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# Developments in the Jewish Communities of Morocco 1956–76

Michael M. Laskier

This study probes the political conflicts and challenges which faced the Jewish community of independent Morocco during the two decades after the dissolution of the French and Spanish Protectorates as well as the International Zone of Tangier. We shall emphasize internal communal problems, Judeo-Muslim relations, and the question of emigration.

## EARLY PHASES OF INDEPENDENCE: LATE 1955–OCTOBER 1958

The end of the French and Spanish Protectorates (1912–56) inaugurated a period of uncertainty for the 240,000 Jews of Morocco. Until the summer of 1954, the economic and social unrest, which began in the early 1950s and led to general economic, political and social breakdown, had not affected the Jews as a whole. They had not been singled out, nor had there been any actions of a specifically anti-Jewish character on a countrywide level. Moreover, the terrorist organizations seemed anxious to avoid maltreating Jews, and Jews were victimized by terrorist acts only on rare occasions.<sup>1</sup>

In 1955, however, during the months of July and August, Moroccan terrorists incited large-scale riots in which the Jews, like the Europeans, were not spared. The terrorists were directing their ire against France after it had exiled Sultan Muhammad V to Madagascar because of his popularity and the support he enjoyed among nationalists, replacing him with a member of the Royal family, Mawlay ben-'Arafa, known for his docility and pro-French attitude.

For all that, and highlighting the instability and fluidity of the times, when Muhammad V returned triumphantly on the eve of independence, the *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party and the *Parti démocratique d'indépendance* (PDI), the two main political parties at the time, invited the Jews to demonstrate together with them. There was an exchange of receptions and speeches, and the Jews were addressed as Moroccan brothers and called upon to build the new Morocco together with the Muslims. In several cities, Jewish leaders were invited by either the *Istiqlal* or the PDI to officially join their ranks.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the Jews remained suspicious for the most part, and divided. Numerous Jews accused their leaders of being interested in only one thing: being members of the future independent government of Morocco. The *Conseil des Communautés Israélites* – the umbrella organization for the diverse Jewish communities scattered throughout the country – and its Secretary-General, Jacques Dahan, appealed to the Jews to demonstrate complete solidarity with the Muslims. But this appeal made no impression on many of the Jews, or caused negative reactions. People expressed strong reservations about the Sultan's declaration as to equal rights and duties for

the Jews. Jews expressed fear of their future conscription into the army and said that they did not wish to be obliged one day to fight Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Various segments of Moroccan Jewry informed the local representatives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC – ‘Joint’) that for some time the Muslims would need them, but that as soon as they would be able to stand on their own feet, they would dispose of the Jews. Others did not believe they would be granted equal rights in an independent Morocco. They were inclined to believe in the sincerity of the Sultan and several of the political leaders, yet they feared the hostile attitude of the mass of the Muslims: once they had the upper hand, they would destroy any kind of equality.<sup>4</sup>

An attachment to the Protectorates, particularly the French Administration, and to whatever it had given the Jews, was evident among urban Jews. There was a certain amount of optimism found among many people. This was based on the fact that the French in November–December 1955 were still in the country.

The affluent stratum of Jews saw in the coming developments some sort of a cultural conflict for their children. Having been brought up in French-language schools those of the Protectorate and the AIU they had much less in common with the Moroccan Muslims than their parents. Things seemed to be different in the middle class where the younger generation was less assimilated to the French. Some of them demonstrated solidarity with the Muslims. Other segments of the middle class and the great mass of the humble socio-economic stratum remained either hostile or indifferent, but certainly frightened, in the face of political developments.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, however, the Jewish position late in 1955 was far from uniform throughout the country. In Azemmour, where the governor was an Arafist (supporter of the now deposed pro-French Sultan Mawlay Ben Arafa), the Jews were fearful. In Safi and Mazagan, Jews were still frightened in the wake of the August riots against the French which were also anti-Jewish. Anxiety was also great in Taroudant and Tiznit of the Anti-Atlas. Muslim competition in Taroudant was very strong, and Jews were constantly being pushed out of their professions and no longer welcome in the *souks* where both Muslims and Jews had traditionally come to peddle their wares. Still, there were also places like Agadir, where the Jews’ socio-economic situation was relatively stable.<sup>6</sup>

Jewish leaders were particularly concerned with the future of the youth, especially in 1956 when full independence was achieved in March. However, changing conditions affected the activities of the major Jewish youth organization, the *Département Educatif de la Jeunesse Juive au Maroc* (DEJJ), less than other societies such as the Zionist youth movements – Dror, Bnai-Akiva, Habonim, Hashomer Hatzair, Hanoar Hatzioni – which, along with the Moroccan Zionist Organization, could not function legally or semi-legally after independence. Though it was feared that efforts would be made to incorporate the Jewish movements into the mainstream Moroccan Youth Movement, this did not materialize. The DEJJ leadership on several occasions stressed the importance of continuing their movement as a separate entity while expressing a desire to cooperate closely with

the Moroccan Youth Movement. An example of such cooperation was a summer activity in Casablanca at one of the AIU schools, which consisted of about 300 Jewish and an almost equal number of Muslim youths. This activity in the summer of 1956 was carried out under the auspices of the Youth Ministry in the Moroccan government. In the Atlas mountains where both the Jewish and Muslim youth organizations carried out summer programs, close cooperation was displayed, although no common program was organized.<sup>7</sup>

Associated with the DEJJ were the *Unités Populaires* (Youth group in the *mellahs*). The cadet units (13–16 years of age) were strengthened in 1956 while the *foyers* (youth centers) in Sefrou and Marrakesh were closed and their participants incorporated into the cadets. The *foyers* in the major urban centers offered rudimentary vocational training and, alongside the ORT schools active in Morocco since 1946, struggled to provide the youths of the AIU, the Otzar Hatorah, and other Jewish schools with future employment possibilities. The *foyer* in Casablanca, for instance, served over 130 youths while its workshop program had substantially expanded to 1,000 participants by 1956. Simultaneously, the *Eclaireurs Israélites de France* (EIF), Moroccan branch, a source of youth leadership, was reorganized. Over 1,500 boy scouts constituted the DEJJ/EIF reservoir in 1956, an elite source for future communal leadership. According to Samuel L. Haber, AJDC-Morocco director, the DEJJ leadership had organized Jewish community centers in 1956 in Casablanca, Oudjda, Fez, Meknes, Rabat and Marrakesh. Hundreds of young people took part in the activities of these centers. In order to establish closer ties with local community leaders, the DEJJ leadership became increasingly involved in wider community responsibilities for youth and adults alike. The community centers began serving adults. Free discussions as well as lectures on Jewish problems were organized. Muslim youth leaders too were invited to these centers to explore problems relating to Judeo-Muslim relations.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the most active proponents of communal discussions and reforms, as well as social and political integration into Moroccan society, were young adults who intended to neutralize the authority of the old leadership. In fact, in 1955–1956, the *modernized* Jewish elite was divided into three main schools of thought. The first, influenced by French and European schooling which in some cases included higher education in France, emphasized the central importance of European culture in general and French culture in particular. In general, the members of this group were not attracted to Zionism, and they eventually settled in France, Canada, Latin America and Belgium. The second group included graduates of the modern schools who, *despite* the education they received at the AIU, were influenced by modern secular and religious Zionism, most notably during the 1930s and 1940s. Although some of its members were physically and culturally remote from the *mellah*, most of them contributed to the emergence of a small but dynamic Zionist movement in Morocco – alongside the traditional Zionism of the Jewish masses – which collaborated in the post-1945 period with the emissaries of the Jewish Agency. Ironically, some of

the notable activists within this elite group never settled in Israel. The third trend, which favored a Judeo-Muslim *entente*, emerged during the early and mid-1950s.<sup>9</sup>

The pro-*entente* Jewish group was by no means homogeneous. It included radicals with strong leftist tendencies as well as moderate leftists and conservatives. David Berdugo, for instance, advocated total Judeo-Muslim integration, with Jews frequenting the same clubs as Muslims and attending the same schools, in order to bridge the political and intellectual gap between the two peoples. Others, though in favor of *entente*, were nevertheless at first more cautious regarding a 'fusion sacrée'. All of the integrationists pinned their hopes on Muhammad V's tolerance. They sought accommodation with political parties, particularly with the PDI and the *Istiqlal*.

Prominent supporters of *entente* included Marc Sabbah, Albert Aflalo, Armand Asoulin, Meyer Toledano, Meir Obadiah, and David Azoulay. These and other proponents of integration were active in *Istiqlal* and, together with several Muslim colleagues, founded a pro-*entente* movement within *Istiqlal* known as *Al-Wifaq* in January 1956. *Al-Wifaq*'s opponents described the society and its most prominent leader, Marc Sabbah, as exclusivist and having been cut off from the *mellah* for years. Sabbah in fact was portrayed as a slavish acolyte of Mehdi Ben Barka, a noted leader of *Istiqlal*.

Sabbah and the vocal integrationists were extremely critical of the *Conseil des Communautés Israélites*, as well as of the separate community council leadership of urban Morocco. In a major editorial in the French language organ of *Istiqlal*, *Al-Istiqlal*, edited by Ben-Barka, Sabbah openly attacked the Jewish leadership. There was a Jewish mass, he claimed, restless, bewildered, misinformed of its own problems because those who retained the name and privilege of leaders were courageous only when their old positions were at stake, and energetic only in clinging to those positions. Not having had a sense of the future and not having foreseen the ineluctable progress of the Moroccan people toward national independence, and consequently, having failed to prepare their own people for the new conditions, – they had guided them, on the contrary, in a different direction – they were unable to answer the questions posed by the Jewish masses.<sup>10</sup>

And now, Sabbah elaborated, though this anxious Jewish mass should have been told that none of its freedoms were impaired and that Jews, like Muslims, had freedom of movement, there was no competent leadership to do so. Only the integrationists, in Sabbah's opinion, were a suitable leadership for the Jews of Morocco. He related that in 1955 and early 1956, he and his supporters were merely a score of people determined to change this state of affairs. However, in the summer of 1956 they were several hundred throughout the country and they intended to struggle against the existing Jewish leadership, the partisans of the colonial past, the promoters of maintaining moral *mellahs*, of separatism.<sup>11</sup>

Sabbah warned that this situation could not last. He urged the Moroccan government to assist in re-organizing the Jewish communities entirely, emulating the pattern of the *consistoires* that existed in France and French

Algeria. New community organizations had to be established, particularly in the major urban centers, with the purpose of:

- (1) Administering communal and religious affairs in accordance with traditional Jewish customs;
- (2) Maintaining good relations with the whole community, especially with the Rabbinate, which should be the object of the greatest respect;
- (3) Trying every means to awaken the national consciousness of the Moroccan Jews so that they would participate more actively in national life.
- (4) Making clear to the Jews that they are citizens of their country on the same terms as their Muslim compatriots.
- (5) Bringing to the government's knowledge all facts which might reflect on the exercise of its functions and the accomplishment of its tasks, and proposing appropriate solutions.
- (6) It should be understood that such activity *must not be carried out in a sectarian spirit but for the exclusive benefit of the Moroccan nation*, under the aegis of the beloved Sultan Muhammad V. [My emphasis, M.M.L.].<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, during the mid – and late 1950s, leaders sharing Sabbah's political orientation did emerge within the community councils, although in the course of the time they either moderated their stance (Sabbah in fact changed some of his views as early as 1957 in the wake of emigration restrictions imposed by the authorities on the Jews) and remained in positions of authority, or more moderate elements prevailed (as with the effective emergence of David Amar). Still, as early as 1956, even among the integrationists and super-patriots, there was increasing fear of certain dynamic *Istiqlal* political leaders. Whereas Ben Barka and Abd al-Rahim Buabid were acceptable to the integrationists, the latter were increasingly fearful of Alal al-Fasi, the conservative leader of the *Istiqlal* who had strong orthodox Islamic leanings. Abraham Laredo who succeeded Jo Hasan as Tangier's Jewish community president and was active in *Al-Wifaq*, thought that the future of the Jews in Morocco was uncertain and intricately bound up with events in the Middle East, particularly following the October 1956 Suez/Sinai war. Laredo was essentially worried about al-Fasi, who had a large following and might ascend to power. Al-Fasi, Laredo indicated, was deeply identified with Cairo and Nasser to whom he felt gratitude for assistance rendered to the Moroccans during their struggle for independence. In Laredo's opinion, if al-Fasi became Premier, the Jews would be in danger.<sup>13</sup>

