...Simon Lévy was this opposition in the PC [Communist Party]. He was accepted but the Authorities ["le Pouvoir"] tortured him to near death in 1965. This was no accident."<sup>798</sup> Serfaty seems to have accepted Lévy as an ideological rival (they disagreed fundamentally about how to work with or against the government, as well as Western Sahara), but put himself in the same contextual identity of a "Jew who does politics," to quote El Maleh. Serfaty was freed from prison in 1991 (but expelled on the grounds he was a Brazilian citizen). He spearheaded Moroccan human rights efforts from afar and ultimately returned as a national hero, with regime change in 1999. His son, who had also been captured and tortured in the 1980s as government revenge, today lives in Casablanca. Abraham Serfaty died in 2010 and is buried in Ben M'Sik cemetery in Casablanca. A pariah of the Jewish community, his funeral was publicized and attended by government ministers.

While Edmond Amran El Maleh never directly addressed the exact catalyst for his leaving the PCM, Serfaty had a few thoughts. Serfaty suggests that El Maleh was "pushed" out of the party

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<sup>797</sup> Serfaty and Elbaz, p. 143.

<sup>798</sup> Serfaty and Elbaz, p. 143.

in 1958, likely for ideological reasons.<sup>799</sup> El Maleh, as a protagonist hints in one of his works of semi-autobiographical fiction, “left the PC [Communist Party] when he discovered how socialism really worked during a trip to Poland in 1958. He spoke against it and was excluded.”<sup>800</sup> Serfaty and El Maleh both objected to the party’s almost religious devotion to Stalinism. While Serfaty’s solution was to become a political pariah and co-found an extreme-left, anti-government Maoist movement (and land in prison for seventeen years, tortured and often in solitary confinement), El Maleh chose exile and a complete break. After leaving the party in 1958, El Maleh continued teaching at Casablanca’s prestigious lycée Mohammed V. He left Morocco in 1965, in direct response to the bloody riots of March of that year. In self-imposed exile in Paris, he taught at the Sainte-Barbe school while also working as a journalist, not publishing his first novel until 1980.<sup>801</sup> Melancholy, disappointment and a palimpsestic historical consciousness of the *longue durée* of Moroccan Jewish history pervade El Maleh’s work. Ultimately, he too was lionized as a Moroccan Jewish hero alongside Serfaty, Lévy and Assidon (prison-mates with Serfaty in Kenitra) in Moroccan public consciousness and human rights discourse. His work is fundamentally, profoundly regretful in tone. El Maleh, too, returned to Morocco toward the end of his life, welcomed as a national hero and celebrity for his writing. Today he has a public foundation and library in his name in Rabat, just next door to the national archives. He died in November 2010, the same month as Serfaty. He is buried in Essaouira.

Ralph Benarosh’s trajectory resembles that of El Maleh. The former PCM legal representative and activist left Morocco pursuant to the Arabization program. He tried to work in the tourism

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<sup>799</sup> Serfaty and Elbaz, p. 110.

<sup>800</sup> Serfaty and Elbaz, p. 127.

<sup>801</sup> Benachir, p. 19.

industry for a bit before finally leaving definitively for Paris on December 31, 1989 after years of going back and forth (he remembers the exact date).<sup>802</sup> As previously discussed, Benarosh had supported the Arabization policy, but most of his family was in France, including siblings and cousins who had also been in the PCM. For him, the PCM had been a family affair. While his parents had not approved of his and his siblings' involvement in the PCM, yet they defended him when the Jewish community boycotted his legal practice and accused him of being a "traitor."<sup>803</sup> Benarosh believed the fundamental failure of Jewish life in Morocco was due to the fact that "Jews did not have a national consciousness," that they did not consider themselves part of Moroccan public life.<sup>804</sup> By way of comparison, Benarosh said he was not particularly perturbed by the Jewish community's reactions to him at the time: "I was very much on the margins of the Jewish community, while Simon [Lévy] was immersed in it." He had few Jewish friends and preferred to immerse himself in leftist politics, much like Serfaty. While for Simon Lévy, "Judaism was much more important." At the time of my interview with him in August 2013, he continued to identify as a communist, but disagreed with the paths taken by both Lévy and Serfaty, and thought that Ali Yata and the PPS had "betrayed Communism." He wrote a letter to this effect to Simon Lévy in September 1992, in which he informed Lévy that he was officially leaving the PPS as it had become "the lapdog of the government." Benarosh says he asked Lévy to circulate this letter to everyone in the party but suspects that he never did.

