OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

ANYTHING GOES

TANGIER

ACCORDING to the latest figures I have seen, there are eighty-five banks and forty-two brothels in Tangier, a city with a hundred and twenty-five thousand inhabitants. Next week, there will probably be more. Often during the past three thousand-odd years, this harbor at the northwestern tip of Africa, opposite Gibraltar, has been dormant, but today it is booming lustily. Tangier owes its well-being to the confused state of the world at large. "Tangier is waiting for you," says a frequent ad in the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune*. "Tangier knows NO restrictions of any kind!" Tangier knows no currency controls, trade barriers, immigration quotas, loyalty checks, red tape, or draft registration. Its prosperity grows in direct ratio to the agonies and restrictions of the outside world. It is one of the few places on earth where anything goes. You can freely import or export, buy or sell, deposit or withdraw gold in bullion, ingots, or coins. Here you can still see Napoleon twenty-franc pieces, American ten-dollar gold double eagles, Swiss twenty-franc gold pieces, British gold sovereigns, Australian gold half sovereigns, and other forms of ready money that most Americans have never seen in their lives. There are no taxes of any importance here—no income tax, no sales tax, no corporation tax, no inheritance tax. All that is needed to set up a corporation is nominal capital—say, five hundred dollars—a local address, and a corporation officer who is a resident. There are more than twenty-five hundred corporations in town. In one recent twelve-month period, over five hundred were set up, some of which lasted just long enough to complete one transaction. The only requirement for admission into this Elysium is a valid passport. Once you've been legally admitted, no questions are asked. The weather is balmy all year round, and the cost of living is low. True, there was a native riot here recently, but it was only a pale reflection of much more vigorous nationalistic upheavals outside Tangier—a purely sympathetic disorder. In fact, one American woman, knitting by her living-room window, was unaware that the riot was going on until a stray rock broke the glass. In these universally jittery and oppressive times, life here seems almost too good to be true.

Tangier is many things to many men. To wealthy Europeans worrying about a war, the Russians, controlled economies, taxation, and inflation, it is an ideal repository for capital. On January 1, 1950, there were ten tons of gold in the banks of Tangier. By July 31st, five weeks after the outbreak of the Korean war, there were sixteen tons, and by December 1st thirty tons. The flow of bullion into the city seems to have slackened recently, probably because the world appears to have settled down a little, but it is safe to assume that Tangier will go on being one of the richest deposits of precious metals on earth for a long time to come. To military deserters and to political refugees of any persuasion, Tangier is a sanctuary. On its café terraces, former Vichy Frenchmen, ex-Nazis, neo-Nazis, Trotskyites, Spanish refugees from Franco, German Jews who fled Hitler's Germany, and refugees and agents from the Iron Curtain countries sit side by side, though not in harmony. To shady capitalists with a predilection for high finance, including its black-market aspects, Tangier is the Promised Land. Some people who came here a few years ago without so much as a hat or an overcoat are worth several hundred thousand dollars today; other people, who arrived with plenty of money, are now hatless and coatless. To traders operating outside of their home government's controls, Tangier is the place where anything can be had for a price. To speculators, it is one big roulette wheel. Real-estate prices have gone up as much as five thousand per cent in the past ten years; the population has doubled in the last twenty; and new streets and districts are spreading out at a super-American rate. To the indigenous population, Tangier—or, rather, its Moorish slums, where the natives live in unparalleled misery—is a hellhole. The thirty-five thousand Europeans and two hundred Americans who are now residents of the city have done nothing to improve the illiterate, squalid condition of the ninety thousand

natives—Moslem and Jewish Moroccans—who live in dilapidated huts made of cardboard, reeds, and flattened cans. There are almost no hospitals, health services, or orphanages for these people. Only nine thousand of the forty thousand children of school age attend classes; the others spend their days begging and stealing. Tangier is no welfare state. The city lives off a twelve-and-a-half-per-cent ad-valorem duty on all imported consumer goods. It produces nothing except a little canned fish, a few goatskins, and some palmetto fibre; practically everything else, including food, has to be imported. The curious, and revealing, thing about Tangier's customs setup is that on gold, precious stones, and certain luxury goods a *lower* import duty—seven and a half per cent—is levied.