Laredo's fears were genuine. The future of the Jews was uncertain at the time. Even the *entente* was essentially over before the 1960s. The indifference of the Muslim elite and the hesitation and apprehension on the part of the bulk of the Jewish community brought the plans of *Al-Wifaq* to nought.<sup>14</sup>

What was the basis for the fears and reservations concerning the *entente*? In the first place, *Al-Wifaq* (like similar groups) was elitist. Its members



may have used it as a forum to advance their own political aspirations. The vision of an *entente* simply did not attract or persuade the Jewish masses. Secondly, the desire of tens of thousands of Jews to emigrate after 1954, mainly to Israel, foreclosed any chances for a Judeo-Muslim *entente* on a large scale. The efforts of the authorities during the years 1956–1957 to afford the Jews political security and representation and a feeling of belonging to the new Morocco – including the appointment of a Jewish Minister for Telecommunications, Dr Léon Benzaquen – were doubtless sincere. These efforts, however, were perhaps too limited in scope and certainly too late. Furthermore, the more promising trend of 1956–1958 was not permanent, as we shall see below. After the second half of 1958 there were clear indications that Morocco was rapidly moving into the radical Arab camp of President Nasser. Morocco joined the Arab League, began issuing virulent anti-Israel statements, and clamped down harder on Jewish emigration. These factors caused greater alarm among Jews, many of whom had already decided to leave, and convinced them that an *entente* was impossible.

If politically there were no major obstacles for the Jews until 1958, their main concern and fears centered around the authorities' decision to curtail their freedom of movement. From 1949 until the summer of 1956 the Jews who emigrated to Israel (approximately 90,000) departed through the *Cadima* apparatus, namely the offices and transit camp on the Mazagan road from Casablanca to Marseilles. Though assisted by local Moroccan Zionists, *Cadima* was supervised and managed by the *Mossad Le'aliyah* and Jewish Agency emissaries sent from Israel. Despite certain restrictions, emigration continued in a relatively smooth manner as long as the French authorities were in charge. However, there were strong indications early in 1956 that this situation would not endure much longer.<sup>15</sup>

The *Cadima* apparatus was shut down in September 1956 and the Jews at the transit camp were allowed to leave for Israel via Casablanca and Marseille only following the intervention of World Jewish Congress (WJC) emissaries.<sup>16</sup> The decision to close down the *Cadima* operations was explained by Muhammad Laghzaoui, then Director-General of National Security: *Cadima* was a foreign organization that recruited Moroccan citizens for a foreign country; Moroccan citizens were thus reinforcing the armed strength of Israel in the conflict with the Middle-Eastern states with whom Morocco had ties of religion and kinship; Morocco was under pressure from the Middle-Eastern Arab States to prevent this reinforcement; Morocco could not afford to lose the Jews who were an important and skilled element of its population, essential for facing the economic difficulties which confronted the new State; and finally, having accorded full freedom and equality to the Jews since independence in March 1956, Morocco expected them to fulfill their obligations to the State and assist in her regeneration and upbuilding.<sup>17</sup>

Though the WJC and the government of Israel may have entertained hopes of future agreement with the Moroccan government over the more than 60,000 Jews who were ready to leave, in fact, large-scale, organized emigration ceased for the next five years. Between 1956 and 1957, Jews

managed to leave individually in small numbers. However, from 1958 to 1961, there were some restrictions on individual and small-group emigration as well, for the authorities believed that the emigrants' final destination was Israel.

In order to cope with these restrictions, the Jewish Agency and the *Mossad*, collaborated between 1956 and 1961. The *Mossad* was created in 1952 to conduct Israel's intelligence operations abroad. Its clandestine apparatus for Morocco was established in the latter half of 1955 with headquarters in Paris and agents dispatched to Morocco. Until the Fall of 1956, the apparatus in France, organized by Shlomo Havilio ('Louis'), and its activists in Morocco, Israelis and European Jews, dealt with a variety of activities which did not pertain to *aliyah*. Nevertheless, the events of 1956 led to a partnership between Isser Harel, head of the *Mossad*, and Shlomo Zalman Shragai, head of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department; the agents of the *Mossad* and the Jewish Agency would be responsible for underground *aliyah* by land and sea.<sup>18</sup>

The lack of an official apparatus for organizing emigration to Israel following the dissolution of *Cadima* contributed to an atmosphere of anxiety. Moreover, in the small villages of the countryside (the *bled*), deep-rooted populations – like that of Illigh, for example – felt insecure and decided to leave their homes and strong local ties in order to feel safer in more organized urban communities. This situation existed wherever the Moroccan Army of Liberation of the pre-independence era still controlled isolated populations, with the result that the official governors could not exercise their authority. In *bleds* like Illigh, Oufrane, Assaka, and Tilline, the Jewish population left on foot or by motor transportation in 1956–1957. The families and rabbis came with their transportable belongings to Safi, Mazagan and Mogador; they brought their Torah scrolls out of the *bled* in this exodus.<sup>19</sup>

In Fez, for instance, despite political security, the Jews, like the Muslims, experienced economic depression in 1957–1958 as was the case in other regions. A significant segment of Fez Jewry departed for Israel before *Cadima*'s dissolution, as many as 6,000 between 1955 and 1956, many of them from the ranks of tradesmen, especially bank clerks, tailors, and butchers. In certain cases, the shops of those leaving were taken over by Muslims. In the case of kosher butcher shops, some had been bought by Muslims but were still operated by Jewish employees. The dwellings of Jews who left Fez were, partially, taken over by *bled* Jews who were generally in transit.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the lower socio-economic strata of the community were in a state of flux and uncertainty.

Fez was one of the many communities where Jewish communal institutions persevered in post-1956 Morocco. In addition to the DEJJ/EIF, the Otzar Hatorah and the AIU schools functioned normally. The same was true for the Lubavitcher schools, active in Morocco since 1950. According to Rabbi Benyamin Gorodetzki, director-general of the Lubavitcher European office in Paris, responsible for Europe and North Africa – on behalf of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Brooklyn – Moroccan Jews were anxious to afford their children a religious education.



Gorodetzki argued that the reason why many had frequented AIU-type secular schools until 1956 was because they had more buildings and facilities and obtained government support. But now the situation was different. Parents feared that insufficient Jewish education could not preserve Jewish identity in face of the Arabization which affected the AIU schools more than the *Otzar Hatorah* and Lubavitcher schools.<sup>21</sup>

Gorodetzki described the political situation thus. First, *aliyah* had for all intents and purposes been stopped or severely curtailed, and the hope of Jews to reach Israel had been dampened for some time to come. Whereas until 1956 Moroccan Jews anxiously awaited their departure, they did not place much emphasis on the quality and quantity of Jewish education. They knew this would be obtainable in Israel. With *aliyah* at a standstill and the Jews no longer in transit, the fostering of Jewish values received greater priority. Second, with the fading of French influence, French education had become less fashionable and less urgent (here Gorodetzki was wrong in his assessment), and there was increased desire on the part of parents to afford their children a Jewish *religious* education. Third, many people had left for Israel and the small villages of the *bled* had emptied of Jews. Nevertheless, a small number of families that remained behind did not find it possible to go on living in the villages any longer and had therefore moved to town in the hope of making *aliyah* which had stopped for the time being. These village Jews were more religious than their urban counterparts and were more determined to offer their children a religious education.<sup>22</sup>

Stanley Abramovitch, the AJDC educational inspector for North Africa analyzed the situation from a similar angle. However, while he agreed with Gorodetzki that French was less fashionable than Arabic and that Jewish education had to be fostered, the Jewish child had to know French as well as Arabic to be protected against the pressures of his Muslim surroundings: over-Arabization, blind integration, and disintegration. The Lubavitcher schools, in Abramovitch's opinion, did not contribute to this task. Unlike the AIU and to some extent the *Otzar Hatorah* schools, the Lubavitcher served a marginal group of children, the village child, the child who had missed a general education owing to parental neglect, among other things.<sup>23</sup>

As to the AIU, despite its importance in independent Morocco in offering Jewish education, propagating French culture, and teaching Arabic as well, the authorities placed its schools and personnel in a difficult situation. In 1956, officials at the Ministry of National Education hinted strongly to the AIU that its schools could no longer enjoy their pre-independence status. It was just a matter of time before an overall decision would be reached regarding the schools and the teachers, most of whom were Moroccan nationals. Indeed during the colonial period – in accord with an agreement signed in 1928 – the AIU received generous subsidies for the schools from the French. The agreement had survived into the immediate post-1956 period, with the Moroccan government and the AJDC helping the AIU maintain its schools. But now the AIU was open to attack from all sides. Moroccan nationalists accused it of having collaborated with French colonialism; these same elements also pointed with some accuracy to AIU-Jewish Agency collaboration since the late 1940s. On

11 July 1957, Reuben Tajouri, AIU delegate for Morocco, informed René Cassin, AIU President in France, about his meeting with Muhammad al-Fasi, the Minister of National Education. They had discussed alternatives to the continuation of the AIU's work: Arabization of the curriculum and changing the status of teachers of French and Moroccan nationality. According to Tajouri the talks centred on the

fonctionnarisation du personnel marocain avec détachement à l'Alliance si possible ou statu quo avec garantie fonctionnarisation en temps opportun; engagement par contrat . . . des instituteurs français avec leur détachement à l'Alliance si c'est possible ou maintien dans le cadre de l'Alliance.<sup>24</sup>

On July 23, 1957, Cassin wrote to Dr Léon Benzaquen, the Jewish cabinet Minister, regarding the future of the AIU in Morocco. Cassin reminded Benzaquen of the educational importance of the AIU before 1912 when Morocco was independent, during the colonial period and after the renewal of Morocco's independence. He emphasized the efforts undertaken by the AIU to promote Arabization, a development which Muhammad al-Fasi and numerous regional governors appreciated and recognized. However, Cassin brought to Benzaquen's attention that during a meeting he had with Muhammad al-Fasi, he sensed that the AIU was in danger. Not necessarily blaming al-Fasi but rather some of his collaborators as well as certain AIU teachers of Moroccan nationality with leftist leanings associated with the UMT, he perceived a tendency to consider a takeover of the AIU quickly or by gradually reducing its role. He then issued a warning:

Nous pensons . . . que, plus que jamais, le Maroc trouverait son avantage à ce que les enfants juifs du Maroc apprennent dans nos écoles à la fois le civisme envers la patrie marocaine et la fidélité envers la tradition juive. Nous ne pensons pas que l'on obtienne ce résultat si la responsabilité de la formation générale de notre jeunesse juive devrait nous être contestée. Je n'ai pas à vous dire non plus quel effet une modification profonde des écoles de l'Alliance aurait sur le moral des parents de nos élèves et des familles juives, sans compter les répercussions que cela pourrait avoir sur l'opinion juive un peu partout dans le monde. . . .<sup>25</sup>

A similar letter was addressed by Cassin to Muhammad al-Fasi. Cassin pointed out to him that in November 1955 he had met Muhammad V at Saint-Germain-en-Laye when the latter had returned from exile and was in transit in France. During the meeting the Sultan declared his inclination to maintain the work of the AIU. Any future revised agreement between the AIU in Paris and the Moroccan Ministry of National Education to modify certain aspects of the AIU's work had to be formulated jointly but without destroying or severely restricting the AIU's task<sup>26</sup>.