Simon Lévy's trajectory was one of persistence with the legal operations of Communist politics in Morocco. It was also a trajectory of persistent activism within the Jewish community until his

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<sup>802</sup> Interview with Ralph Benarosh, August 26, 2013, Paris.

<sup>803</sup> Interview with Ralph Benarosh, August 26, 2013, Paris.

<sup>804</sup> Interview with Ralph Benarosh, August 26, 2013, Paris.



death in 2011. Lévy's strategy within the PCM/PLS/PPS was one of commitment to the Moroccan state apparatus, including the Monarchy, choosing to work within those parameters instead of rejecting them. He continued to work closely with the Politburo of the party, and was one of the leaders of the National Education Federation from 1958-1970. From 1976-1983 he served in an advisory capacity on the Municipal Council of Casablanca, where he worked to create local libraries and professional training centers. A professor of linguistics at the Faculty of Letters in Rabat and specialist in Hispanophone dialects, Lévy contributed important scholarly works to the study of Moroccan language and literature in addition to his political activism and legacy. Following Ali Yata's death, Lévy ran to become the Secretary General of the PPS, but lost to Nabil Benabdallah who won on the slogan: "Vote for the Sharif and not for the Juif [Jew]!" – he was subsequently expelled from the central committee in the 1990s. Toward the end of his life, he poured his energy into one of his most lasting legacies in the country. Morocco is famous for having one of the only official Jewish museums in the Arab world. Under Lévy's direction, the museum has worked to restore a number of synagogues across the country, most recently his own childhood synagogue of Fez, (Slat al-Fassiyine, restoration completed after his death with help from the German government). The opening ceremony of the restored synagogue, just last year in 2014, featured Moroccan ministers, Jewish communal luminaries, members of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora and above all, one of Simon Lévy's sons, Jean Lévy (who was instrumental in the restoration process). When I asked Lévy in May 2010 how he felt about the fading of the Moroccan Jewish community, he insisted: "I am not nostalgic because I am active."<sup>805</sup> Indeed, when several Jewish sites in Casablanca were bombed by terrorists in May 2003, Simon Lévy visited schools (Jewish and non-Jewish) around Casablanca in a public outreach program to bring awareness of the shared Muslim and Jewish history in Morocco. His

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<sup>805</sup> Interview with Simon Lévy, May 7, 2010, Casablanca.

funeral, like Serfaty's, was a public, media-covered affair with government officials in attendance, including André Azoulay. Like Serfaty, very few Jews attended his funeral. Encarnacion recounted this to me in January 2014 with great resentment. Encarnacion, too, has recently passed away (February 2015). Her funeral, also in Ben M'Sik Jewish cemetery, she ultimately converted to Judaism, was attended by members of the PPS old guard who praised her quiet activism.<sup>806</sup> Each of these Moroccan Jewish Leftists worked for another, possible Morocco, that seemed increasingly at odds with the world around them.

## VI. CONCLUSION

You wait one hundred years, a thousand years, you are stuck in the honey of the past like a stubborn fly, you are bogged down by an incurable nostalgia, you give birth to an imaginary country, suckled by fantasies, obsessive desires, obstinately blind to the present, you wander, within yourself, along the ramparts of the Scala ["ramparts" in Italian and adopted in Moroccan Arabic] – most likely referencing the one in Essaouira, facing the sea, captivated, fascinated by it, you are enthralled by the astonishing marriage of the city and the ocean, a dead city – embalmed, intact in its past.<sup>807</sup>

The above lines, written by El Maleh from Paris in 1983, conjure the author's depressing vision of a failed promise for Moroccan independence. El Maleh's protagonist no longer lives in the country, but some aspect of him is "stuck" like some "stubborn fly," seduced by a past nostalgia and sweet vision of Morocco and a country that never came to fruition. The late 1990s were a period of profound political change in Morocco. Before his death in 1999, King Hassan II, under tremendous pressure from a litany of international human rights groups working released and pardoned many political prisoners. With regime change in 1999 and King Mohammed VI's

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<sup>806</sup> Conversation with Jacques Lévy, Paris, May 12, 2015.

