



MEMORANDUM FOR THE NSC SENIOR STAFF  
PREPARED TO SUPPLEMENT THE

PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AFRICA



THE CURRENT SITUATION IN  
NORTH AFRICA

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## THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NORTH AFRICA

### Tunisia

1. The Moslem population of Tunisia is politically and culturally the most advanced in North Africa, and constitutes a relatively homogeneous society. Since 1881, when France established its protectorate, the French have followed a policy of "association" rather than assimilation which has not altered the nature of this society. Well defined cultural and social barriers exist between the 3,100,000 natives and the 153,000 "colons" of French descent (there are also 88,000 Italian settlers in the north). The proportion of native illiteracy is high, but less so than in other North African areas. Owing largely to a growing and influential French-educated group, the Tunisians have shown substantial capacity for self-government.

2. *Political Structure.* Tunisia is legally a sovereign state under the rule of the Bey of Tunis, but the protectorate treaty and a modifying convention of 1883 give France control of defense and foreign affairs and the right to propose internal reforms. In practice, the French Resident General exercises almost total control of Tunisian affairs. The "colons" and officials from the metropole play a major role in the government, holding almost all civil service posts of any consequence. Despite their small numbers, the "colons" also dominate the Tunisian economy. French commercial interests are allowed special advantages. The French-dominated protectorate government enjoys majority participation in public utilities, railroads, and airlines and holds various other monopolies.

3. Since World War II the French have allowed increased Tunisian participation in the government, although the natives are unable to make policies or pass laws. There is an equal number of French and Tunisian cabinet members, with the former holding the important portfolios. In 1951 France started

a program for expanded Tunisian participation in the civil service, though its impact was largely vitiated by French use of political patronage. Municipal reforms have been blocked by Tunisian refusal to agree that the "colons" should participate in local government, as demanded by the French. The Tunisians insist that the "colons," as French citizens, cannot be allowed to vote or hold office in another sovereign state. Native participation in elective governmental assemblies is mostly on the local advisory council level. Even at this level only a small proportion of natives is enfranchised.

4. The Bey of Tunis, while sympathetic toward the aspirations of his people, holds his position only with French concurrence and finds it difficult to oppose the French. France has used the nominal ruler as its instrument of power. The present ruler, despite fitful periods of stubbornness, has generally yielded to French coercion and threats of deposition.

5. *Nationalism.* Nationalist activity in Tunisia dates roughly from 1907, but the first effective nationalist party, the Destour, was formed only after World War I. In 1934, stimulated by the Pan-Islamic revival in the Near East, the radical element in the party broke off and formed the Neo-Destour. The Old Destour has since declined into relative unimportance, but the Neo-Destour Party, led by Habib Bourguiba, became sufficiently prominent by 1947 to be offered cabinet posts by the French. In 1950 the nationalists entered the government after the French promised to institute reforms.

6. Before the present crisis the French-educated leadership of the Neo-Destour was essentially moderate in outlook. Although requesting French recognition of Tunisian internal autonomy and initiation of a program leading gradually to independence, the Neo-Destour

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leaders aimed chiefly at winning greater participation in the government.

7. The relatively well developed native Tunisian labor movement, primarily the influential UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) led by French-trained Farhat Hached, has given the Neo-Destour increasingly effective support. While the UGTT affiliated with the Communist-sponsored World Federation of Trade Unions in 1949, it soon withdrew and joined the anti-Communist ICFTU. Its new affiliation has given the UGTT and Tunisian nationalism important contacts with organized labor in Europe and the US, and has lessened the possibility of Communist influence over nationalist labor. The Communist Party itself probably has less than 4,000 members. Its chief source of strength lies in its control over a smaller union, the USTT (Syndical Union of Tunisian Workers), which has steadily declined in influence and may eventually be absorbed by the UGTT. French efforts to identify the Neo-Destour and UGTT with a Communist conspiracy are not supported by the available evidence.