Despite certain problems, the status quo remained in 1957. As late as 1958-59, despite the prevalent atmosphere of uneasiness about governmental designs, it is noteworthy that the government contributions to

the AIU and ORT were generally maintained.<sup>27</sup> This followed the example of the French subsidy for the AIU and ORT schools.

#### DIFFICULT TIMES: OCTOBER 1958 – MAY 1960

Politically, at least, the situation of the Jews, as we have seen, was rather tolerable in the years 1956–58. Jews were regarded as citizens, and fears of physical harassment failed to materialize during the transition from colonial to independent rule. This did not last. In May 1957 the Bekkai government, the first government of independent Morocco, was replaced by the *Istiqlal*, headed by Ahmad Balafrej. Dr Léon Benzaquen, the Jewish Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, did not participate in the new government. In December 1958, the left wing of the *Istiqlal* formed a new government, headed by Abdallah Ibrahim which remained in power until May 1960. Morocco had joined the Arab League even prior to its tenure, (October 1958) and actively participated in its affairs. The Jews were particularly fearful of the Ibrahim government and they conveyed these fears to the leaders of the major world Jewish organizations active on their behalf – notably the WJC, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the AJDC.

After independence, before the WJC sections in Morocco, which had been active since the late 1940s or early 1950s, closed down their offices in 1959, several WJC officials frequently visited the country. These were Alexander L. Easterman, Political Director of the WJC, Joe Gouldin (Golan), Dr Nahum Goldmann's WJC Political Secretary, and Dr Gerhard Riegner, also a political director of the WJC – all of whom had also visited Morocco before 1956. They met with leading government officials to discuss the political rights of the Jews. During one of his visits to Morocco, late in 1958, Dr Riegner found the general situation in the country rather confused. The conflict within the *Istiqlal* party between leftists and conservatives, the struggle for power between the *Istiqlal* and the King, the unrest in some parts of the country, especially the Rif Mountains – created a conflict-laden situation which did not foster an appropriate climate for concrete negotiations between the WJC and the authorities as to renewal of Jewish emigration. Internally, the struggle for Jewish communal leadership calmed down in 1958. The young Jewish *Istiqlal* integrationists were now more realistic and understood they could expect very little from the authorities. The former Jewish leaders from the pre-1956–57 period also showed more understanding of the new conditions and needs of the newly independent country.<sup>28</sup>

A lack of leadership continued to exist among Moroccan Jewry, Riegner observed. The *Conseil des Communautés Israélites* played a very limited role, partly owing to its inability to adapt itself to the new conditions and to the refusal of certain ineffective personalities to withdraw from communal responsibilities. Riegner, who had spoken to Abderrahim Bouabid and Mehdi Ben Barka, both noted leaders of the left within the *Istiqlal*, was assured that Morocco's adhesion to the Arab League had not brought about any change in government policy towards the Jews.

Nevertheless, he was unconvinced by their claim and expressed profound concern about emigration restrictions. He was aware that Jews were able to leave individually in small numbers to countries other than Israel via the United HIAS Service (which had representatives in Morocco), and that some did go to Israel, probably by giving their final destination as France. But he felt problems did exist. Generally speaking, Riegner believed that persons belonging to the middle class succeeded in obtaining passports if they were sufficiently insistent and if they expedited matters with *bakshish*. On the other hand, concerning the humbler socio-economic strata, he added:

we gained the impression that no considerable demand for passports has been made. Most of these people are afraid to ask for passports or are discouraged by the local officials who are turning them away. They are afraid to appear a second or third time.<sup>29</sup>

During his meeting with Ahmad Laghzaoui who was still chief of the Moroccan *Sûreté Nationale* in 1958, Riegner was told that there were numerous Moroccan Jews who wanted to return to Morocco after having been in Israel either as immigrants or for a visit. Laghzaoui had issued detailed instructions to choose selectively – according to various criteria – which Jews could return; and he insisted that Morocco did not want to keep anybody in the country who did not want to stay. But people who had definitely emigrated to Israel would not be entitled to return. What Morocco could not tolerate was recruitment for Israel, and it did not want to feed future foreign armies with young Moroccans.<sup>30</sup>

Easterman provided a more pessimistic appraisal of the situation, yet, like Riegner, he believed that the Jewish leadership in Morocco was beginning to reveal greater understanding for the Jews' needs and rights. In 1957, Easterman reported that M. Hamiani, the Political Director of the Ministry of the Interior, had received a Jewish leadership delegation which protested in the strongest terms against the anti-Jewish discrimination in issuing passports, as a violation of the King's and the Government's repeated declarations that the Jews were equal citizens, and as a breach of the United Nation Declaration of Human Rights. The delegation requested the immediate removal of the ban, stating that they were not concerned with emigration to Israel as such, but with the democratic right of freedom of emigration.<sup>31</sup>

According to Easterman, Hamiani stated that the Minister of the Interior had issued a directive to all local authorities instructing them not to grant passports to Jews traveling or intending to travel to Israel, and to refuse readmission to Morocco to Jews who had been to Israel. Hamiani, moreover, told the delegation that Morocco would not allow Moroccans to be exploited by Israel against the Middle Eastern Arab states and implied that the Moroccan government preferred 250,000 Jews inside Morocco rather than seventy million Muslims breathing down its neck over liberal emigration policies.<sup>32</sup>

The Jewish delegation reacted to this statement, by declaring that they would not accept this position. The *Conseil des Communautés Israélites*,

it was said, would take, officially, strong public action in defense of the Jews' liberties. Thereupon, Hamiani sought to mollify the delegation and promised to communicate their views to the Minister of the Interior.<sup>33</sup>

Easterman was delighted by the vigor demonstrated by the delegation. In his judgment, this marked a new and highly encouraging turn of events, not merely in reference to emigration, but also in respect of general Jewish affairs. The WJC's major difficulty hitherto, Easterman added, had been the reluctance and timidity of the leading Moroccan Jews and their organizations to assist by approaching the authorities.<sup>34</sup>

This bold stance and the WJC's initiative to convince the authorities to relax emigration restrictions bore no fruit. If Jews managed somehow to leave Morocco individually for different countries before the middle of 1958, the restrictions were tightened considerably after Morocco joined the Arab League in October of that year. After a long conversation in Morocco between Easterman, Bouabid, and Laghzaoui (April 1959), Easterman was totally discouraged. He had proposed to them a plan whereby Jewish application for passports would go through the local Jewish community councils first and the councils would then present these to the relevant officials; under such a system, to be organized discreetly, 500–600 Jews would leave on a monthly basis.<sup>35</sup>

Bouabid said that Morocco had to show regard for its 'international obligations' and 'the other states'. Thus, the government could not countenance collective emigration. Laghzaoui, however, hinted that he would not object to the proposed emigration scheme, but Easterman had doubts as to his sincerity and concluded that:

. . . the whole atmosphere has deteriorated and Morocco is more and more under the pressure of the Arab League. The Arabs' pressure on the Rumanian *aliyah* is, I imagine, another factor against us. Bouabid also referred to the fact that the [new] Ibrahim government has to face 'other opposition', obviously referring to the Alal al-Fasi group of the *Istiqlal* and others, and that the government are not likely to give them the weapon of Jewish emigration with which to attack them.<sup>36</sup>

Did Easterman speak on behalf of Goldman, the Jewish Agency, or the government of Israel? Was he their intermediary over the emigration question? We have already seen that the WJC had served as intermediary on emigration in 1956, and it is possible that the various proposals to organize some type of an apparatus for organized emigration via Europe or 'to Europe' originated in Jerusalem. Since Goldmann was a leading figure in the Zionist movement (in addition to his position as WJC president); since he was present at the sessions held jointly in Jerusalem by the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency on emigration; and because Goldman, through Easterman, Golan and Riegner, had established ties with the Moroccan political leadership as early as the mid-1950s, the State of Israel may have used the good offices of the WJC to reach the Moroccan authorities and raise, informally or through discreet negotiations, the matter of emigration possibilities. On the other hand, we need to conduct further research into the possibility that the WJC was acting on its own

regarding the pressing problems of Moroccan Jewry.

Also active to a significant extent on behalf of Moroccan Jewry at the time was the American Jewish Committee (AJC), through its offices in France. According to a detailed report of 1959 drawn up by the AJC delegation headed by Zachariah Shuster, the delegate to France, the general situation of the Jews had deteriorated drastically since the summer of 1959. Shuster and his main assistant, Abraham S. Karlikow, held intensive conversations on 13–15 December with leaders of different elements of the Jewish community, with representatives of world Jewish organizations operating inside Morocco, and with Charles W. Yost, the American ambassador in Rabat.<sup>37</sup>

The AJC Report pointed to several factors which had caused a marked depression in the spirit of the Jews. First, once Morocco joined the Arab League and there were indications of a growing rift with the western world, Jewish insecurity increased. In this connection, Jews feared that the recently-formed Syro-Egyptian union and Morocco's support for Nasser's Arab unity schemes would undermine their position. Second, the Moroccan government under Abdallah Ibrahim (from 24 December 1958) announced economic policies involving state direction, thus implying even greater economic controls. Third, there was a continuing hardening of government measures restricting Jewish emigration that included the establishment in 1959 of a special section of the police to deal with this matter. There were increased numbers of Jews arrested on mere suspicion of desiring to emigrate. Fourth, there were tensions and indecision resulting from the fact that all organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish, had to register their statutes, with some groups not being accepted and others finding their statutes in doubt as late as December, 1959. Finally, anti-Zionist expression was intensified by the political parties as well as the press. Less of a sharp distinction was made between Zionism and local Jews than previously. One governmental measure was cutting off postal relations with Israel.<sup>38</sup>

Another critical political turning point came in 1959. The Jewish community leaders and the AJC were not oblivious to it. During the premiership of Ibrahim, a split occurred within the *Istiqlal*. The leftists seceded, led by Mehdi Ben Barka, supported by Bouabid and Ibrahim. Ben Barka then founded the *Union Nationale des Forces Populaires* (UNFP). He enlisted, temporarily at least, the support of the *Union Marocaine de Travail* (UMT), the leftist labor union. There were now two major political blocs in the country: the conservative *Istiqlal* led by Alal al-Fasi and the UNFP led by Ben Barka. Challenging the *Istiqlal* newspapers, the UNFP activists published *al-Tahrir* (Liberation). The UNFP launched attacks against the Palace and against the *Istiqlal*, backed, though not blindly, by the UMT. At the end of 1959, the editors of *al-Tahrir* were arrested on suspicion of plotting to assassinate the Crown Prince, Hasan. The paper was temporarily suspended. Early in 1960, Ben Barka, known for lack of enthusiasm for the monarchy, left Morocco never to return.

In these politically tumultuous times, the Jews had little to gain from



the split in the *Istiqlal*, from the Palace – UNFP tensions, or from King Muhammad V's growing disenchantment with the Ibrahim government. Most Jews, save active members and supporters of the UNFP or the *Istiqlal*, shunned political involvement. Not only did they find the policies of the parties distasteful, whether leftist or conservative, but the various political forces did not appear particularly eager to enlist Jewish support. The AJC report correctly explained that there were reasons which explain this phenomenon. In the days of the struggle for national independence, the Jews either claimed to be neutral or evinced sympathy for the French, and this had unfavorable consequences for the position of the Jews in Morocco. In 1959, Jewish pride and quest for rights notwithstanding, no Jewish leader wanted to be put in the position of having picked the 'wrong' side. Furthermore, there was little or no place on the political scene for Jews to turn, for the political parties vied with each other in showing their loyalty to Arab unity and pan-Arab causes. Most significant, however, was the prevailing feeling among different segments of the Jewish population of forced estrangement from vital areas of Moroccan life. This sharpened the distrust that had already been widespread – before and after 1956 – as to the potential for genuine integration.<sup>39</sup>

The distrust and estrangement were exemplified by the AJC report in regard to the 1959 negotiations for the May 1960 elections: the first elections since independence. Jews in Casablanca simply did not register to vote, to the quiet despair of the official Jewish leadership. Jews in Fez asked the governor if they would be provided with their own registration booths *inside* the Jewish neighborhoods because the Jewish population did not want to go and register at the regular booth. The *Conseil des Communautés Israélites* then undertook a campaign to get Jewish registration with some success.<sup>40</sup> The leadership's reason for having Jews register was doubtless to provide a good showing so that the authorities would not become more confirmed in their existing distrust of the Jews; the hope was that, eventually, the Jews would register in substantial numbers, with increasing attention paid to voter registration having favorable consequences for their position.

