

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATIVE PROBLEM

All textbooks and authorities consulted before touring the area insisted that the Pan-Arab movement and all its connotations as regards dislike of the European and contempt for his methods started in the East and filtered down the farther west it came. It was axiomatic with such authorities that Tunisia was the hot-bed of unrest as far as French North Africa was concerned, that it became less grave in Algeria, and was practically non-existent in Morocco.

In personal experience, the writer found that every Algerian native invariably spit when he saw a European. At first this was taken to be an Arab custom, indulged in even in the absence of Europeans. After spending some time in Tunisia and Morocco, however, it can be unqualifiedly stated that the indigeneous population in those two areas do not spit, ergo either the Algerian native spits more or else he spits only in the presence of the European.

The second lesson was imparted by an RAF Security officer, speaking perfect Arabic, who had been in the country three years. His main function was to study the attitude of the native population, and take measures as might be necessary if unrest became a military problem. His very unreserved opinion was that the native in Algeria felt himself inferior to his brethren in Tunisia and Morocco because he did not have his own forms of government, was incorporated into the French state, but yet did not have rights of citizenship therein.

His argument was that the French had an interest in keeping separate the Moslem populations in the three areas of North Africa, and to this end had done three things:

(a) The Moslems in Morocco and Tunisia feel that they are protected by the forms of self-government left them through the Cherif and the Bey respectively. It has even been suggested by other sources that the French fairly often place before these native authorities measures which, being completely unacceptable, will not fail to obtain a veto, in order that the "Rulers" may be more surely confirmed in his own importance.

(b) The Moslem in Algeria is given a salary which varies from 33 to 100 percent higher than that of his neighbours. Although goods are not forthcoming upon which these high salaries may be spent, this results only in higher prices economically, but politically, it results in a supreme contempt of the Algerian brotherhood by his neighbours. This in itself keeps the various native elements apart.