8. *The Current Crisis.* The present tension in Tunisia followed a French note of last December which the Tunisian nationalists considered a refusal to accept their reform proposals. Bourguiba's subsequent attempt to put pressure on the French by demanding UN consideration of the Tunisian case led to his arrest and an outbreak of strikes and riots in mid-January. Confronted with the need for quick action the French embarked on a policy of force, combined with new reform proposals. When the pro-nationalist Chenik ministry refused to negotiate on these terms, the French arrested its members late in March, and induced former premier Baccouche to form a cabinet which could negotiate reforms. This attempt to present the UN with a *fait accompli* was nullified by the inability of the new prime minister to secure the support of influential Tunisians for these reforms. The French have moved in substantial forces, however, and kept Tunisia under firm control. A state of siege has been fully implemented and Moslem males over 18 have been made responsible for sabotage in their

localities. While terrorism has not been eradicated, the 9,000 French and 13,000 native troops in Tunisia can almost certainly control any nationalist uprising.

9. The most significant result of the French policy of force has been greatly to stimulate Tunisian nationalism. As a result of French repression, the majority of Tunisians now sympathize with the nationalist movement, currently led by Farhat Hached. The nationalists have become progressively more intransigent and have come to demand complete and immediate independence.

10. *French reform program.* Though the French reform program is still flexible in its details, it appears to call for: (a) creation of an appointed consultative assembly with one all-Tunisian chamber to deal with all but financial and economic matters, which are reserved to a second French-Tunisian chamber; (b) French representation on elective local councils only when there is a large French element in the local population; (c) a majority of Tunisian members in the Cabinet; (d) gradual creation of an all-Tunisian civil service except for a certain number of key posts; and (e) the creation of an administrative tribunal of appeal headed by a French official, to replace the Resident's veto over administrative regulations. Eventually the consultative assembly would become an elective legislature. However, France would retain indefinitely control over foreign affairs, security, and finance.

#### French Morocco

11. The French protectorate over the Sherifian Empire of Morocco dates from the treaty of Fez in 1912. The population of French Morocco is roughly 8,600,000, including almost 350,000 French nationals and about 60,000 others of European descent. The native population is three-fifths Berber and two-fifths Arab in ethnic derivation.

12. French financial interests were firmly implanted in Morocco well before the protectorate was established and France now completely controls the economy. Morocco is the third most important producer of phosphates in the world, and the source for about half the

French steel industry's manganese. By 1937 the French had succeeded in abolishing all important foreign capitulatory rights with the exception of the US privileges, which are based on an agreement last renewed in 1236.

13. *Political Structure.* France governs the protectorate through a separate administration, headed by a Resident General, which functions beside that of the Sultan and exercises almost complete control. The relative importance of the two governments is illustrated by the fact that the French administration's budget (largely provided by France itself) is almost eighty times greater than that of the Moorish government. There is little coordination between the dual administrations. Virtually all officials in important posts are French. Almost the only native participation in the protectorate administration is in the advisory Council of Government which assists the Resident. Legislation is promulgated by decree. Refusal to sign French-sponsored decrees has been the Sultan's chief means of opposing French domination. France also enjoys extraordinary disciplinary powers through a state of seige which has been in force since 1912. Military censorship has been the rule since 1939. Four of the seven Moroccan regions are administered by military officials, and the presence of 54,000 troops (one-third of them native) guarantees control of the zone.

14. While French controls have left the Sultan at the head of only a shadow government, recent events have greatly increased his prestige and diminished French ability to coerce him. More vigorous and able than his Tunisian counterpart, he has openly supported nationalism and has close connections with several leading nationalists. His demands for French reforms in October 1950 and March 1952 have made him a symbol of Moroccan nationalism and even appear to have brought many Berbers to recognize his leadership. However, the French colons have in large measures blocked such reforms.