Whereas the Jews avoided taking any political stance, their sympathies lay primarily with Muhammad V, in whom they saw a figure of last resort who might check the serious deterioration of their position. For, at no time since 1956 had their situation worsened as much as under the Ibrahim government.

Economically, the Jewish members of the middle class were hard hit under Ibrahim. They, like Muslim businessmen, felt that any declaration of assets outside Morocco would mean, in the future, loss of control of those assets to the Moroccan government and possibly the loss of the assets themselves. Whether to accept this possibility and register, or attempt to hide the assets and have a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, was their dilemma. As the AJC report indicated, many of these Jews quietly sought arrangements to move to France or Spain or, when possible, to other countries. Other businessmen imagined that they would have to become employees of the State or simply lose their businesses

should the government take over certain economic activities. Hence, they too were discouraged and wanted to leave.<sup>41</sup>

On the lower economic levels, the policy of the government was felt through the placement service. Jews felt they were being discriminated against in job placement, although that was difficult to prove. What happened was that a Jewish mechanic or electrician who wanted employment registered for a position. His name was placed on the placement bureau's lists. When a position was available – and unemployment was a serious problem during the late 1950s – the Jew found literally hundreds of Muslims ahead of him on the waiting lists. It was also quite logical that there would be scores of Muslim applicants for every Jewish applicant, given the population ratio. Hence the position of the Jew was bad enough. In fact, employers tended to favor Jewish employees because they were better workers. There were occasions when employers notified particular Jewish mechanics that a job was available and asked for them, but were sent Muslims by the placement bureau instead, even though the Muslim was often not qualified for the job.<sup>42</sup>

There were signs, too, according to the AJC report, that in government administration, Muslims were favored over Jews. Certainly the Jews in Morocco believed this, and they complained that there were cases of Jews having being passed over for promotion or for hiring, even though more qualified than Muslims. On the other hand, Jews themselves indicated how difficult it was to make a case in this regard, for thanks to their education, they were well represented in certain branches of the administration. They were so well represented in the postal service that certain postal activities stopped on Yom Kippur. It was also asserted that, in some cases, government posts were offered to Jews who turned them down because the salaries were very low.<sup>43</sup>

It was briefly mentioned above that a special section of the police was established to stop emigration. According to the AJC report, there was a notable increase in 1959 in the number of Jews brought into police stations and detained on suspicion of wanting to emigrate. These prisoners were often roughly treated in order to make them talk. The situation became such that, sometime in 1959, Meyer Obadia, the president of the Casablanca Jewish community, protested to the governor of the city and threatened to resign unless the prisoners were released. The governor and Obadia made a tour of the various police stations. They found eighty Jews in jail who had undergone interrogation on suspicion of wanting to emigrate. These Jews had been held without charges and were thus released. They had been arrested on the basis of anonymous letters or rumors.<sup>44</sup>

As for the position of Jewish organizations, by the summer of 1959, the United HIAS Service and the Moroccan sections of the WJC had been closed down because the authorities would not register their statutes, thus making it virtually impossible for them to operate. The ORT continued to operate without any difficulty. The same was true for *Otzar Hatorah*, Lubavitch, the OSE Clinics, and the AJDC. The same was not quite true for the AIU as we shall see below. In fact, the AJC report emphasized

that Moroccan Jews were surprised that the AIU had lasted as late as 1959, it being anomalous that the State would permit what it considered a foreign, French organization to play a preponderant role in the field of primary and secondary education, a function of government in almost every nation, and that the Moroccan government provided a substantial part of the AIU budget.<sup>45</sup>

The AJC delegation met with Charles W. Yost, the American ambassador. Yost stated that while Morocco's joining the Arab League had had a deleterious effect and although the position of the Jewish community had indeed deteriorated in 1959 more than in any comparable period of time, there was no crisis and no reason to be alarmed. The position of the Jews in Morocco, he added, was better than that of Jewish communities in other Arab nations. He did not feel that the time was opportune for intervention with the Moroccan authorities.<sup>46</sup>

Dr Léon Benzaquen was no longer a member of the cabinet in 1959, but remained concerned with the shaping of events. He now returned to communal responsibilities, regaining the presidency of OSE – Maroc. He observed that 95 per cent of Jewish youth were attending school at the time while scarcely 10 per cent of the Muslims youth did so; 90 per cent of Jewish children received medical care (through the OSE-Maroc and other facilities) against 10 per cent of their Muslim counterparts. Any Jewish child was able to attend the ORT vocational schools, while Muslim youths had little educational/vocational training available. While still a cabinet member he had heard Abdallah Ibrahim (Labor Minister until December 1958) argue at a cabinet session that ORT was an impressive phenomenon but that its schools should have been wide open for Muslim youth and not exclusively – or almost exclusively – for Jews.<sup>47</sup>

Ibrahim, according to Benzaquen, often stated at cabinet meetings that he admired Jewish communal initiatives which provided social and cultural services, notably *Aide Scolaire*, ORT and OSE. Yet, being in constant touch with Muslims as Labor Minister before becoming Premier, Ibrahim had concluded that Muslims resented the fact that Jews had such high-quality institutions while they did not have them. The Jews had thus drawn too much attention to themselves and, consequently, were potential victims of that excellence. Ibrahim, Benzaquen added, himself resented these organizations (although, simultaneously, he admired their work) because most of them were administered by foreign Jews.<sup>48</sup>

To avoid problems in the future Benzaquen encouraged Jewish leaders increasingly to involve Muslims in certain Jewish communal and organizational institutions. Now that Morocco had been independent for three years, there was no reason for the Jews themselves to discriminate and that integration had to be carried out starting with these institutions. Benzaquen insisted that he would do his utmost to integrate Muslim physicians into OSE and that the proportion of Muslim youth treated at OSE would be increased.<sup>49</sup>

Benzaquen was also disturbed by the fact that Jewish institutions in Morocco were subsidized from abroad. This was a dangerous situation and he was convinced that in the future several deputies in the *Assemblée*

*Consultative* would launch attacks against attempts by foreign minorities to create and maintain institutions in Morocco with outside funding.<sup>50</sup>

#### TRANSITION TO THE ERA OF HASAN II: MAY 1960–MAY 1967

The first elections since independence were held on 8 May 1960, for 13 local chambers of commerce and industry, and on 29 May for municipal councils. On both occasions the UNFP made impressive gains. In the municipal elections the UNFP won 23 per cent of the votes as compared with 40 per cent for the *Istiqlal* and seven per cent for the *Mouvement Populaire* (a conservative movement) – a significant showing for the UNFP which was not yet one year old.<sup>51</sup> Among the Jews elected was Meyer Toledano of Casablanca who, as the UNFP candidate, defeated the Jewish candidate of the *Istiqlal*, Meyer Obadia, the president of the Casablanca Jewish community. At least 10 other Jews gained office throughout the country.<sup>52</sup> Yet this achievement was of little significance for the overwhelming majority of Jews.

Six days prior to the local elections, King Muhammad V formed a new government which he led personally and in which Hasan, the Crown Prince was vested with real authority. Most Jews welcomed the new government, but the Jewish community as a whole remained vulnerable to the whims of its anti-Zionism and to the measures taken against the AIU.

The year 1960 was a crucial turning point for the AIU Morocco school network. Throughout the year there were indications that the authorities would drastically alter the AIU's status. It should be noted that, from the summer of 1960 the Ministry of National Education sought either to integrate Muslim youths at the AIU schools alongside Jewish youths – limiting the number of Jewish youths significantly in relation to Muslim enrollment – or, at the very least, to integrate the schools (the buildings of which mostly belonged to the government), the pupils, and the teachers under the auspices of the Ministry. Did this trend intend to subject Jewish youth to the Arabization process which had already gained momentum in 1955–56? Would Jewish youth in the integrated AIU institutions be able to obtain Jewish education within the schools? Or, did government policy aim at transferring Jewish education for Jewish youth in the integrated schools to after-school hours, to be provided by the community and/or the Otzar Hatorah and Lubavitcher?

We do not have appropriate answers at this stage of research, although, in the final analysis, the AIU continued to function and to offer Jewish education as well as French – alongside Arabic – following the *partial* integration of its schools. In October 1960, when the AIU still operated 77 schools with 28,684 pupils, the first critical challenge took place. The authorities could no longer resist temptation as well as nationalist and political pressure from Cairo. Nationalists, including Moroccan Jewish teachers affiliated with the UMT, accused the AIU of 'controlling Jewish minds and thus the artificial separation between Jew and Muslim was becoming permanent'.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the authorities now requested that the

AIU cede one-third of its schools to the Ministry of National Education, including the students and teachers in these schools, while the rest were to remain, for the time being at least, in the hands of the AIU.

It is quite possible that the authorities had not given up the idea of total nationalization of the AIU schools and were instead preparing a gradual nationalization process. Be that as it may, the educational authorities promised AIU officials that Jewish studies would be kept in the curricula of the nationalized schools, although Jewish observers claimed (a claim that we have as yet been unable to confirm) that the teaching of Jewish studies in the nationalized schools had been so readjusted as to be limited to reading the Bible.<sup>54</sup>

The decision to nationalize one-third of the AIU schools was made official on 3 March 1961, retroactive to 1 October 1960, through *Zahir* (decree) 1-61-006, which led to the following developments. First, the AIU was now left with 20,000 students and 64 schools. Second, the 1928 agreement signed between the AIU and the French was annulled. This move in itself was threatening to the AIU which probably feared that the authorities were implementing a step-by-step nationalization policy.

Concerned with developments and seeking to hold on to its 64 schools directly or indirectly, the leaders of the AIU in 1961-62 were willing to consider various sacrifices. On July 19, 1962, an additional measure was adopted by the authorities: a *Zahir* (1-62-058) that was subsequently modified (or supplemented) by *Zahir* 1-63-079 on April 16, 1963, envisaging the integration of the teachers of the AIU (Moroccan nationals) into the Ministry of National Education.<sup>55</sup>

The Paris AIU would have coped with the implementation of this measure and would have probably accepted a reduced role by raising funds to maintain the schools as long as these preserved their Jewish character. In fact, Marcel Franco, a vice-president of the AIU and *persona grata* with the Moroccan authorities, argued in May 1962, before the above-mentioned edicts were published, that the AIU teachers of Moroccan nationality – except for Jewish studies personnel – should become state functionnaires and then ‘lend-leased’ to the AIU network. The integration of the teachers into the public sector ‘would permit the AIU to get rid of the problem of the pensions.’<sup>56</sup> In other words, integrating the teachers into the sector, while still using them in the AIU schools, which would continue to function, could be positive for the AIU, relieving it of major financial burdens. We cannot ascertain if other members of the Paris AIU shared this point of view.

Searching for solutions, Franco contacted the Moroccan government as well as representatives of the AIU teachers in 1961-1962. Some of these representatives favored total nationalization of the schools and the integration of their personnel into the framework of the Ministry of National Education. It is unclear what exactly Franco achieved from his contacts. It is evident, however, that the policy of integrating the teachers into the public sector was, by 1962-63, viewed with mixed feelings by many of the teachers. As Eugène Weill, AIU Secretary-General in France maintained in September 1962:

. . . l'on sent très bien aujourd'hui que le personnel est effrayé des perspectives d'une nationalisation et souhaiterait rester hors de la fonction publique . . . avec l'Alliance. Pour cela, il faut naturellement lui offrir un attrait.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, when the decree was published in 1963 and throughout 1964, the majority of the teachers of Moroccan nationality *refused* to become state functionaries. They felt that they were being paid better by the AIU delegation in Casablanca than they would be by the Ministry of National Education.<sup>58</sup>

One more critical measure, perhaps with AIU assistance and approval, was imposed on the school network in Morocco in 1961–62: it was transformed from AIU – Maroc to the arabized *Ittihad* – Maroc. The change was not in name only. A special *Ittihad* committee was created, headed by local Jewish notables and administered *locally* by Elias Harrus. Still, the *Ittihad* remained part of the AIU network of schools throughout the world, because the Paris AIU (and AJDC) continued to subsidize the schools, along with the Moroccan government. The teacher who retired from service received severance payments instead of a pension.

