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KING AND PEOPLE IN MOROCCO, 1950-1959: U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT RECORDS ON THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF MOROCCO



Morocco's strategic location has shaped its history. After gaining independence in 1956, Morocco made great strides toward economic and political liberalization. The sultan Muhammad V, ruling his newly independent nation, proclaimed his intention of turning it into a constitutional monarchy. His first act was to transform himself into a monarch and assume the title of king. The Moroccan government undertook a number of economic, social, and political reforms, including the drafting of a constitution.

Date Range: 1950-1959

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Source Library: U.S. National Archives

Detailed Description:

Morocco's strategic location has shaped its history. Its location and resources led to early competition among European powers in Africa, culminating in the establishment of a French protectorate over Morocco.

Nationalist political parties, which took shape under the French protectorate, began a strong campaign for independence after World War II. Declarations such as the Atlantic Charter, served as a basis for the independence movement. A manifesto of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party in 1944 was one of the earliest public demands for independence. That party subsequently provided most of the leadership for the nationalist movement and remains a strong political party.

In 1953, France exiled the highly respected Sultan Mohammed V and replaced him with the unpopular Mohammed Ben Aarafa. Ben Aarafa's reign was widely perceived as illegitimate, and sparked active opposition, particularly a reign of terrorism, followed by an armed uprising in 1955. France allowed Mohammed V to return in 1955, and by 1956, Morocco regained its independence. After gaining independence, Morocco made great strides toward economic and political liberalization. The sultan Muhammad V, ruling his newly independent nation, proclaimed his intention of turning it into a constitutional monarchy. His first act was to transform himself into a monarch and assume the title of king. The Moroccan government

undertook a number of economic, social, and political reforms, including the drafting of a constitution.

Economically, Morocco has faced the problems typical of developing countries - restraining government spending, reducing constraints on private financial activity and foreign trade, and achieving sustainable economic growth.

There is essential and unique documentation on a wide variety of topics relating to Moroccan internal affairs:

U.S. support for Nationalists

Istiqlal Party terrorism

Arab League's anti-French attitude

French exchange controls in Morocco

French settler concerns of spread of Algerian civil war

Pan-Arabism

Berber support of French administration and army

Installation of French-puppet Sultan

Economic and financial reforms

Exodus of Moroccan Jewry

Islamic society and Berberism

Decolonization

Development of the agricultural sector

Industrial development

Immigration and emigration

Development of the textile industry

Foreign trade and investment

Marshall aid to Morocco

Historical Description

Nationalist Movement

During World War II, the badly divided nationalist movement became more cohesive, and informed Moroccans dared to consider the real possibility of political change in the postwar era. However, the nationalists were disappointed in their belief that the Allied victory in Morocco would pave the way for independence. In January 1944, the Moroccan

Istiqlal (Independence) Party released a manifesto demanding full independence, national reunification, and a democratic constitution. The sultan had approved the manifesto before its submission to the French resident general, who answered that no basic change in the protectorate status was being considered. The general sympathy of the sultan for the nationalists had become evident by the end of the war, although he still hoped to see complete independence achieved gradually. By contrast, the Residency, supported by French economic interests and vigorously backed by most of the colons, adamantly refused to consider even reforms short of independence. Official intransigence contributed to increased animosity between the nationalists and the colons and gradually widened the split between the sultan and the resident general.

In December 1952, a riot broke out in Casablanca over the murder of a Tunisian labor leader; this event marked a watershed in relations between Moroccan political parties and French authorities. In the aftermath of the rioting, the residency outlawed the new Moroccan Communist Party and the Istiqlal. In 1953 France exiled the popular Sultan Mohammed V to Madagascar. Mohammed V's deposition enraged not only the nationalists but also all those who recognized the sultan as the religious leader of the country. Two years later, faced with a united Moroccan demand for the sultan's return, rising violence in Morocco, and the deteriorating situation in Algeria, the French government brought Mohammed V back to Morocco.

Moroccan Independence

In late 1955, Mohammed V successfully negotiated the gradual restoration of Moroccan independence within a framework of French-Moroccan interdependence. The sultan agreed to institute reforms that would transform Morocco into a constitutional monarchy with a democratic form of government. In February 1956, Morocco acquired limited home rule. Further negotiations for full independence culminated in the French-Moroccan Agreement signed in Paris on March 2, 1956. The abolition of the Spanish protectorate and the recognition of Moroccan independence by Spain were negotiated separately and made final in the Joint Declaration of April 1956. Later that year, Morocco regained control over Tangier.

In the months that followed independence, Mohammed V proceeded to build a modern governmental structure under a constitutional monarchy in which the sultan would exercise an active political role. He acted cautiously, having no intention of permitting more radical elements in the nationalist movement to overthrow the established order. He was also intent on preventing the Istiqlal from consolidating its control and establishing a single-party state. In August 1957, Mohammed V assumed the title of king.

U.S. State Department Central Classified Files

The U.S. State Department Central Classified Files are the definitive source of American diplomatic reporting on political, military, social, and economic developments throughout the world in the twentieth century.

This collection of U.S. State Department Central Classified Files relating to internal and foreign affairs contain a wide range of materials from U.S. diplomats, including:

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- studies and statistics on socioeconomic matters
- interviews and minutes of meetings with foreign government officials
- court proceedings and other legal documents
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- voluminous reports and translations from foreign journals and newspapers
- countless translations of high-level foreign government documents, including speeches, memoranda, official reports, and transcripts of political meetings and assemblies

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- religion
- culture
- trade
- industry
- foreign relations

- natural resources

On these subjects and many more, the Central Classified Files offer authoritative, in-depth, and timely documentation and analysis that cannot be matched.

Publisher's Note: This collection comprises, in their entirety, the Primary Source Media microfilm collections entitled *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs, Morocco, 1950-1954*; and *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs, Morocco, 1955-1959*.