15. The French have traditionally followed a policy of "divide and rule" in Morocco by capitalizing on the historic antipathies between the Berbers and the Arabs, but these

groups are very slowly being welded into a single people. In fact, a recent French attempt to pit Berber against Arab appears to have backfired, and the French have had to suppress several local anti-French Berber uprisings. However, despite growing Berber association with Moroccan nationalism, the French may still have some success with this policy. As a further counter to nationalist support of the Sultan, the French have favored the old religious fraternities and the urban and rural native aristocracies. Berber chieftain el Glaoui, Pasha of Marrakech, has received special attention.

16. *Nationalism.* Nationalist sentiment, relatively dormant before World War II, has grown rapidly since the war. The chief nationalist parties, the Istiqlal (Independence) and the Shoura (Democratic Independence), are technically outlawed, but are allowed to function except in areas controlled by pro-French Berber chieftains, where they have been sternly repressed. The Istiqlal is by far the more important, Shoura opportunism having incurred the charge of collaboration with the French. Estimates of Istiqlal membership vary widely because of the semi-clandestine nature of the Istiqlal and its cellular structure; some 200,000 members plus a much larger number of sympathizers appears the most reasonable guess. Party strength is strongest among the expanding middle class and other urban groups. The two Istiqlal leaders, Allal el Fassi and Ahmed Balafrej (internal dissension has prevented the naming of a single leader), are opposed to violence, partly because of the risk to the very limited group of educated leaders. However, a growing faction of young extremists presently threatens to overcome the restraining influence of the party heads. The Istiqlal has no use for the Tunisian experiment of native participation in the French administration and instead demands acknowledgement in principle of Moroccan independence. A pact of unity was signed in 1951 between the various nationalist parties in French and Spanish Morocco and Tangier, but dissension between moderates and extremists has prevented extensive cooperation.

17. The Communist Party has had little success among the natives except in a few industrialized areas like Casablanca. Membership is estimated at about 20,000. Communists dominate the largely French UGSCM, the only Moroccan labor union. Since the French do not permit separate native unions, Istiqlal has sought to penetrate the UGSCM and has recently taken control of its Executive Committee, following the deportation of several non-Moroccan Communist leaders. There is no evidence that the Istiqlal has cooperated with the Communists despite the latter's attempts to identify themselves with nationalist aims. On the contrary, it has vigorously denounced Communism.

### Algeria

18. Algeria is unique among the North African territories in that it has a large population of French descent and is administered as an integral part of metropolitan France. French penetration has made Algeria the most developed and Europeanized part of North Africa. French nationals number 1,200,000 out of a population of some 9,300,000. They completely dominate Algerian economic and political life.

19. Although France has politically assimilated Algeria, there has been little social or cultural assimilation of the native population, and a sharp differentiation exists between the European and Moslem communities. The inadequacy of modern educational facilities for the Moslems and consequent reliance on antiquated Koranic schools has only confirmed this division. On the other hand, the forces of Islam and nationalism are slowly tending to submerge cultural and linguistic distinctions between Arabs (about 60 percent of the native population) and Berbers.

20. *Political Structure.* The three Algerian departments (Oran, Algiers, and Constantine) elect representatives to the National Assembly, the Council of the Republic and the Assembly of the French Union. Their administration, however, is markedly different from that of metropolitan French departments. A Governor General appointed by the French Cabinet and responsible only to Paris

is interposed between the Algerian departments and the Paris government. He has broad authority, both legally and in practice, and completely dominates the local scene. There are also a separate Algerian Assembly, which first met in 1948, and a separate Algerian budget. While the Assembly has limited fiscal and budgetary powers, its "decisions" are mostly subject to ratification by Paris, which remains the principal legislator for Algeria. The vast Southern Territories remain under military control pending assimilation into the existing departments.

21. Moreover, within the Algerian government itself, the French minority exercises a wholly disproportionate political influence. Although the Algerian statute of 1947 makes all Algerians legally French citizens, the French have failed to implement the voting rights of the bulk of the natives. The total registered electorate, including the French residents, is only 1,800,000. Native voting is further limited by ballot-stuffing and other practices. In addition the French residents and pro-French Moslems hold a preponderant number of seats in the Algerian Assembly, the departments' general councils, and the various municipal councils. Algerian access to posts in the civil service and in industry is severely limited by inability to meet the educational requirements for higher positions. Extensive native participation is found only in the *djemaas*, the elective assemblies of the rural villages.