It is clear, therefore, that in 1960–61 under the Muhammad V/Hasan government, the AIU network faced dangers which would have had serious cultural and social repercussions on the Jewish communities, had the schools been fully integrated and thoroughly Moroccanized. Still, several interesting developments with long-range positive effects for emigration occurred during this period.

In agreement with the WJC and the Jewish Agency, Easterman went to Rabat in August 1960 to discuss with the new government the potential for liberalizing Jewish emigration. In July when the Easterman visit was being planned, Shragai requested that Easterman speak with M'Barek Bekkai, then Minister of the Interior, and with Crown Prince Hasan. He indicated that there was no need to go into intricate details but that Easterman should clearly state that, since Morocco had become independent, Jews had not been allowed to emigrate to Israel in spite of the promises and statements which Morocco had made.<sup>59</sup>

The meeting between Hasan and Easterman was held on August 11. Hasan was deeply serious in insisting on secrecy. This is attested by the fact that the meeting took place late at night, outside Rabat, in the private residence of one of his closest friends. Hasan's friendly manner encouraged Easterman to be open with him. He spoke to him about the WJC's disappointment regarding emigration, the general state of disquiet in the Moroccan Jewish community, and the position of the WJC in Morocco whose sections had been closed down the year before. Easterman did not raise the question of Israel as such, nor did he feel in a position to refer specifically to the embargo on postal relations with Israel, though he did comment, in general terms, and as a human problem, on the restrictions on communication between Moroccan Jews and their relatives and friends in Israel: portraying them as part of the tragedy of separated of families.<sup>60</sup>

Hasan did not provide Easterman with any concrete answers, but only the



promise of future contact and discussion of these problems. Nevertheless, he suggested that during his projected visit to the USA to lead the Moroccan delegation at the UN, it would be unwise to upset him by any hostile Jewish demonstration or by pressure on the part of American Jewish organizations.<sup>61</sup>

Easterman later observed that he was well aware of the unreliability of Moroccan declarations of goodwill and good intentions. At the same time he well understood that Hasan headed a new government which had only just assumed authority, and was balancing on a very slender political tightrope stretched between fiercely hostile partisans on the one hand, and the suspicious forces of the Middle Eastern Arab states on the other. Easterman was convinced that Hasan and Muhammad V had little love for Nasser, and vice versa, but they did not feel as sure of themselves as did Bourguiba of Tunisia. Easterman concluded that after the WJC had had so many disappointments with the previous Moroccan governments of Si Bekkai, Balafrej and, worst of all, Ibrahim, the WJC in the latter half of 1960 had at last reached the ear of the real head of government, and established direct relations with him. Easterman believed he had succeeded in dispelling the widely spread rumor in Morocco that the WJC actively supported Ben Barka and similar leftist groups and that, therefore, they were taking sides in Morocco's internal political conflicts.<sup>62</sup>

Less than two weeks later, Easterman had a lengthy discussion with Sam Benazeraf, a Moroccan Jewish financier close to the Palace. Benazeraf informed him that there appeared to be a relaxation of rules regarding applications for passports, particularly in Casablanca. Benazeraf said that instructions had been given to the Casablanca passport offices to the following effect: applications were not to be rejected without giving a reason; in dealing with passports, precise questions had to be put to the applicant; if there were objections to granting a passport, they had to be clearly stated; and if there were no objections on legal grounds or on account of official instructions, passports had to be granted. Benazeraf claimed that these instructions had been given by the Ministry of the Interior to the governor of Casablanca, but he did not know if they were written or oral. He added that the Ministry of the Interior had to have acted on orders from the Crown Prince, and that it was most unlikely that the Ministry would have acted on its own initiative on a matter of this importance. 'If this was accurate,' Easterman boasted, 'I think we can assume that my meeting with Mawlay Hasan is having fruitful results'.<sup>63</sup>

It seems that for reasons unknown, Easterman's optimistic forecasts were premature, although there was an apparent inclination on the part of Hasan or his father to consider changes. Nevertheless in January 1961 the intensification of official anti-Zionism, rather than liberal policies, prevailed. On January 3, Muhammad V organized the Casablanca Conference which was attended by representatives of the United Arab Republic (including Nasser), Ghana, Mali, Guinea and the Algerian FLN. Although a wide variety of topics pertaining to the 'Third World' were discussed, Israel, portrayed as an agent of imperialism and colonialism, was the focus

of some attention. The second event took place on the night of 10–11 January when the *Pisces*, a sixty-five foot boat carrying 44 Jews from the Gulf of Alhucemas to Gibraltar, foundered and all but the Spanish captain and his assistant met their death. These Jews were being smuggled out of Morocco as part of the clandestine emigration process after several such attempts had been made in the past.

Both events brought the Moroccan Jewish community into the focus of public attention with dire results. Jews suffered police abuse, arrests and imprisonment as well as severe beatings. Those who happened to be wearing any combination of blue and white clothing were arrested as ‘secret Zionists’, while Jews wearing black skullcaps or garments were accused of ‘displaying signs of mourning’ at Nasser’s visit. The Egyptian President’s presence in Morocco, was thus a stimulus for anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish sentiments.

Similarly, the sinking of the *Pisces* resulted in further outbursts of anti-Zionism. Toward the end of January, the Minister of Information, Mawlay Ahmad Alawi, blamed the tragedy on the Zionist organizations which ‘incited’ Jews to leave Morocco. But by then the European and American press had identified the difficult conditions of Moroccan Jewry as the main cause of their desire to emigrate. The Israeli government, too, seized this opportunity to place much of the responsibility on the Moroccan government.

At the same time, various pro-Israel groups working inside Morocco – Israelis associated with the Jewish Agency and the *Mossad* (the latter represented by the late Alex Gatmon); the Zionist youth movements working underground (Dror, Habonim, Bnei Akiva, Hanoar Hazioni, Hashomer Hatzair), and other elements – decided to take advantage of the *Pisces* affair and the unfortunate effects of the Nasser visit in order to urge Jews to emigrate. On 9 February 1961, in commemoration of the Jews who had met their death at sea, thousands upon thousands of copies of a tract were distributed by local activists, urging the Jews not to despair. The text of this tract, written in French and bordered by heavy black mourning bars, was very strongly worded. It reads:

To our Jewish brethren in Morocco. Forty-four of our brethren, driven by an intense desire to live in the Holy Land and full of hope for the future, have disappeared in the sea. Only a few of them were buried in accordance with our rites. The others were swallowed up by the depths of the sea; their families, the people of Israel and we ourselves weep at their loss.

A 2,000-year hope pushes Jews to leave by every means and by all roads leading to Zion and Jerusalem.

Any certainty of finding a place in an independent Morocco has disappeared. It might be that the Palace is not involved in the anti-Jewish wave that has been unleashed at this time. We know that anti-Semitism is in contradiction to the principles of Islam, but there exist elements who have secretly decided to pursue us and humiliate us. Let those elements know that their end will be bitter.

From Amalek and Haman to Hitler and Eichmann the list of those whom destiny has struck is a long one.

We are not alone. All the communities of Israel and the world weep for the dead and struggle for our rights and our liberties . . . Do not lose courage. Remain strong and steadfast! The struggle for our rights and liberties continues!

The tract led to a public outcry, and arrests soon followed, mainly in Fez, but also in Meknes, Sefrou, Tangier and Casablanca – the major Jewish centers. We do not know how widespread these arrests were, yet it is certain that among those detained were people suspected of disseminating the tract. The reaction among Jews to the tract was mixed. There were those who were impressed by it. However, the suspicion of a community that lived in fear, led some to question its authenticity. Many argued that it was the work of provocateurs, that it could not have been done by Jews. Some believed it must have been the work of the French Deuxième Bureau psychological warfare unit, for reasons of its own. Some claimed it had been encouraged by adherents of the UNFP, the opposition party, which sought to provoke the Muhammad V/Hasan government and, thus, unfavorable press reaction in the outside world against the regime.<sup>64</sup>

Jewish community leaders were placed in a most embarrassing and difficult position. The *Conseil des Communautés* held a special meeting on 12 February and issued a communiqué denouncing the ‘the diffusion of tracts of unknown origin whose purpose is to divide and sow discord among Muslim and Jewish population’. The *Conseil* also seized the occasion to denounce the persistence of a press campaign hostile to the Jewish population and expressed ‘the will of Moroccan Jewry to continue to work for accomplishing the task of reconstruction of the country’.<sup>65</sup>

Distribution of the tract also gave rise to many fears. The day after the distribution of the tract there was one report that the Muslims in Marrakesh had decided to descend upon the *mellah*, out of anger at this provocation. In Casablanca, Jewish community leaders were worried enough to have five cars touring the Muslim quarters for a day or two to see whether the Muslims would react violently. One person associated with the UNFP asserted that Muslims had come to that party’s headquarters to ask what action should be taken against this Jewish provocation, and had had to be assuaged and calmed. In the *Istiqlal*, there was a feeling that action should be taken against Jews and, still according to this same source, these advocates of physical action, were calmed down only by the top party leaders. In the Moroccan situation, therefore, the tract was a dangerous weapon to use.<sup>66</sup>

Among those who correctly attributed the tract to Zionist groups there were also unfavorable reactions. The basic criticism was twofold: that it was dangerous and, even more, unnecessary. For never had Jewish opinion in Morocco been so favorable to emigration, and so understanding of the Zionist viewpoint, even among those Jews who had pressed most actively for integration. Police brutality, the anti-Zionist press campaign, and other factors had, in fact, provided the best pro-Zionist propaganda.

And the sinking of the *Pisces* had reinforced, not lowered, sentiments in this regard.<sup>67</sup>

If the series of events in Morocco had brought depression and shock they had, also, brought a new sense of dignity and determination to Jewish leadership. In the weeks following the Casablanca beatings, personal conflicts, and quarrels among Jewish leaders, though not forgotten, became subordinate to the need for cooperation in the face of the dangers to the community. The arrests following the distribution of the tract, which again served to underline Jewish insecurity, also served to reaffirm and harden the expression of Jewish dignity, almost out of desperation, as it were. There was reinforcement, too, of the growing sentiment that the situation could not become worse, and the Jews had to stand up and demand freedom of movement. Said one communal leader: 'it might be that some day, we will come to a Warsaw ghetto situation. But if we do, let it be for real things, not for something like a tract'.<sup>68</sup>

Mounting criticism from abroad – Europe, the US, and Israel, following the *Pisces* affair, placed the Moroccan government in a negative light, and the latter was now willing seriously to consider changing its policy. Jewish leaders met with Si M'Barek Bekkai, the Minister of the Interior, who informed them that instructions were being given to local authorities that no obstacles should be placed in the way of Jews seeking passports. He promised them an audience with the King.<sup>69</sup>

On 18 February 1961, King Muhammad V gave audience in his throne room to the same Jewish delegation – composed of David Amar (Secretary-General of the *Conseil*), Dr Léon Benzaquen, Sam Benazeraf, and David Azoulay; Jewish leaders of Fez and Meknes, and Marc Sabbah. The audience lasted a little more than half an hour. To this audience the delegation brought a memorandum in French, four pages long which consisted of the following:

- (1) A dignified pledge of allegiance to the King of Morocco describing the desire of the Jewish communities to live in harmony and work for building the country;
- (2) A request for unconditional and unrestricted freedom of movement, with a description of some of the difficulties that had been met in this regard. The delegation was careful to include the terms of the statement made by Bekkai, in order to get them on record;
- (3) A request that action be taken to stop the forcible abduction and conversion of Jewish girls to Islam.
- (4) A request that the Jewish communities and the *Conseil des Communautés Israélites* be given a new, fully legal status, suitable to independent Morocco.<sup>70</sup>

Muhammad V said that Bekkai's orders with regard to unconditional and unrestricted emigration were his orders, and that he was responsible for them and guaranteed them. He said that if Jews met with any difficulties they should immediately go to him. Indeed, he reproached them for not having come to him with their problems earlier. He said that if somebody

were to take a passport and then not come back to Morocco after four or five months, it would mean that he did not wish to stay in Morocco and that was the end of that. Regarding personal safety, Muhammad V said that he had not known of the jailing and beating of Jews, and that had he known, he personally would have gone to the prison to take them out. In this connection, he also asserted that whatever might be Morocco's external relations, it was more important that, internally, the people of Morocco should not be divided and that it was not Nasser who decided Moroccan internal affairs. When the King was told that Moroccan Jews in other countries had difficulties in getting their passports renewed, he stated that it was the business of Moroccan consuls to help his citizens and not to create difficulties for them, and that steps would be taken in this connection.<sup>71</sup>

On 24 February 1961, Bekkai announced that the Jews were free to settle in any country in the world except Israel. Morocco did not recognize Israel and Moroccan passports thus were not available for that country. Moroccans who went to Israel would lose their citizenship.<sup>72</sup> It was, of course, quite clear that, once in Europe, the Jews would probably choose Israel as their final destination.

