

16 april 1959

U 4128/59 - C 46 - P1/PS9.

PH 9696/117

GEHEIM

Land: Sino-Sowjet Blok/Noord-Afrika.

Onderwerp: Sino-Soviet Bloc activity in Tunisia, Morocco,
and Algeria.

Referenties:

Datum van
waarneming: Eind maart 1959.

Bron: Van bevriende zijde.

Opmerkingen:

Verzonden aan: de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken.

Aan Zijne Excellentie Prof. Dr L.J.M. BEEL
Minister-President

Plein 1813 no. 4

'S-GRAVENHAGE.

16 April 1959

U 4120/59 - C46 - P. 1/159

REVIEW: SINO-SOVIET BLOC ACTIVITY IN
TUNISIA, MOROCCO, AND ALGERIA

GEHEIM

General Bloc Policy: The over-all aims of Sino-Soviet bloc policy in North Africa continue to be disruption of Western interests, establishment and expansion of lasting political and economic relationships, and encouragement of an anti-Western neutralist posture in the area. In the last six months, the bloc has enlarged the modest scope of its trade relations. Soviet First Deputy Premier Mikoyan declared in January that the USSR, without attaching political strings, would be "always disposed to study" any Tunisian requests for economic development loans. Moscow scored an initial break-through in the political field by exchanging ambassadors with Morocco, and Morocco has also given agreement for a Chinese Communist ambassador, who apparently will be a Chinese Moslem. Soviet propaganda throughout the period called for immediate American withdrawal from air bases in Morocco.

The bloc has furnished political and propaganda support for the Algerian provisional government established in Cairo in September, but Moscow and the European satellites, eager to preserve good relations with France, so far have stopped short of recognition. China and the Asian satellites, on the other hand, have recognized the provisional government. The bloc is interested in stimulating anti-Westernism and nationalist regionalism throughout North Africa, and bloc governmental activities in this regard often parallel those of the UAR.

Diplomatic Activity: The Soviet Embassy in Rabat, opened in October and is the only bloc diplomatic post in the area. In February Morocco named an ambassador to Moscow. The USSR and Czechoslovakia maintain trade missions in Tunis, and the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have trade missions in Casablanca. Soviet officials in Rabat have moved quickly to make initial contacts with Moroccan society. The Polish trade mission in Casablanca, and to a lesser extent the Soviet and Czech missions there, are actively expanding social and propaganda activities and efforts to promote trade. Tunisia is committed in principle to an eventual diplomatic exchange with both the USSR and Communist China.

Economic Activity: In recent months the bloc has intensified its efforts to increase commerce with North Africa, but trade with the bloc continues to be only a small fraction of the total foreign trade of Tunisia and Morocco. Bloc commerce constitutes about 4 percent of Morocco's total trade, somewhat over 2 percent of Tunisia's total trade, and one percent of Algeria's trade carried on within the French economic framework.

If recently concluded agreements between Morocco and bloc countries are fully implemented, a substantial increase in the present small amount of trade will occur in 1959. Agreements with Communist China and Czechoslovakia call for an increase

of roughly 100 percent in trade turnover. In Tunisia, recent trade accords, especially those with the USSR and Communist China, foreshadow a considerable increase in 1959. The agreement with China calls for \$2,000,000 in trade each way compared with total exchanges in 1957 of only \$600,000. Both the Casablanca and Tunis trade fairs continue to be focal points for bloc promotional activities. The USSR will exhibit for the first time at the Casablanca trade fair in April.

Morocco has experienced great difficulty in its trade with Peiping because of China's unwillingness or inability to absorb Morocco's traditional agricultural exports. In 1958 China's large exports of green tea to Morocco were balanced by Chinese imports from France. A Chinese trade delegation recently spent three months in Rabat and worked out a series of triangular trade transactions as well as Chinese purchases of phosphates in an effort to correct this imbalance.

There have been unconfirmed reports of Soviet and Czech economic aid offers to Morocco and Tunisia, but to date there has been no official response by either government. The USSR has reportedly expressed interest in Morocco's agricultural development scheme and has offered specific aid.