22. *Nationalism.* There are two important nationalist parties in Algeria. The MTLD (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties), led by Messali Hadj (now under surveillance in France), is an extremist movement recruited primarily from the laboring classes. It advocates systematic violence in order to win complete independence from France. Party membership is unknown, but was estimated at 150,000 in 1945. The UDMA (Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto) includes better educated natives of the professional and small business classes. Its leader, Ferhat Abbas, appears to favor gradual evolution toward an Algerian republic within the French Union. UDMA membership is probably less than 100,000.

23. Although not now an organized political force, the *ulema*, Moslem teachers and religious figures, appear to be the natural leaders of the masses. Many of them support the nationalist movements and have been endeavoring to reconcile the aims of the MTLD and UDMA. They have also shown willingness to ally with the Communists to further their own ends.

24. The Algerian Communist Party numbers only about 15,000. Its potential strength lies in its ability to identify itself with the Algerian nationalist movements, in which it has had some limited though probably superficial success. Communist domination of the CGT (General Federation of Labor), by far the strongest labor group in Algeria, has provided the party with a useful vehicle for propaganda and action. In July 1951 the Communists played a major role in forming the FADRL (Algerian Front), which includes the *ulema*, UDMA and MTLD. The Communists have since played the leading part in this committee. So far, however, FADRL activities have not led to much unity of action among nationalists and Communists, or among the nationalists themselves.

25. Since the uprising in 1945 in the Department of Constantine, Algeria has been relatively quiet. Last April, however, the trial of several Communist and nationalist leaders in Algiers led to demonstrations and sporadic clashes with the police. Tighter governmental restrictions have since been enforced against free assembly and movement and against the nationalist press. France unquestionably can maintain order with the 56,000 troops now in Algeria.

#### Spanish Morocco and Tangier

26. Spain's "zone of influence" in Morocco, roughly one-twentieth the size of French Morocco, derives from Franco-Spanish agreements of 1904 and 1912. Of an estimated population of almost 1.2 million, about 7 percent is of Spanish descent. Only one-third of the zone is considered arable and the only important raw material is iron ore, exported mainly to the UK, Spain, and Germany. The zone is a drain on Spain's economy. Al-

though there are limited possibilities for mining development, Spain lacks the necessary investment capital. Spanish Morocco is administered by a High Commissioner who exercises almost dictatorial powers, and is responsible directly to Generalissimo Franco. On the Moroccan side, the Sultan's deputy, the Khalifa, is the native ruler. Reforms of 1946 and 1948 provided the Khalifa with a premier and ministry but gave him little power. In addition to the large Spanish ground forces of about 60,500, there are approximately 7,500 Khalifian troops which are under Spanish control.

27. *Nationalism.* The chief nationalist party, the *Islah*, has about the same proportionate strength and influence in the Spanish Zone as the *Istiqlal* in French Morocco. The minor *Wahda* Party is almost defunct. Spain is sponsoring a new *Al Maghreb* Party, designed to give the impression Spain is receptive to nationalism, but this party probably will be no more successful than previous ones sponsored by the Spanish. The *Islah* and *Istiqlal* cooperate in seeking a re-unified and independent Morocco. In view of Spain's attitude toward Communism and its tight control of the region, organized Communism is virtually nonexistent.

28. Spain has recently modified somewhat its hostile attitude toward local nationalism, after a long period of repression. As part of Spain's current policy of endeavoring to win favor in the Arab world, it has undertaken a rapprochement with the nationalists. *Islah* leader Abdelkhalek Torres has been allowed to return from Tangier, and *Islah* has been allowed to hold political meetings and to publish its newspaper, supposedly free from censorship. There is no indication, however, that Spain intends to grant more than civil rights or that the conflict of nationalist and Spanish interests will be resolved.