<sup>807</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 161.

ascent to power, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the victims of the Years of Lead was established. Many exiled victims, such as Abraham Serfaty, were welcomed home with a government pension or released from prison. Susan Slyomovics has written extensively about this “performance of human rights in Morocco,” as have others.<sup>808</sup> This dissertation focuses on a few figures within a tumultuous period, and what their stories mean for Moroccan history, Jewish history, and all the intersecting regional and international histories. While ultimately there is an ostensibly “happy ending,” at least for the Moroccan Jewish Communists covered in this dissertation, it is part of a longer, unhappy struggle. This fourth and final dissertation chapter has argued that the 1960s and 1970s were a critical period for Moroccan post-independence, state reinforcement and development, as well as a tremendous demographic shift. During this time the Moroccan left fractured into different strategies trying to cope with an increasingly strong, oppressive state power. The PCM/PLS/PPS opted for the existence as a defanged, if legal, opposition; Ila al-Amam and 23 Mars chose a more radically revolutionary path. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Moroccan Jews left for Israel, France and Canada. Jews in Leftist movements found themselves increasingly alienated and isolated from the prevailing attitudes and concerns of the majority Moroccan Jewish community. Leftist Jewish calls for solidarity against Zionism and anti-Semitism within the country seem to largely have fallen on deaf ears. They represented the minority of a minority, drowned out by much louder and more plentiful voices. But they remain integral to the public national memory and modern Moroccan, as well as modern Jewish, history. Unlike El Maleh’s stubborn fly stuck in the sweet honey of a fictional past, a fictional city, the Jewish leftist voices presented in this chapter disrupt honeyed nationalist, triumphalist narratives: whether Moroccan, Zionist, or internationalist.

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<sup>808</sup> Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

## Scarification: a Conclusion

“The swiftness of scarification is astonishing in this country, the wounds we hide, the wounds we show.” – Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit*<sup>809</sup>

Morocco still maintains a robust Jewish community – the largest in North Africa and the Middle East outside of Israel and Iran. The vast majority live in Casablanca, with graying pockets in Tangier, Fez, Rabat, and Marrakech. Generous estimates suggest about 2,000-3,000 Jews remain in Morocco. Many of them have children and extended family members in France and Israel. While there is a young Jewish population in Morocco, it is relatively minuscule and unlikely to persist for long. Despite (or perhaps because of) these numbers, great interest exists among Moroccan academics, institutions and students in the Jewish past.

Since Simon Lévy’s death in 2011, Zhor Rehilil, the Moroccan Jewish Heritage Museum’s Muslim curator, has for all intents and purposes taken on the direction of the institution. When I asked her back in 2009 about her career trajectory, she answered with a question of her own: “Is a human being marked by the events that surround its birth?”<sup>810</sup> Zhor was born in 1967, following the Arab-Israeli Six Day War. A Muslim woman from Casablanca, Zhor was born after most of Morocco’s Jews had left. The question mentioned above was in response to one of my own, concerning how she had become interested in Morocco’s Jewish history. Zhor’s narrative of how she came to be the curator of the only Jewish museum in the Arab world shares a common inspiration with French literature scholar Ronnie Scharfman’s assessment of Edmond Amran El Maleh’s book *Mille ans, un jour*. Scharfman writes: “The ‘Mille ans,’ or thousand

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<sup>809</sup> El Maleh 1983, p. 15.

<sup>810</sup> Interview with Zhor Rehilil, Casablanca, November 11, 2009.

years of Maleh's title ... refers to the presence, since time immemorial, of an already pluralistic, heterogeneous Jewish population, speaking several different languages, inhabiting both urban and rural communities. The 'un jour,' or one day, on the other hand, articulates the lighting flash moment of their disappearance from the scene of Moroccan history and memory."<sup>811</sup> El Maleh himself, in an interview with Marie Redonnet, described the exodus of Jews from Morocco as a "true hemorrhage."<sup>812</sup> Zhor grew up with family stories about Jewish friends and places, and wondered what had happened to them; she grew up in a city that once had street names such as Synagogues Street, with Jewish booksellers and publishers along it. The streets had been renamed by the time she began her work in preserving Jewish objects and texts in the early 1990s.

At around the same time that Zhor began her work in the museum, King Hassan II began to release prisoners and speak of human rights reforms in Morocco in response to intense international pressure and scrutiny. Gilles Perrault's damning exposé of the King and his regime during the Years of Lead, *Notre Ami le Roi* ("Our Friend the King") fed this criticism. Perrault had written it with the extensive help from Christine Daure Serfaty, Abraham Serfaty's wife expelled by the Moroccan authorities in 1976 to France.<sup>813</sup> Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Moroccan diaspora political organizations around the world loudly condemned the regime with mounting international and national political consequences. When the Moroccan Association for Human Rights was established in 1979 by friends and family members of political prisoners, internal activism continued robustly, within and without prison. It wasn't

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<sup>811</sup> Ronnie Scharfman, "The Other's Other: The Moroccan Jewish Trajectory of Edmond Amran El Maleh." *Yale French Studies*, no. 82, vol. 1 (1993): pp. 135-145, p. 136.

