

Africa Report by Jacques Cheminade

Morocco: Who are the King's enemies?

If the Anglo-Americans are out to wreck Franco-Moroccan friendship, France's best bet is to help "green the desert."

The riots which have broken out in Fez and several other Moroccan cities did not occur by accident; they are part of a vast campaign aimed at destabilizing the regime. The same confluence of interests which, a decade ago, brought down the Shah of Iran, is today trying to cause the fall of King Hassan II, and for very similar reasons.

Morocco is a country where the royal power has undertaken structural reforms which have allowed, under difficult conditions, a certain economic development and especially the formation of a class of engineers, technicians, and skilled workers who form the surest basis for coming prosperity. It is this success, relative but real, that has Morocco and its king a target—not the violation of human rights or the lack of democracy, which are far less shocking than in most African lands.

In fact, the loudest voices against the King are coming from outside Morocco. One enemy is Paris-based: Gilles Perrault, the author of *Red Orchestra*, who has always faithfully served the communist cause and constantly tried to destroy French intelligence, and his communist and leftist friends. The other is the hostile reports of Amnesty International, an organization which pretends to defend civic freedoms everywhere except in Britain and the United States. This combination leaves familiar pawprints, for anyone who followed the Shah's demise up close, or the attacks, in his day, against General de Gaulle. It entails the tactical alliance of all those who cannot stomach a strong independent regime outside their direct control.

Could the anti-Hassan riots be a CIA operation to hurt Morocco and France, as was said of the kidnaping and disappearance of Moroccan nationalist leader Ben Barka in France in 1965? This may seem to stretch credulity. The Americans have long boosted the King's cause, and Henry Kissinger is even a member of the Moroccan Royal Academy! But it would not be the first time that Washington sacrificed a friend who had become too independent (remember the Shah). In tandem, from Moscow's "international department," another hand would appear—that of phony friendship.

The King of Morocco might play an independent role in the Persian Gulf crisis and become a factor for peace—a peace which is not desired by the Anglo-Americans, if it means their departure. What they want, war or no war, is to stay in the Persian Gulf for a long time, to control oil and petrodollars. Hence it is natural to lend a helping hand to the "Parisian" operation of Gilles Perrault to overthrow Hassan II, with the included result of provoking a French-Moroccan brouhaha, between two troublesome "allies."

French President François Mitterrand recently dismissed this scenario as "drugstore fiction." But then, how would one explain the fact that Morocco's current problems stem from Anglo-American financial policy? If running amok is popular in Fez right now, it is because of the International Monetary Fund's decisions, which are remote-controlled from London and Washington. It was the IMF-demanded "adjustments," involving ending

subsidies on basic consumer needs, which set off the discontent. The economic gloom was worsened by the bad sales of Morocco's two biggest exports, phosphates and citrus fruits. In Fez, artisans were hit very hard by the crisis, while part of the rural population of Rif has circled the city with shantytowns.

Hassan II reacted promptly. He announced on Jan. 2 a 15% increase in the minimum wage, and the creation of jobs through the Council on Youth and the Future, composed of members of the government, business, and representatives of all the political and trade union tendencies. He also absolved the CDT and UGTM—the labor confederations, which had made the call for a general strike—of blame for the riots, and thus isolated the provocateurs who, witnesses say, were not Islamic fundamentalists. He accused, instead, drug traffickers and criminals, thus singling out the local part of the problem.

The only thing which can really restabilize Morocco is international economic recovery. The efforts of Michel Vauzelle, the chairman of the French National Assembly's foreign affairs commission, to shape a Mediterranean policy of mutual development are, in that sense, an important first step.

To go any further would mean to undertake a "grand design" capable of giving a horizon to what Hassan II began with his "green market." France, in its own interest and Morocco's, has an opportunity to seize here. What better basis for Franco-Moroccan reconciliation, beyond a joint, coordinated action for peace in the Gulf, than to start creating the "green band" once imagined by Hassan II to roll back the Sahara? France has the nuclear power, which could rapidly supply enough energy to extract the water that will "green the desert."