29. *Tangier.* The International Zone of Tangier is geographically an enclave in Spanish Morocco. Of the estimated population of roughly 110,000, some 45,000 are Europeans, over half of them Spanish. The zone has become an entrepot for European transit trade, smuggling, and financial dealings be-

cause its statutes permit uncontrolled re-export of commodities and a free currency market. During World War II Spain unilaterally assumed a dominant position in the Tangier administration. In 1945 England and France, with the support of the US and USSR, ousted Spain from this position and forced her to accept even less than her pre-war role. A new committee of control was formed to represent the US, UK, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Portugal, and the USSR. However, the USSR has so far not exercised its right to participate. There are an international administration, a Mixed Court, and an appointive Legislative Assembly representing the participating powers. The administration is headed by a "neutral" Administrator, at present a Portuguese. In practice France plays a dominant role in the Zone. Owing to French control of the Sultan of Morocco's appointive powers, the Sultan's representative (the "Mendoub") and the Moroccan members of the Assembly are predisposed toward France.

30. Tangier has become a focal point for North African nationalist activities and a headquarters for exiled nationalists. All the important Moroccan parties and the French Zone Communist Party have branches in Tangier (the Communists have only a few hundred members and no real importance). The French and Spanish have taken sporadic repressive measures against the nationalists without reference to the other participating nations.

31. Nationalist riots broke out in Tangier on 30 March 1952, the fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Fez. Although responsibility could not be determined, Spain has used the riots as a pretext to request increased participation in the Tangier administration through a return to the prewar agreements of 1923 and 1928. Specifically, it requests appointment of a Spanish Police Commandant and Assistant Administrator for Public Order, and reinstatement of the Mixed Bureau of Information (i.e., intelligence) under a Spanish director. The other powers are concerned lest reopening the question of Tangier's administration lead the USSR to assert its right to participate. They

appear willing to grant at least a portion of the Spanish demands, but intend to devise a procedural method which will not stimulate the USSR to take an active interest in the Zone.

### Libya

32. The new United Kingdom of Libya, which became independent in December 1951, is composed of three provinces — Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the southern desert area of the Fezzan. The sparse populations of these areas are widely separated from each other by the Sahara (which comprises almost 95 percent of the country), and have accordingly developed strikingly different attitudes and characteristics. There are: (a) 800,000 Tripolitarians who are partially detribalized and sedentary and divided by conflicting urban and rural interests; (b) over 300,000 seminomadic Cyrenaicans who, on the other hand, are united by tribal bonds and still widespread allegiance to the orthodox Moslem Sanusi religious brotherhood; (c) roughly 50,000 Fezzanese oasis-dwellers and nomads, who have little contact with the coastal regions; and (d) 46,000 Italians settled in Tripolitania, who play a leading role in its economy. The vast majority of the population are illiterate and politically apathetic.

33. Libya is extremely poor and lacking in most natural resources. Fuel is practically nonexistent, although oil may be found along the Cyrenaican coast, and the French have reportedly discovered iron ore (and perhaps oil) in the Fezzan. Agriculture supports over three-quarters of the population and with fisheries contributes over 90 percent of the country's exports, mainly to Italy and Greece. These cover at present only 45 percent of Libya's imports, creating a payments deficit which has fluctuated between two and eleven million dollars since 1946. Even with foreign help the Libyan standard of living is one of the lowest in the Arab world.

34. Because of its economic weakness, Libya is almost wholly dependent on foreign aid. Great Britain has been Libya's main support since it occupied the area in World War II. In return for various concessions, Britain

underwrites the major part of Libya's budget deficit (currently about \$3-5,000,000) and its adverse balance of payments. France does the same on a much smaller scale for its sphere of influence in the Fezzan. These powers and Italy have donated limited sums to a Libyan Development and Stabilization Agency and a Finance Corporation which were set up by the UN Commission for Libya to help the new state. The US gives a large amount of separate assistance, which may reach \$5,000,000 in 1952; it consists of direct payments for the US bases, technical assistance, local US expenditures, and UN technical aid contributions.