In international journalism, Tangier is often referred to as a "thieves' den" or a "smugglers' paradise," which upsets the Tangerois a good deal. Before I came here, I read an article in an American magazine that divided the foreign population of Tangier into "full-time smugglers, part-time smugglers, and occasional smugglers." One might just as reasonably divide the population of Chicago into full-time gangsters, part-time gangsters, and occasional gangsters. Not long ago, a feature story in a French paper reported that "dozens of murders and kidnappings occur [in Tangier] every year." Exactly four murders have been committed here since 1946. The percentage of crime and vice is no higher in Tangier than it is in any other Mediterranean city—Naples, say, or even Monte Carlo, which Tangier is reminiscent of, with its beaches, palm trees, blue skies, and bright-colored stucco houses.

In short, Tangier is less sensational than its reputation. There are thieves and con men here, as there are everywhere, but there are also old, reputable trading firms, such as Joseph Toledano & J. M. Pinto, which was founded in 1880, and conservative banking houses, such as Moses Pariente and the Banco Salvador Hassan e Hijos, among whose correspondents are some of the biggest banks in America. Such firms would as soon blow up their own vaults as engage, however indirectly, in smuggling. Their proprietors carry on their policy of prudent investment, think poorly of Tangier's boom, and are pained by the freebooters and entrepreneurs who have come here to make a fast sovereign and given the place a bad name. Of course, there *are* foreign

smugglers who use Tangier as a way stop and assembly point, but the golden days of uninhibited smuggling are over. (Some Tangerois even claim that there can be no such thing as smuggling in Tangier, since the "traders" break none of Tangier's laws.) In the first years after the end of the war, whole shiploads of American cigarettes, automobiles, refrigerators, ball-point pens, and hosiery were dumped on the Tangier quays, for transhipment by all sorts of craft whose skippers knew how to get the stuff into Europe's black markets. But today the importation and sale of American cigarettes is legal in France, the Spanish car market has dried up, and the European needs for penicillin and streptomycin are being legitimately filled. Actually, smuggling was never a very lucrative game in Tangier, since the smuggler had to operate expensive speedboats to outrace the customs guards of the receiving countries or else spend a lot of money to bribe them, either of which cut down profits. In fact, many former smugglers are broke now, and some have drifted away. A few still sit around Dean's Bar talking nostalgically, if not accurately, of the good old days.

But legitimate business (practically every transaction is legitimate from Tangier's point of view, whether or not it violates a foreign country's laws) is fine—couldn't be better. According to one set of official statistics I came upon, Tangier in a single recent year imported sixty-five tons of nylon hosiery. That is a staggering quantity of nylons for the ten-thousand-odd European women in town who bother with stockings. Another set of statistics showed that Tangier in 1950 imported nine billion Moroccan francs' worth of goods and reëxported one billion francs' worth through channels scrutinized by the authorities. What happened to the rest of the stuff? It's a pretty safe guess that it didn't all stay in Tangier, but that is a question one doesn't discuss here.

It isn't easy to find out anything about financial operations in Tangier, where the banks make an unparalleled fetish of discretion. The bankers of Tangier know what happened to the Swiss bankers after the Second World War, when the American government put pressure on the Swiss to reveal the names of the true owners of blocked Swiss deposits in the United States. Up to then, Switzerland had been the refuge of capital being shipped out of its home country. The opening of their books cost the Swiss a lot of confidence; many holding companies deserted Zurich and

Geneva for Tangier. Tangier has become the perfect place for oppressed financiers in search of outlets for their capital. Two Swiss banks have conveniently set up branches in Tangier, and there are plenty of conduits for getting hot money out of Europe. The financiers are not worried that a breach of discretion such as occurred in Switzerland will ever take place in Tangier, because, to quote one of them, "here the Americans are in on the proposition and would only hurt their own interests by getting idealistic."

Banks in Tangier range all the way from holes in walls and al-fresco establishments in street-corner booths to magnificent financial cathedrals that have no interest at all in savings or checking accounts. There were only two banks in Tangier prior to 1904, and only sixteen in 1945; all the sixty-nine others have opened since then. To set up a bank in Tangier is a simple matter, because, under Tangier law, the great majority of banks are not required to keep books or publish annual statements. Only those banks that hold gold bullion in bond have to file an annual statement with the administration; they must also get a license, which costs about sixty dollars a year. (Other pursuits requiring a license are medicine, prostitution, and the practice of law.) Tangier's bankers like to make it clear that they don't get rich overnight. "The only difference between banks here and banks elsewhere is that we deal in pure gold," one conservative financial man told me. "We are commercial bankers in the old European sense of the word—trading in securities, bonds, and currencies, and making investments. Our margin of profit is somewhat smaller than that of comparable banks in New York."