During the same week that Jewish leaders met with the King and with Bekkai, the Coordinating Commission, the Israeli body comprising representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Israeli government, met to discuss developments in Morocco. Isser Harel, the head of the *Mossad* was present at the meeting. Golda Meir, the Foreign Minister, opened the session and pointed out that discussions with Morocco had been carried out for several years through diverse channels, via the WJC, and with the assistance of the American ambassador in Rabat. The Israeli government, she said, had for some time until the *Pisces* tragedy believed that, through quiet diplomacy, solutions would ensue. But this was no longer possible: international public opinion had to be awakened to the reality of Moroccan Jewry. Of course, there arose the issue of whether Israel should continue clandestine *aliyah* or halt it. Meir was strongly in favor of taking risks and engaging in underground operations.<sup>73</sup>

Meir expressed the opinion that everything possible had to be done to avert tragedies in the future. The *Pisces* was certainly a far cry from a suitable boat but it had transported Jews clandestinely out of Morocco eleven times before. Still, funds had to be made available for the purchase of better boats.<sup>74</sup>

Isser Harel was very pessimistic about the intentions of the Moroccan government. The Ibrahim government, he observed, had suppressed *aliyah* more brutally than the Bekkai and Balafrej governments had previously. The Muhammad V /Hasan government was not as liberal as had been expected. Not only had the king joined the pro-Nasser bandwagon but the restriction on Jewish rights remained intact. Muhammad V had realized late in 1960 or early in 1961 that he had made a mistake in closely identifying with the Nasser regime, but he did not know how to go about distancing himself from Egypt. Consequently, in 1961, Nasserism, the Arab league and anti-Jewish actions dominated the streets of urban Morocco.<sup>75</sup>

Harel further noted that several Jewish *Istiqlalists* and former ardent integrationists were now dissilusioned with the Moroccan government. In the past they had been enemies of *aliyah* and Israel, whereas in 1960–61, they were contributing substantially to pro-Zionist activity. The synagogues and Jewish community centers were becoming centers for Zionist activity, though carried out with the utmost discretion.

Even if the anti-Zionist atmosphere was evident in the high echelons of government and the cabinet, and the policy restricting emigration originated there, the implementation of the policy was in the hands of officials on lower levels of government, as well as the police. The Jews, therefore, felt most vulnerable when facing these forces. Harel described their plight at the hands of a branch of the Moroccan police:

One of the means for persecuting the Jews is the highway police. There is a special police force that patrols the roads. If they find Jews traveling on a bus, they force them off and send them home. If they find a Jewish family on the road, this is a sign that they are on their way to a departure point. There is no protection for these Jews . . . Our units from Casablanca move out [to the homes-ML] at two o'clock in the morning, enter the houses, and immediately leave. The whole procedure – beginning with registering candidates, getting them in shape, setting a date, delivering a passport, transporting them suddenly, because they are to come at the last moment – is all carried out in strict conspiratorial fashion. Afterwards, there is a problem of coordinating the means of departure. Both problems are as one – taking people out of the cities: from Casablanca, Meknes, or Fez, and bringing them to a certain destination point at the very moment that a ship or fishing boat is to arrive. This is an involved and very complicated activity. Very many have been arrested.<sup>76</sup>

Harel accorded much of the credit to local Moroccan Zionists. True, the elite of the underground and *aliyah* organizers were Israelis. Yet the main burden fell on local young Zionists some of whom had received self-defense training in Israel. They were the backbone of activities and some of them were imprisoned and tortured by the police when apprehended. Harel also did not underestimate the authorities' efforts aimed at neutralizing underground Zionist efforts:

At first we looked for the easier routes. The land route was less dangerous, not from the Moroccan vantage point, but from the standpoint of risk to life. We exhausted almost every possibility. We transported many thousands of Jews over the land route with counterfeit passports. They understood our evasions, issued additional decrees, cancelled exit permits, and placed army guard units on the land routes. I would like you to know that once Tangier was annexed to the Moroccan state . . . there was almost no land border left that we could cross. On the south was the desert. It was impossible to get from there to anywhere. The Spanish enclaves were left. But they were small enclaves with short borders. These borders were closed by the army.



Everything was directed against our activity. What was left was mainly maritime actions which was divided into two: one was taking Jews out over the Moroccan border and bringing them over to Gibraltar, that is, crossing the Mediterranean; the second way was smuggling them out in fishing boats and smugglers' boats from the Moroccan coast near an eclave or on the sea.<sup>77</sup>

Harel revealed that the Spaniards at Ceuta and Melilla were very helpful, particularly the Catholic religious functionaries, but also the political and administrative authorities. When asked at the session by Moshe Sharett if this was done with the knowledge of the Spanish government, Harel responded that this was definitely the case, even though Spanish-Israeli relations during the Franco era were officially strained.<sup>78</sup>

Shragai, who together with Harel, was the prime initiator of this clandestine *aliyah*, pointed out that a certain member of the Moroccan cabinet received \$600,000 at one time so that Jews could leave in large numbers. Although it is not clear exactly when this transaction was made, Shragai suggested that, in accordance with this 'understanding', as many as 7,000-8,000 Jews departed for Israel via Casablanca and Marseilles. They left quietly, the police were not there, and no one bothered to check their passports.<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, Shragai considered the Hasan – Easterman meeting of 11 August 1960, as a positive step toward the relaxation of measures against *aliyah*. Not totally discouraged, he argued before the Coordinating Commission that

Meanwhile, what happened happened and the negotiations have been interrupted. I don't mean that they have been cancelled; they have been interrupted. In any case, we are trying to go in this path. Nowadays, it is especially with the petty officials that it is hard to deal . . . .<sup>80</sup>

If we go back to the meetings between Muhammad V and Bekkai on the one hand, and the Moroccan Jewish delegation on the other, as well as the willingness on the part of the authorities to relax emigration restrictions in February-March 1961, we may ask what the primary factors were which, eventually, resulted in a change of policy? First, the vigorous press campaign which had placed that country in a negative light, and was followed by *démarches* made by many different countries. Second, Muhammad V himself may have – as Harel suggested – desired to check what he might have considered growing pro-Nasser influence. It was no secret that among the policemen who beat up Jews in Casablanca in January, 1961, there were many expressing strong pro-Nasser as well as anti-Jewish sentiments; and that the Casablanca action seems to have been taken without the knowledge of the central authorities. There were reports from Morocco that pro-Nasser feeling was not just something vague and general, but organized, with the pro-Nasserites having their own cadres, in a movement cutting across party lines. Hence, the King's actions aimed to demonstrate, as he told the Jewish delegation on 18 February that it was not Nasser who decided Moroccan internal policies.

Finally, the Moroccan government desired to get rid of a problem which, for it, was secondary in comparison with the many other difficult, fundamental problems facing it. According to an American Jewish Committee report,<sup>81</sup> the government had circulated among the local governors a questionnaire asking their views as to whether complete freedom of movement for Jews should be granted, and the majority had replied in the affirmative. This AJC report was confirmed by the Easterman – Hasan meeting of 1960, even prior to the sinking of the ‘Pisces’ in January 1961, which brought the whole question of Jewish emigration into the limelight.

Muhammad V died on 26 February 1961, and was succeeded the next month by Crown Prince Hasan. An agreement to permit the Jews to depart discreetly was made final in the latter half of 1961. We do not as yet have sufficient archival data to analyze and document the obstacles and challenges encountered by all parties concerned before then. What role did important local Jewish notables such as Sam Benazeraf play in encouraging the new King to hasten the process? What was the position of the WJC? How did Israel contribute to this process, most notably the role of Alex Gatmon, the *Mossad*’s man inside Morocco? What was Marcel Franco’s role? After all it was he who was partly instrumental in bringing the United HIAS Service back onto the scene (after its offices were closed down in 1959), the organization serving as a semi-legal cover for emigration from Morocco to Israel, starting in November 1961.

We do know, however, that Easterman held a conversation in October 1961 with a high-ranking Moroccan diplomat who was a close confidant of Hasan. The diplomat informed Easterman that the relaxation of restrictions on issuing passports – already evident during the summer of 1961 – resulted from the direct instructions of the King. The diplomat stated that this change of policy represented the king’s decision to carry out the promise which he, as Crown Prince, had given to Easterman in August 1960. The diplomat indicated that although the character and conservative background of the late King had made it difficult for him to consider the emigration matter objectively, Hasan was able to view it realistically.<sup>82</sup>

Be that as it may, at the end of October 1961, the United HIAS Service reopened its offices in Casablanca. Other offices were set up in Morocco’s major urban centers. They were staffed by Israelis, some of whom had been active during the clandestine *aliyah* phase. Also cooperating were local Moroccan Jews who assisted in the *aliyah* process. This development was possible owing to the institutional cooperation between the Israeli activists, possibly the *Mossad*, the Jewish Agency, and the HIAS. The operation for bringing Jews out of Morocco via Europe to Israel, mainly between 1961 and 1964, was known as ‘Operation Yakhin’.

During the second half of 1961, when rumors spread that the authorities would consider easing emigration restrictions, the UNFP’s *al-Tahrir* was as critical of such changes as the rest of the radical press, if not more so. The UNFP did not participate in the government formed by Hasan during the summer of 1961 (just as it had not joined Muhammad V’s government in May of 1960). It used its press organ and the emigration question to discredit the new regime and its supporters. In a major editorial on 16 December

1961, *al-Tahrir* reproached the government for authorizing emigration to Israel. It emphasized that the vast emigration movement no doubt aimed at reinforcing Israel and compromising the rights of the Palestine refugees whose country was occupied by the Zionists:

Has the Moroccan government modified its position with respect to Palestinian refugees? What must one therefore conclude when seeking the government's attitude towards authorizing the Jews to leave Morocco to go to a country considered as the enemy of the Arabs and Arabism? The government's attitude can only be considered as treason by the popular masses . . . One wonders whether the Moroccan government is not being forced by pressure from a foreign state whose interest it would be to see Morocco's doors open wide to let Zionist aims be achieved.<sup>83</sup>

In another editorial, *al-Tahrir* accused the authorities of tolerating the work of 'a certain organization' which was sponsoring the exodus of the Jews. This organization, the editorial stressed, enjoyed a spiritual authority enabling it to convince Moroccan Jews to leave the country and such an organization could only be a powerful Zionist movement, well organized within Morocco. The destination could only be Israel. All that had been said about Canada and other countries was false propaganda, because why should the Moroccan Jews sell their furniture and goods if they really wished to go to Canada which is a country where any citizen can go under normal conditions? It concluded that numerous Jews were leaving behind debts, not having paid their taxes and, consequently, this exodus constituted an act of treason toward Morocco and Moroccans.<sup>84</sup>

Despite several occasions when the authorities, under pressure from Cairo, the Arab League and the local nationalist press halted emigration, *aliyah* proceeded rather smoothly. Between 1961 and 1964, 80,000 Moroccan Jews emigrated to Israel (On the shift in Jewish population and emigration to Israel between November 1961 and 31 June 1963, see Table 1).