35. *Political Problems.* Six months of independence have brought little change in the fundamental disunity of the Libyan kingdom. While Tripolitania adhered to the concept of a united kingdom through fear of renewed domination by Italy, the Cyrenaicans have been largely separatist in outlook, fearing domination by more populous Tripolitania. After the UN decision of 1949 in favor of a unified Libya, Tripolitania reluctantly accepted as monarch the Amir Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi of Cyrenaica, who was almost equally reluctant to head the new state. Time has only widened the breach between the two areas; King Idris I constantly reasserts his preference for Cyrenaica, and the Tripolitans show increasing distaste for their "Shepherd Chieftain."

36. The separatism of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica is expressed in the nation's political forms and the provision for two capitals. At the insistence of Idris, supported by the Fezzanese, a federal form of government was adopted which insured that the Tripolitanian majority would not dominate. The elective lower house of the Assembly recognizes the numerical superiority of the Tripolitans (by a seating ratio of 35:15:5), but the three provinces have equal seats in the royally appointed senate. In the nation's first elections last February pro-government candidates gained at least 46 of the 55 seats in the lower chamber; only 7 seats (including all those from the City of Tripoli) went to presumably hostile candidates. The able and pro-Western

Prime Minister, Mahmud Muntasir, gives Tripolitania high level representation in the government, but he has little support either from his province or the king in his efforts to strengthen national union. Except for Muntasir and the able Cyrenaican Defense Minister, Ali Jarbi, few of the ministers have the capacity to view Libyan affairs from a non-provincial standpoint. Most members of the legislature also are politically inexperienced, and there is a serious lack of trained administrative personnel.

37. The chief opposition to the government comes from the Tripolitans, who desire a dominant influence in the kingdom. While Tripoli is the center of agitation, the Cyrenaican coastal towns of Bengazhi and Derna are also opposed to royal conservatism and royal control over their economic interests. The Tripolitanian opposition was seriously crippled when its leader, Bashir Bey Saadawi, was deported after the elections. His Congress Party immediately lost most of its strength, merging into a heterogeneous group of opposition parties. There is no recognized Communist Party; pro-Communist leader Enrico Cibelli and several of his lieutenants were deported in 1951. Several trade unions and a large number of anti-foreign malcontents in Tripolitania supported Cibelli, but the government appears determined to suppress any renewed Communist activity.

38. In view of the present weakness of the potential opposition to the government, the Libyan police (over 1,900 in Tripolitania and almost 1,000 in Cyrenaica) would be able to control any outbreak short of a major revolt. In the unlikely event of such a revolt, the British garrison probably would assist in its suppression. Libya wants its own national army of about 3,000 and is negotiating with the British for military assistance and advisors. The British consider 1,000 sufficient for the near future, however.

39. *External Relations.* The new Libyan government, and especially King Idris, are strongly pro-Western in their orientation, owing both to Libya's need for foreign aid and the strong ties developed with UK during the war. Since then, British influence has been



predominant in Libya; the UK provides the bulk of Libya's outside economic assistance, UK advisers are the backbone of the administration, and roughly 9,000 British troops stationed in Libya provide the country's chief security force. Perhaps as a reaction to British influence, the Libyans are now more strongly pro-US. The US has a major airbase in Libya, as does the UK. France remains in *de facto* control of the Fezzan, which it occupied in World War II, and has 400 troops as well as French advisers there. Italy still maintains substantial interest in its former colony and is anxious to reassert its influence in Tripolitania, where the dominant Italian commercial interests are expanding.

40. Libya has only slight relations, at present primarily cultural in nature, with Egypt and the Arab states. The King and most Cyrenaicans fear the ascendancy of adjacent Egypt and have shown little desire to join the Arab League. Egypt itself apparently has ambitions to dominate the new kingdom, though its influence has declined with the expulsion of the pro-Egyptian Saadawi. However, various Tripolitanian urban elements and a few politically conscious Cyrenaicans still regard Egypt as their champion against Sanusi conservatism and Western "imperialism" and call for closer ties with the Arab world.