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THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF TANGIER

A Letter from Charles F. Gallagher

Tangier
September 4, 1956

The American School of Tangier, the only privately-run American educational institution in North Africa, is a unique example of American pedagogical theories in this part of the Arab world. It is less a school for Americans in Tangier than it is an American school for all religions, races, and classes of the city, where the American approach to the problems of youth and education can be applied on an international basis.

The School itself is still in short pants, having been founded in 1950 by a group of American citizens of Tangier and a number of protégés (a class of honorary citizens created by the early capitulatory treaties with Morocco), with an assist from officials of the American Legation in this city. They raised sufficient funds to maintain the School for two years, and the United States government came in with a timely grant of \$10,000 to pay the salary of an American principal and cover part of the cost of books and supplies purchased in the United States. A private house in a residential area was rented, remodeled, and furnished; it served until 1953 when the School, having outgrown the original building, moved to a new site. The initial teacher problem was met by volunteer co-operation and good luck, and willing and capable applicants were found within the community from among American, Spanish, British, and Moroccan groups.

The students are even more diverse in origin than the staff, and they represent a fitting cross section of this multilingual cross-roads city. This year (1955-56) there were 205 students enrolled in all, of whom 47 were American and 67 spoke English as their primary language. Moroccans properly led all nationalities with 75 students, and there were 36 Spanish, 4 French, 3 Yugoslavs, with a scattering of Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Swedish, Finnish, and German children.

These figures show more than any description that the American School, although American in name, in principles, and in curriculum, is an undertaking meant to benefit the entire community instead of one privileged group. But the students, who come from these varying backgrounds, do not learn how to become "Americans" or lead the lives that students in the United States do; rather they are taught to develop their own abilities and to find, through an

American education, a way of bringing these abilities to bear on the problems of their own community.

CURRICULUM

The course of study at the School is guided by this general principle of American education: that the school must "meet the needs of the child in his community." The concepts of democracy and personal freedom are brought to the child in English through the teaching of American history, literature, music, and art. The course of study is generally parallel to that outlined in the Syllabus of Elementary Education of the State of Pennsylvania.

Instruction is currently given in a kindergarten and the eight grades of primary school. Starting this fall one year of secondary school will be added each year until by 1960 the first high-school class will be graduated and a full four-year course will be offered. Courses in English, arithmetic, geography, science, history, creative expression, social sciences, music, art, health and physical education are scheduled. Great stress is laid in the early years on developing the English language and from the fourth year of primary school a foreign language can be selected from among Classical Arabic, Spanish, and French. Moroccan students are obliged to choose Classical Arabic.

Among its outside community activities the American School has for several years conducted a series of night-school courses in English for the non-English-speaking residents of Tangier. During the 1953-54 academic year 432 persons, of 22 nationalities, were enrolled in three-times-a-week classes. A summer session in English is also held during the vacation period primarily to assist regular students who are having difficulty with the language; about one-third of the non-English-speaking students attend each year.

ENDOWMENT AND TUITION

The annual operating budget of the School today is about \$40,000. There is no endowment and few reserve funds. Money comes primarily from the same sources that contributed to the original campaign, i.e., local businessmen and American residents. The American Friends of the Middle East, Inc., is the largest single source of aid to Moroccan children. In addition to giving \$1,000 a year as a contribution to annual operating expenses, it has provided from 1954 on an annual grant of \$2,000 for scholarships to Moroccan children; this will provide for 14 full, or more partial, scholarships.

Lacking an endowment, the School has found it necessary to meet most of its operating costs through tuition fees. These are \$5 a month per student for the kindergarten, \$15 a month for primary and \$25 a month for secondary school. The School has made it a general basic principle, however, that no student shall be denied admission because of inability to pay the fees. When an

investigation shows that a family of a potential student cannot pay, whole or partial scholarships are made available by the School or by interested supporters.

FUTURE PROBLEMS OF THE SCHOOL

The rapid and wholesale political changes in recent months in Morocco have shaken education as much as any other field. The integration of Tangier into a unified Morocco poses new problems in the relationship of private schools to the official education system which are already being faced in the ex-French zone. "Arabization" of the curriculum is one notable feature and an understandable one in a country where an overwhelming part of the teaching has been done in a nonnational language. Such elementary items as Arabic textbooks, however, are extremely short now, and their absence precludes any immediate drastic change. The earnest and personable young director of the School, Robert Shea, feels that the role of the School can only expand in an independent Morocco and he says that the first words of Sultan Muhammad V, when the sovereign granted him an interview recently, were to ask when the school would become a university.

The Sultan's interest in this question was undoubtedly the result of his knowledge that facilities for higher learning in North Africa west of Algiers are largely nonexistent, or confined to specialized technical schools. A general college education is open only to those few who can afford to travel and study abroad for long periods. Viewed in this light, the possibility of the eventual expansion of the American School into junior college, or full university, status merits serious consideration. The need for educational facilities is so great in Morocco that the government feels that all available means must be mobilized for the struggle.

Right now the School faces more immediate problems. It has already outgrown its present building and must somehow, with an almost empty pocketbook, find a new one. Given the housing situation in Tangier and the lack of a suitable structure, it has been thought preferable to build rather than to buy or rent. This will involve costs of around \$150,000 plus annual expenses thereafter, on the basis of current spending, of at least \$65,000. These estimates were made, incidentally, before the sharp rise in the cost of living which began this month, and they will almost certainly have to be revised upwards. The menace of inflation hangs heavy over the heads of the teachers, whose average salary is currently about \$150 a month. At that level it is clear that few teachers from any country can plan a long employment with the School.

Along with the problem of building a new school is linked that of residence facilities. If the School is to maintain its international character and serve the whole country it must provide some living quarters for out-of-town students. The cost of such facilities would be about \$50,000.

FUTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION IN MOROCCO

Future possibilities for all American education, as well as for the American School, are intimately linked with the changes in the new Morocco. Basically the School must, if it is to survive, orient itself to the entire country rather than to Tangier alone. The peculiar sui generis status of the International Zone is already in a twilight period and although plans are afoot to keep Tangier the summer capital, as it has always been the diplomatic capital, it is going to be, in all circumstances, far more a part of Morocco than it ever was under the old regime.

The new situation should not be unfavorable once the transition period is passed and an understanding collaboration arrived at. For one thing, although a Franco-Moroccan cultural convention is currently being negotiated which will continue to some extent France's cultural presence and educational predominance, her previous absolute monopoly has been broken. Moroccan education will henceforth be "national" in aim, and it will be up to the American School, or any foreign institution in the country, to show that it can fit in with the national life while simultaneously offering something uniquely valuable to the country's youth. Government plans to send Moroccan students to several countries for their university work, rather than only to France, will certainly enhance the School's value as a preliminary bridge to those who are slated for further training in the United States.

On a more philosophical level the presence of an institution representing fundamental American teaching ideas should be useful to Moroccan educators in their efforts to adapt to their own needs a synthesis of Western and Eastern educational methods, instead of confining themselves to the rather narrow cadre of the techniques of one or two nations. Here, as in all other cases, it would seem that the American School, by being true to its own American standards, cannot be false to the needs of the new North African society.

CF Gallagher