Cultural and Propaganda Activity: Peiping installed a New China News Agency representative and opened information offices in Rabat in November, immediately following the Moroccan-Chinese agreement in principle to establish diplomatic relations. In Tunisia, the USSR and Czechoslovakia are the most active bloc countries in local propaganda directed at the press and theaters. The USSR has recently attempted direct mailing operations; it has provided a free and unsolicited supply of Arabic-language literature to Tunisia's largest Arab book wholesaler. However, there appears to be no widespread public distribution of bloc publications.

Subversive Activity: The Tunisian and Moroccan Communist parties have apparently been unable to penetrate the nationalist movements and dominate political parties which they support publicly. Dominant nationalists still regard the Communist parties as foreign organizations, since party leadership has been in the past predominantly European. Communist parties in all three areas have, however, substantially "Arabized" themselves in the last several years. In Tunisia, there are about 300 hard-core Communists in Morocco, where the party is formally illegal but tolerated, less than a thousand; and in Algeria, where it is also illegal, between 5,000 and 10,000. Several higher level Moroccan government officials, including the director of mines, are Communists. In addition a considerable portion of the French teachers supplied to both Tunisia and Morocco are Communists or Communist sympathizers, and this is a potentially serious source of Communist influence.

It is probable that, with the establishment of the Soviet Embassy in Rabat, North African Communists may receive some degree of direct guidance. The three parties are apparently in consultation with each other on regional questions, and they have maintained covert contacts with a number of European Communist parties, especially those in Italy, France, and Belgium. Direct contact with Moscow through visits of party leaders is the mechanism for basic guidance.

Reaction to Bloc Activities: The governments of Morocco and Tunisia have cautiously accepted a wider measure of bloc relations, but they have been slow to do so and they have rejected many bloc initiatives. Both are sensitive to the dangers posed by a growth in bloc influence. Their security services tend to discount the potential of local Communists, and the services' concern over UAR, French, and, especially in Tunisia, Algerian activities tend to push the Communist question into the background. Given their pre-occupation with organizational and political questions and their present capabilities, the security services probably could not cope effectively with substantial Communist subversive operations.

President Bourguiba has used the threat of limited arms procurement from the bloc to induce Western aid. Although the Tunisian Government indicated in July that it would exchange ambassadors with both Moscow and Peiping, the government has ignored Soviet overtures and it has apparently dropped the question for the time being.

Both Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia advocate a foreign policy of "non-dependence" which the bloc, for reasons of its own, has so far heartily endorsed. Both governments, particularly Tunisia, tend to be Western oriented and to be proud of their veneer of French culture. Political factions in both countries advocating disengagement from the West were apparently strengthened in 1958 by rising North African dissatisfaction over the continuing war with Algeria, Western failure to meet Tunisian arms demands, and the continued presence of American, French, and Spanish bases in Morocco.

The Algerian rebels' contacts with the bloc, primarily made through Cairo, but also through Bengasi, have increased during the past year. The Algerians have attended international Communist-front meetings and a delegation visited both Moscow and Peiping. Both Morocco and Tunisia continue to seek to influence the provisional government along moderate lines, but their concern over foreign influences on the movement is directed at the UAR rather than the bloc.

The Outlook: The bloc will probably continue to make slow progress in broadening its political and economic relationships with North Africa and, if circumstances permit, it will move on into the field of economic aid. Trade turnover between Morocco and Tunisia and the bloc will probably increase but will remain within the range of the present small percentages. Future bloc efforts will continue to be affected to a large degree by the course of the Algerian war and by the periodic crises that recur in France's relations with Tunisia and Morocco. The Tunisian and Moroccan governments would probably be inclined to accept bloc economic assistance to supplement American, other Western, and UN aid.

North African Communist parties have improved somewhat their effectiveness as they have "Arabized" themselves and have continued to identify themselves with the cause of national independence. Any significant extension of their influence in domestic policy depends on the extent to which the position of the leading conservative political figures is further eroded by internal crises or by the lack of visible gains resulting from cooperation with the West.