THE origin of Tangier is lost in mythological darkness. It was supposedly named after Tinga, the wife of the unfortunate Antaeus, who was killed by Hercules. The Berbers were the first known inhabitants of the region, and the Phoenicians were here as early as 1450 B.C. Then came the Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Goths, the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the British, and the French. The Americans appeared relatively late, in 1791. The next year, the Danish, Portuguese, Swedish, British, and Venetian consuls formed a Sanitary Council, ostensibly to prevent the spread of plagues. In 1793, the Spanish consul joined the Council, and in 1797, the American

and French consuls. Somehow, the Council very soon assumed the powers and prerogatives of government. A hundred years later, the consuls were imposing taxes and had almost usurped the sovereignty of the Sultan of Morocco, the official ruler of Tangier. In 1912, the Sultan made a treaty with France that set up France's Moroccan protectorate. That same year, France and Spain, without consulting the Sultan, who was probably beginning to wonder what he was Sultan of, fixed a line of demarcation between French and Spanish Morocco. And in 1925, France, Spain, and Great Britain established an International Zone comprising the city and harbor of Tangier and a surrounding area of two hundred and twenty-five square miles. Its administration was to be in the hands of a Committee of Control, made up of the Spanish, French, British, Belgian, Dutch, Portuguese, and Italian consuls. The Sultan, as the sovereign of the Sherifian Empire of Morocco, was allowed to retain jurisdiction over the native population of the Zone.

After the collapse of France in 1940, Franco, betting on an early German victory, sent his troops into Tangier. He waited awhile to see whether anybody would protest, and when nobody did, he abolished the International Zone consular administration and put his own men in; Spain has often claimed "natural" or "sacred" rights—whatever that means—in Tangier. Soon the Spanish secret police and the Gestapo were working closely together here. The main Spanish contribution to the German military effort, however, was to light up the harbor brilliantly every time an Allied convoy steamed through the Strait of Gibraltar, thus silhouetting it. At the end of the war, the delicate question arose of what to do with Tangier. At the conference of the Big Four in Paris in August, 1945, the Russians and French were for throwing the Spanish troops out of Tangier bodily; the Americans and British, who would have had to do most of the throwing, suggested a more cautious course. Caution won out, the Spanish evacuated their troops and distributed leaflets to the effect that their military occupation had all been a mistake, and administration of the Zone was returned to the powers that had been here before. The United States and the Soviet Union were invited to join. The Russians declined to participate as long as Franco's people had anything to do with the government. They never have sent a consul to Tangier. Naturally, Russians

are entitled to come in as private citizens any time they care to, but it is fervently hoped in Tangier that they never will care to come in officially.

Today, Tangier is run by a new Committee of Control, which consists of the consuls general of the seven old "participating powers," plus the United States. The consul general of each power, in alphabetical order, is chairman for one year. There is a legislative assembly, made up of eighteen foreign members—four Frenchmen, four Spaniards, three Britons, three Americans, one Italian, one Belgian, one Dutchman, and one Portuguese—and six Moroccan Moslems and three Moroccan Jews, who are appointed by Si Ahmed Tazi, the Mendoub, who is the plenipotentiary in Tangier of the Sultan of Morocco. (The Sultan has his seat in Rabat, French Morocco, where he is supposed to listen attentively to General Augustin Guillaume, the Resident General of French Morocco. The nine native Assembly members in Tangier are supposed to listen attentively to the French Consul General here.) The Committee of Control has the right to reject any law passed by the Assembly, which eliminates any possible danger of a really democratic government.

ON the surface, Tangier looks like a heartening experiment in international government. The name of each street is inscribed in French, Spanish, and Arabic. There are English, French, Spanish, and Italian churches, Jewish synagogues, and Moslem mosques. The war in Israel, which had repercussions all over the rest of the Moslem world, did not trouble the good relations between Moslems and Jews in Tangier. Spanish pesetas and Moroccan francs are the city's legal tender, but all hard currencies are accepted at true, not government-rigged, exchange rates. If you want to mail a letter, you can choose between a French, a Spanish, and a British post office—a situation that pleases philatelists and a couple of years ago inspired a couple of fellows in London to try to ship three-quarters of a million pounds' worth of diamonds out of England without an export license, since, they maintained, the stuff just went from one British post office, in London, to another British post office, in Tangier.