Moshe Yuval, one of the main activists who took part in 'Operation Yakhin', observed that the political climate in 1962 and 1963 was more relaxed for the Jews, despite the border conflict between Morocco and Algeria. However, this did not mean there were no dangers. He added:

Although nowadays, annihilation is not anticipated for the Jews in Morocco, God forbid, this country remains Muslim and basically unstable . . . A Jew might very easily get stabbed for any reason whatsoever. An incident that took place a month and a half ago is characteristic . . . The whole port [of Casablanca-ML] was saying that not only were the Jews leaving with all their baggage, but were also smuggling weapons. The next day the notorious [*al-Tahrir-ML*] wrote about it on the front page . . .<sup>85</sup>

Though there was a major wave of *aliyah* in 1961–63, the numbers dropped considerably between 1964 and the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In September 1966 there were four Israeli emissaries inside Morocco: Shmuel

TABLE 1  
CHANGES IN THE JEWISH MAP IN MOROCCO  
From 11.26.61 to 6.30.63

Region	Number of Jews 27.11.61	Number of Jews 31.6.63	Emigrants	
			Number of emigrants	% of emigrants
Ksar Es Souk	4,859	1,340	3,519	72.4
Agadir	2,810	1,147	1,663	59.2
Quarzazate	4,007	2,360	1,647	41.1
Marrakesh	16,818	8,542	8,276	49.2
Rabat	11,008	6,410	4,598	41.8
Tetuan	5,674	5,202	472	8.3
Oujda	2,655	2,069	586	22.1
Meknes	10,692	6,708	4,265	38.9
Tanger	6,246	5,402	844	13.5
Nador	72	72	-	-
Fes	12,194	7,976	4,227	34.7
Casablanca	86,149	56,794	29,355	34.1
Taza	713	647	66	9.3
Alhucemas	49	49	-	-
Ceuta			510	0.3
Total	163,946	104,718	60,028	36.6%

Source: Files of the Aliyah Department of the CZA, Jewish Agency in Europe

Sharon, Georges Barbie (responsible for *aliyah* from Casablanca, Rabat and the south), David Izowitzki responsible for *aliyah* from Fez, Meknes and Tangier), and Dan Kariv (responsible for special missions).<sup>86</sup>

The offices organizing *aliyah* still functioned in 1966, although their personnel was considerably reduced. The morale of the Israelis working inside Morocco was at a low ebb at the time for the following reasons. First, *aliyah* was unpopular, not because of governmental opposition (which did not then exist), but due to the news spread with the Jewish community about the severe economic problems plaguing Israel at the time. Second, the economic situation for the Jews was then favorable, even though this was not the case for their Muslim compatriots. Third, there was a certain

number of *yordim*, as well as Jewish 'tourists' encouraged by the emigration organizers to visit Israel before settling there, who had returned to Morocco discouraged and highly critical of Israeli society. As Hayim Halahmi, one of the main coordinators of Israeli activity in Morocco, through Paris, assessed the post-1964 developments:

Despite the dimensions of correspondence with Israel, this cannot change anything. We have already been acquainted with a number of social cases that refuse to immigrate to Israel, though we have emigration permits for them in hand. Even parents who have been requested by their children [in Israel-ML], refuse to emigrate. A new, even more worrisome phenomenon, is the application by family members to our office, offering to pay the expenses for return of parents or children. The question may be asked whether everything possible has been done in Israel to avoid having Jews leave the country. In the present economic situation, we will never be able to withstand the arguments of those who leave, and even less – the arguments of the tourists . . . The good reputation which we had in the past among the Jews no longer exists. It would seem that we must not appear here with a negative image, and that it would be best for us, therefore, to shut down and withdraw with dignity while we can still do so . . . The present situation reinforces the affinity of many for migration to Canada, and this without the hesitations that existed in the past.<sup>87</sup>

Several months later Halahmi suggested that whereas the majority of the Jews (some 200,000) had left for Israel since 1948, there were still 60,000 Jews nevertheless in Morocco who, in 1966, either considered Europe or Canada as their destination, or even worse, preferred to deepen their roots in Morocco:

We are witnessing Jewish resettlement. In the big cities, new businesses have been opened, fine restaurants, all owned by Jews.<sup>88</sup>

This situation continued until May 1967, but changed drastically during and following the June 1967 war.

#### SIX-DAY WAR AND AFTER: 1967–75

When the 1967 war broke out, Moroccan Jews were on the verge of panic. This situation continued for several weeks. That total panic was averted, that there were no major disasters for the Jews, can be attributed to the efforts of the government and the Palace who protected them.

Political forces both on the left (supported by the UNFP and the UMT) and the conservative right (the *Istiqlal* Party) actively sought to exploit the fact that the King protected the Jews. Externally, the Moroccan political establishment could not afford any Jewish praise, lest it seem that they were turning their backs on the Arab cause. The attacks on Israel were especially strong in neighboring Algeria, whose radio and press were quite vehemently anti-Israeli in tone, as much as Radio Cairo. Since

Moroccan–Algerian relations at the time were quite strained over a host of political issues, and as the King was being subjected to attacks by the Boumedienne regime, any overt sympathy on the part of the Palace and the government toward the Jews might cause serious problems for Hasan with both Algiers and Cairo.<sup>89</sup>

As we have seen and as was confirmed by other reports during and after the 1967 war, it appeared before May 1967 that the Jews were secure in Morocco. Not only were the days of mass emigration to Israel over and few were attracted there, but Moroccan Jews were also reluctant, temporarily at least, to settle in France, Canada and the USA. Early in 1967 the Jewish community was not only numerically stable but was in fact slightly augmented as a result of the traditionally high birth rate. Furthermore, unlike the times when restrictive measures were imposed, economically, and on emigration, the Jews during the mid-1960s enjoyed freedom of movement while economic conditions were more promising in Morocco than in France or Israel where the economies could not provide ample employment or business opportunities. This combined to make life in Morocco temporarily attractive, so that Jews did not wish to uproot themselves and commence anew elsewhere.<sup>90</sup>

The 1967 war and its aftermath introduced, temporarily, a new perspective. An increasing number of Jews seriously considered leaving Morocco once again. Their concern was aroused by several phenomena. There was the *Istiqlal*, emphasizing quasi-religious concepts, drawing much of its political strength from the rural population, that traditionally supported anti-Zionist campaigns. In June 1967, it seized upon Nasser's defeat and Israel's territorial gains to intensify anti-Jewish activity. It utilized classic anti-Semitic literature such as the alleged letter by Benjamin Franklin denouncing the Jews. The *Istiqlal* French-language organ, *L'Opinion*, encouraged the Muslim population to publicize black lists of Jewish-owned businesses and in fact enjoyed partial success in that campaign.

Then, there were the more leftist and intellectual forces who, in addition to their anti-Zionist and anti-Western campaign, were also opposed to the King. Represented by the UNFP and the UMT and dominant in certain professional and white-collar circles, they organized a mass meeting in Casablanca during the first week of the 1967 war and engaged in precisely the same sort of crowd-inciting themes as the *Istiqlal*, both against Israel and the USA. The leadership of the UNFP and UMT quietly sought to wrest statements from the Casablanca Jewish community leaders denouncing Israel and Zionism, and expressed clear displeasure when this was not forthcoming.<sup>91</sup>

Jewish fears were also heightened as a result of statements made in the Moroccan press, particularly by extremist conservative newspapers such as *al-Masa'*, that expressed virulent hatred against them. For instance, following the June War, *al-Masa'* claimed, in an editorial entitled 'From the People to the Authorities', that:

There are no Zionists, only Jews, no more no less. . . . We do not wish the authorities to harm the Jews. The are on the same footing with the



Muslims by the terms of the constitution. But we want the heads of the Jews if they betray the Muslims. . . . We do not want the authorities to carry on a war of destroying everything as did Hitler, for the Islamic religion forbids this; but in the name of this religion we demand that they punish severely those who betray this religion that protects them, this country that gives them abode and food, and shelters them from all fear. . . . We only want to say this common truth that all men in Morocco know. The feelings of the Jews do not change. They are upholding the little state [Israel] with money and none of them fail in this. We defy anybody among them to prove the contrary. The emigration campaign from Morocco is very clear and evident to all. We demand of the authorities that, on this occasion, they protect their citizens from the provocation and defiance of the Jews and that they should not guard the Jews when the latter organize receptions and festivals to express their joy [at Israel's victory] under the guard of the police protecting them.<sup>92</sup>

The major problem faced by the Jews of Morocco at the time was the economic boycott. Otherwise, despite the work of extremists and the political parties, there were few problems in Jewish-Muslim relations. True, Muslims often avoided Jews they knew in daily contacts, but in the schools Jewish and Muslim youths continued to study together.<sup>93</sup> Even insofar as the boycott was concerned, while Jewish merchants found their wares rejected, the boycott was only partial and in certain regions stronger and more effective than in others.<sup>94</sup> Jewish textile shop owners faced extremist Muslim youths who encouraged would-be customers not to buy from them,<sup>95</sup> but usually, ordinary Muslims did not take the initiative in organizing the boycott. Quite frequently, Muslims boycotted Jewish products because of pressure imposed by the extremists.

Jewish schools were kept open and Jewish institutions functioned normally, albeit often under police guard. The *Shavuot* holiday fell on 14 June as knowledge of the Israeli victory filtered in. The Moroccan government now encountered a serious dilemma. In the first place, it could not, and did not, permit any but the most innocuous publications from the Arab world to come into the country, and, it has been rumored, jammed outside Arab radio stations that expressed violent propaganda against Jews in general. Secondly, although placing certain Jewish institutions and residential quarters under guard, the government also sought, for the sake of normalcy, to let Jewish life go on despite the problems. Consequently, synagogues and Jewish clubs stayed open. Finally, while maintaining a precarious balance between protection of Jews and allowing them to enjoy freedom of movement, the authorities simultaneously had to act in a way that would not be construed by segments of the Muslim population as if the government were friendly toward the Jews. Therefore, the Jews were discreetly urged not to organize celebrations that might be interpreted as rejoicing in Nasser's defeat. Weddings and circumcisions were limited or postponed. Jews were adjured not to sing too loudly during normal Sabbath services at the synagogues.<sup>96</sup>

But, with several exceptions, Jews were free to leave Morocco. This did not mean, however, that they did not encounter difficulties at the hands of officials when seeking the necessary papers to emigrate. Even though orders were issued by the government to help or at least permit Jews to obtain the papers, the bureaucrats were frequently resentful and in no particular hurry to respond favorably. At the time, moreover, it was an open secret that the United HIAS Service (UHS) had been working in Morocco for several years in connection with emigration both to Israel and to other countries, such as Canada. Over 100,000 Jews had emigrated to Israel since 1961, through Jewish Agency efforts, and thousands to other lands. Movement on this scale had only been possible owing to the approval and cooperation of the authorities. Without preventing emigration of Jews, the Moroccan government suggested to the UHS, in May 1967, as the pre-war crisis was brewing, that it would be prudent to shut down operations inside Morocco, temporarily at least.<sup>97</sup>