<sup>812</sup> Marie Redonnet, *Entretiens avec Edmond Amran El Maleh*. (Paris: Éditions La Pensée Sauvage, 2005), p. 73.

<sup>813</sup> Gilles Perrault, *Notre ami le Roi*, (Paris: Gallimard Education, 1990).

until 1990 that King Hassan II created the Consultative Council for Human Rights (CCDH), which had as its mission: “to promote the culture of human rights in Morocco.”<sup>814</sup> In 2004, the new King Mohammed VI positioned himself as a different sort of leader from his father. He set up the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) (Morocco’s version of a Truth and Reconciliation Committee), populated by commissioners appointed by the King and including former prisoners. The absence of “truth” in this title has been frequently noted, as many have come to understand the IER as a quick means to “move on” for the new regime, without adequately dealing with an ugly legacy of human rights abuse in Morocco.

The IER operated from January 2004 to November 2005, collecting testimonies to rule on the matters of reparations and government responsibility.<sup>815</sup> The commission reportedly received over 16,000 requests for reparations (some cite this number as much higher, even double); 9,779 were granted “financial, medical and psychological assistance.”<sup>816</sup> No trials of those who carried out the government sponsored brutality have been held. In fact, the IER’s report was prohibited from naming individual perpetrators, ostensibly for the purposes of national healing.<sup>817</sup> It was in this context that Abraham Serfaty, among many others, was released from prison after 17 years behind bars in 1992. He returned triumphantly to Morocco following the death of Hassan II in 1999, as did Edmond Amran El Maleh. Serfaty had been the subject of an extensive human rights campaign directed from Paris; that now come to fruition. Simon Lévy, on the other hand,

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<sup>814</sup> Sefrioui, pp. 135-136.

<sup>815</sup> “Truth Commission: Morocco,” *United States Institute of Peace*, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-morocco>, accessed 5/4/15.

<sup>816</sup> “Truth Commission: Morocco,” *United States Institute of Peace*, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-morocco>, accessed 5/4/15.

<sup>817</sup> “Truth Commission: Morocco,” *United States Institute of Peace*, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-morocco>, accessed 5/4/15.

had remained in Morocco. He had continued to work within the PPS, even running for its chief office in the early 1990s, before losing on, it is suspected, anti-Semitic grounds. As the conclusion of the previous chapter discussed, it was at this point that Lévy left the PPS and began to work in earnest on the preservation of Jewish life and legacy in Morocco through the Moroccan Jewish Heritage Foundation and Museum in Casablanca. Despite ideological differences, El Maleh, Serfaty and Lévy would each choose to ultimately remain in (and return to) Morocco, welcomed as national heroes.

Moroccan Jews engaged in national liberation politics joined the PCM for its pluralistic, universalist platform. This platform allowed them to negotiate multiple allegiances and identities in the midst of profound demographic and political change. This dissertation has argued that for them, Moroccan identity was inclusive of the Jewish and Muslim past, imbued with shared experiences, dialects, religious traditions and cultural expressions unique to Morocco. For them, Morocco was the only possible home for Moroccan Jewry, and they implored the Moroccan Jewish community to join in solidarity with the whole of the Moroccan nation, Muslims and Jews alike. The plethora of political options available to Moroccan Jews, ranging from Communist, to Gaullist, to Zionist were not yet mutually exclusive during the interwar period. The borders defining these political options hardened over the course of the twentieth century. The experiences of the Vichy period, the struggle for national liberation and the wars attending the first decades of Israel's existence all contributed to an increasingly precarious context for Moroccan Jewish life. It was itself in the midst of profound ideological schism. The leftist Jews who chose to remain in Morocco did so out of an idealistic conviction for what their country could be, rather than the state in which they lived. The story of Moroccan Jewish Communists

elucidates regional, national, and transnational ideas. It intervenes in the history of modern Morocco, Zionism and internationalism, adding one more voice to a contrapuntal choir. The Moroccan Jewish conscious pariahs attempted to bring attention to the national and international wounds addressed in this dissertation, just as the state tried to hide them. The scarification is now visible, and refreshing.



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ANOM -- Archives nationales d'outre mer, Aix en Provence, France

CADN -- Centre des Archives Politiques de Nantes, Nantes, France

CAHJP – Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, Israel

CZA – Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Israel

JDC – Joint Distribution Archives, Jerusalem, Israel

NARA – National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA

PCF Archives -- Les archives départementales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis, France

Police Archives -- Les Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris, France

Royal National Archives – Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco

USHMM – Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, USA

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