In this city, you may read *La Dépêche Marocaine*, if you care for the French point of view, or the Tangier *Gazette*, which stubbornly clings to the notion of the British Empire, or *España*, which is widely read across the Straits

in southern Spain because it is more independent than the papers published there. Justice in Tangier comes in four different flavors. There are the Mendoub's courts for Moslems, rabbinical tribunals for Jews, a Mixed International Court for citizens and protégés of the participating European powers, and the United States Consular Court for Americans. The police are under the command of a Belgian colonel, the customs officers under a Frenchman. The city's utilities, operated by private Spanish and French outfits, are in a scandalous state. Even the millionaires in Tangier cannot be sure of having running water all the time, and the electric-power supply is equally undependable. The excellent natural harbor in the three-mile-wide bay has poor docking facilities, for the French are not interested in establishing a competitor to Casablanca, in French Morocco, and the Spanish feel the same way about Ceuta, in Spanish Morocco. In Tangier society, the French set the tone. They also run much of the local business, but the Spanish, who make up two-thirds of the foreign population, play first fiddle politically. Retired British officials have always considered Tangier a pleasant place. In the green hills surrounding the city, road signs bearing such informal legends as "TO MR. BROWNING'S" are reminders of a British era that no longer exists.

AMERICAN relations with Morocco go back to the Treaty of Peace and Friendship that Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson negotiated with Sultan Mohammed XVII of Morocco in 1787. American consuls have been stationed in Tangier for a hundred and sixty years. The American Legation is quartered in an ancient palace in Hauma Benider, the old Moorish section of town, which was given to the American government by a Sultan many, many decades ago. Other governments that received such gifts have long since moved to more fashionable districts, being aware of the importance attached to political prestige in this part of the world, but the United States sticks to its antiquated site. What was once a harem is now occupied by a stenographers' pool. When the American Minister entertains on his terrace, he is never quite sure that the neighboring housewives will not unintentionally bombard him with garbage or drape him with errant laundry. As the years have passed, the Legation has had to rent additional office space in adjacent buildings. The en-

trance to the Legation is off a narrow passageway in the Moorish slums, which is frequented by snake charmers, beggars, and peddlers, all of whom can listen in on conversations inside the Legation. From a sightseer's point of view, this is the most interesting State Department installation in the world.

There are three powerful American relay radio transmitting stations in the Zone, one operated by R.C.A., one by Mackay Radio, and the third by the Voice of America. The geographic location of Tangier is said to be extremely favorable for radio transmission. The Russians have announced several times that they are going to put up a transmitter here, but they haven't got around to doing it.

Until 1950, Americans with children in Tangier had no choice but to send their offspring to Spanish, Italian, or French schools, which are under the strict supervision of their respective governments. In that year, a non-national school was set up by a group of civic-minded citizens in a remodelled Moorish villa. I went there one morning with the American Public Affairs Officer in Tangier. A turbulent soccer game was in progress on the villa's tiled terrace. The goalkeeper of one team was Spanish, the two fullbacks were French and Latvian, and the three halfbacks were Moroccan, American, and Maltese, and the opposing team was equally international. But when one team scored, everybody yelled in pure American. Among the school's ninety-two students are thirty-six Moslem or Jewish Moroccans, twenty-four Americans, twelve Britons (including Maltese and South Africans), seven Spaniards, six French children, two Latvians, one Hungarian, one Egyptian, one Portuguese, one Russian, and one Indian; their ages range from kindergarten to junior high school. The school's faculty consists of three Americans (including the principal, who is paid by the United States Information Service), two Britons, one Spaniard, and one Moroccan girl who was born in Tangier and educated in America. A teacher told me that there have been frequent arguments about such matters as marbles, soccer games, butterflies, and postage stamps, but never one about racial or national issues. It's a fine experiment in true democracy—the only one I have found in Tangier.

—Joseph Wechsberg

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MAN CRITICAL AFTER
BUS BACKS INTO HIM
Middletown (Conn.) Press.

Bigot!