Although we know today that between 1967 and 1971 the Jewish population in Morocco was reduced from 60,000 to 35,000, in June 1967 individual and unorganized movement from Morocco was not yet on a very large scale, even if it was greater than at the same period in 1965 and 1966. There were numerous Jews who prepared to travel to France, Spain and other countries for 'an early vacation'. Sometimes the head of the family sent his wife and children abroad and stayed behind alone to maintain his business. There were 'scouts' who went abroad to probe opportunities in various countries. In both Marseilles and Paris, Jewish welfare organizations reported that they had three to four times as many people as usual from Morocco approaching them, many of whom were 'scouts'. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan coast (and in Christian hands since the fifteenth century), were filled with Jews as were Madrid and Malaga. Moroccan Jews did not need visas for Spain.<sup>98</sup>

Emigration to Israel in 1968 and 1969 reached approximately 5,000 per year and dropped to 200–250 per month in 1970. HIAS was still operating inside Morocco and, according to Abe Loskove the AJDC-Morocco director, while the closing down of its offices appeared imminent in 1967, this was not carried out<sup>99</sup>. Moreover, by 1968 there was relative calm in the country. In spite of the anti-Israel campaign by press, radio and television, there were few overtly anti-Jewish incidents. A brutal exception was a knife attack, not fatal, on two elderly Jews in northern Morocco while the Chief Rabbi of Tangier also received non-fatal stab-wounds. The boycott of Jewish businesses instituted in 1967 had dried up. Unemployment in the country remained high in 1968–1969 as in previous years, and both government and private employers were reluctant to take on Jewish staff. This attitude was largely due to justified fears that Jewish employees were likely to leave Morocco and their jobs before they had been trained.<sup>100</sup>

The Israeli raid on the Beirut airport (December 1968), the shooting down by Israel of Egyptian fighter jets during the 1969 War of Attrition, and the El-Aqsa Mosque affair were reported, distorted and exaggerated in the Moroccan press. The Arab Summit meeting on the El-Aqsa fire took place in Rabat. Television provided propaganda coverage of Israelis

torturing Arab men, women and children, causing some panic among the Jews. However, the government took precautionary measures and stationed police guards in front of the large synagogues, thus preventing incidents.<sup>101</sup>

Jewish observers make the point that, given the authorities' alertness on the Jews behalf at times of crisis, the Jews, after 1970, reconsidered staying and postponed emigration to other lands. The leaders of the AIU and French Jewry attempted to emphasize the importance of some Jewish presence in Morocco. They indicated that the Moroccan government provided subsidies for the *Ittihad* schools and thus were encouraging the Jews to remain in Morocco. The leaders of the AIU pointed out in 1970 that, with 40,000 Jews remaining in the country, emigration 'ne se fera pas "overnight"'.<sup>102</sup> Cassin, still president of the AIU in 1970, went as far as to suggest that the presence of Jews in Morocco was vital for future rapprochement between Israel and Morocco:

Il faut naturellement penser qu'Israël a intérêt à avoir des populations nouvelles, mais il n'a pas intérêt à ce que tout soit rompu. Car quand tout aura été rompu, qu'on voudrait recoller les morceaux, qu'on voudrait réintroduire des rapports entre Israël et le Maroc, s'il n'y a plus des juifs au Maroc ce sera très long, très difficile. Tant qu'il y a un noyau, c'est notre devoir à nous, je ne dis pas d'imposer la conservation, mais de ne rien faire qui puisse nuire à cette conservation. . . .<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, *aliyah* or emigration to countries other than Israel could not be carried out overnight. Cassin's reasons for the need for continuation of a Jewish community in Morocco might have provoked arguments and disagreement at the time, but it was unrealistic to expect it to disappear abruptly following the events of the late 1960s. Besides, the high natural birth rate of the Moroccan Jewish community prevented total self-liquidation.

Until 10 June 1971, the country enjoyed relative tranquillity and the Palace provided ample protection to the Jews. This was reinforced by an expanding economy while the Jewish elite nourished a buoyant optimism. Massive unemployment, corruption, abject poverty, and the deep frustration of the rising generation seemed to evoke little anxiety among Jews so long as the government demonstrated strength and determination to suppress expressions of discontent.

On 10 June 1971, forces hostile to Hasan within the military attempted an unsuccessful *coup d'état*. For the Jews, popularly identified with the Palace, this was a difficult period. The president of the *Conseil des Communautés*, David Amar, hurriedly left the country, along with the Secretary-General of the Casablanca community and several other notables.<sup>104</sup> It appears that the 35,000 Jews remaining weathered many crises and maintained their faith in the King. No one expected a sudden mass emigration but merely a gradual self-liquidation.

During the summer of 1972, a second attempt was made to overthrow Hasan, but despite some anxiety there was no major panic in the Jewish

TABLE 2

Comparative Jewish School Enrollment in Morocco: 1965 to 1969<sup>a</sup>

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Nov. 1965</u>	<u>Nov. 1966</u>	<u>Nov. 1967</u>	<u>Jan-Feb 1968</u>	<u>June 1968</u>	<u>Oct 1968</u>	<u>Mar. 1969</u>	<u>Reduction</u>	
								<u>Nov. 1965</u>	<u>March 1969</u>
<u>AIU (Ittihad)<sup>b</sup></u>	9,221	9,291	8,158	7,656	7,140	6,786	6,683		2,538
<u>OTZAR HATORAH<sup>c</sup></u>	4,666	4,637	4,277	3,774	3,510	3,531	3,431		1,235
<u>Lubavitch</u>	1,299	1,384	1,350	1,256	1,013	900	864		435
<u>Total</u>	15,186	15,312	13,785	12,686	11,663	11,217	10,978		4,208

a The AIU schools in some instances included non-Jewish pupils who were not included in the above tabulation.  
b The figures for the AIU included the enrollment in ORT where the AIU provided Jewish and general education through its teachers.  
c The enrollments contained duplications. for example, some pupils attending the AIU during the day, also frequented the Otzar Hatorah schools in the afternoon.

\* Statistics taken form report by Jack J. Diamond to Samuel L. Haber, 3 September 1969, AJDC Archives, 401A/AIU Files

community.<sup>105</sup> The same held true during and after the October 1973 Middle East War in which Moroccan Muslim volunteers took an active part.

However, as in the past, despite the continued presence of an organized community, Moroccan Jewry was moving slowly but definitely toward liquidation. If Jewish school enrollment was the best yardstick before 1970 for confirming this trend (See table 2), this remained very much the case during the early 1970s. There was a decrease of 15 per cent in the enrollment of Jewish day schools between October 1972 and October 1973. There was further decrease of about five per cent by March 1974,<sup>106</sup> although in 1975 there was temporarily, hardly any decrease.

By the early 1970s an increasing number of Jewish families in Morocco were interested in joining their relatives overseas. Each family had by then more members outside Morocco than inside. Two-thousand Jews left for Israel in 1973 and a similar number during the first quarter of 1974. A larger number left for Canada, Latin America, France, and elsewhere. The United HIAS Service was still active but its role was now more directed toward assisting emigration to countries other than Israel.<sup>107</sup> Once again, what enabled the Jewish community to persist, despite emigration, was the determination of some of Jews to remain. One of the main reasons was that the anti-Israel propaganda of October 1973 had ceased. The mass media no longer published chilling stories of Israeli cruelties. This improvement made Jews feel less threatened. Furthermore, discouraging letters from Israel contributed to their hesitation to uproot themselves. Finally, total self-liquidation may have also been impossible owing to the large pieces of property that the local communities still owned in 1974–75. All this property, worth many millions of dollars, was registered with the Ministry of the Interior. The proceeds of a sale had to be kept in cash in a bank or reinvested in other communal property. They could not be used for any other purpose or transferred to banking establishments abroad.<sup>108</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

According to Jewish observers of the Moroccan Jewish scene it seemed that in the period 1975–77, the Jews were not planning to evacuate Morocco in the immediate future. Their semi-secure feeling was strengthened by developments in the Middle East, especially by Sadat's visit to Israel and (at the time) King Hasan's support of Sadat's policy. There was greater confidence, sometimes exaggerated, in the future of the Jewish community of Morocco.<sup>109</sup> This observation is only partly accurate, for it does not relate to the decline of economic prospects *since* the mid-1970s.

True, there had been considerable fluctuation over the years in Jewish emigration. From 1954 to 1956, *aliyah* (in particular) had been massive. This was not the case during the five years which followed, not because of less desire on the Jews' part to leave but, rather, owing to Morocco's policies in this regard. The Jews' determination to leave was certainly obvious during the years 1961–64. By then, the community had lost two-thirds of its original numerical strength to Israel since 1949. This does

not include emigration to countries other than Israel. It is clear, then, that very many Jews, well over two-thirds, either demonstrated profound attachment to Israel over the years and/or left for that country and other places owing to political circumstances (before 1964) as well as social and economic hardships.

However, even the more gradual emigration pace of the post-1964 period did not signify the end of the self-liquidation process. It was simply slower and more to countries other than Israel, but, none the less, a definite trend toward communal self-liquidation. In 1976–77 there were still 18,000 Jews left in Morocco as compared with only about 8,000 in 1987. Jewish schools were closed down or combined owing to empty classrooms. Therefore, on the one hand, the community-sponsored *Em Habanim* schools closed down whereas the AIU (*Ittihad*) and *Otzar Hatorah* schools in several urban centers merged – with the AIU offering general education while *Otzar Hatorah* religious teaching. The Lubavitcher schools in the *bled* were closed before the mid-1970s (in fact long before), since the Jewish *bled* had been evacuated by the ‘Operation Yakhin’ of 1961–64.

Even the atmosphere of greater political security after the June 1967 war, the suppression of *coups d'état* in 1971–72, and the Jews' ability to ride out the rough storm of anti-Israel sentiment in October 1973, did not stop the self-liquidation process. This was because, during the 1970s, Canada increasingly became an economically more desirable alternative than Israel or France, while in Morocco, Jews sometimes encountered economic difficulties. Thus, for example, in 1975–77 the official cost of living increases were moderate, but this did not reflect the real situation in the country. Basic food items, such as bread, tea and sugar, were heavily subsidized by the government to keep prices artificially low. But vegetables, meat, and oil were beyond the means of salaried families, Jewish and Muslim. Some Jewish businessmen were making large profits but most Jews were still salaried employees, who, at the time, barely managed to buy food, clothing and pay the rent. They were often unable to pay rent increases, while young couples could not get married because even one-room apartments in Casablanca or Fez were too expensive. Those who could leave for Canada with or without the assistance of the HIAS did so. Others remained simply because they had not yet taken the initiative to leave.<sup>110</sup> This situation was in complete contrast to the more promising economic trend of 1965–73.

It does seem, then, that in post-1956 Morocco, the Jews suffered from instability, and from the constant fluctuation of the economic and political situations.

Government policy vis-à-vis Jewish emigration to Israel up to 1961 is a subject of central importance which requires further clarification. When Morocco set out to restrict individual as well as group emigration (in 1957–58), there were no *official* announcements made. When approached by the WJC about this problem, Moroccan officials either denied that Jews were refused passports or promised to look into these ‘administrative’ problems. Restrictions on large- and small-scale emigration, mainly to Israel, were clearly the result of internal nationalist pressure as well as external



pressure originating from Arab League sources. It could well be argued that Muhammad V and his governments (up to his death in February 1961) did not have the courage – as his son the pro-Western Hasan had in late 1961, or as Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia had – to allow emigration to resume. But support for the Arab league alone cannot account for Morocco's overall emigration policy. Internal political upheaval during the middle and late 1950s meant that there was not one unified force willing or able to take the emigration issue seriously. The successive Moroccan governments between 1956 and 1961 did not speak with one voice over a variety of issues, some of which were far more important to Morocco than Jewish emigration. Finally, whereas in Nasser's Egypt, Jews and other minorities were expelled or encouraged to leave in 1956–57 and subsequently as part of the *national homogeneity* campaign, Moroccan politicians frequently spoke of *national heterogeneity*, even though Moroccan Jewry was often portrayed in the local press as disloyal and was becoming isolated from Moroccan society on various levels. The Jews were prevented from choosing the emigration alternative until 1961, because the Moroccan authorities expected them to participate in nation-building, to invest their capital in Morocco and not in Israel.

#### NOTES

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