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Algeria: The Kabyle mentality

Sail Mohamed

16th February 1951

On many occasions I have spoken in these columns about the libertarian and individualistic character of my fellow Berbers from Algeria. But today, as Ali Baba's cave overseas cracks and crumbles, I think it useful to assert, against all professional pessimists and dreamers wishing for a lucrative position, that an Algeria liberated from the colonial yoke would be ungovernable in the religious, political and bourgeois sense. And I challenge all scoundrel pretenders to the crown to make any meaningful and honest excuse for their unhealthy aspirations, because I would oppose their claims with tangible and verifiable information, without however denying that their policy has had some success in terms of action against the colonialist tyrant.

The native Algerian, especially the Kabyle, must be seen in the context of his native village and not judged solely on how he acts at protests against his mortal enemy: colonialism.

For the native Algerian, discipline is a degrading submission if it is not voluntary. However, the Berber is very sensitive to organization, mutual aid and comradeship, but as a federalist, he will not accept order unless it is the expression of the common desires

of the grassroots. When a village delegate is appointed by the Administration, Algeria considers him an enemy.

Religion, that once made him bend to the whims of the marabout [religious leader] is in decline, to the point where it is common to see the representative of Allah held in the same wretched view as the infidel. Everyone is still talking about God, out of habit, but actually nobody believes in him anymore. Allah is in decline through the Algerian worker's ongoing contact with his brothers in the misery of the metropolis, and some Algerian comrades are also doing much in this fight against obscurantism.

As for nationalism, for which I often reprimand Algerians, do not forget that this is the bitter fruit of the French occupation. A reconciliation of peoples will destroy that, as it will destroy religions. And, more than any other people, Algerians are receptive to internationalism, either because of their tastes or because the nomadic lifestyle inevitably opens their eyes. There are Kabyles all around the world, they like everywhere, and fraternize with everyone and their dreams are of knowledge, well-being and freedom.

Also, I refuse to believe that nationalist puppets may one day become ministers or Sultans intending to subjugate these people who have a rebellious temperament .

Until the arrival of the French, the Kabyles never agreed to pay taxes to a government, including the Arabs and Turks, whose religion they embraced only by force of arms . I particularly emphasize the Kabyle, not because I myself am Kabyle, but because they are actually the dominant element in any point of view, and because they are capable of driving the rest of the Algerian people into revolt against all forms of authoritarian centralism.

The funniest thing is that the band of forty thieves and charlatan politicians present us with a type of overseas nationalism in the form of an Arab union with an Islamic emblem and political, military and spiritual leaders in the image of the countries of the Levant. I admit that the Arab god of our disasters has done things since the Jewish-Arab war to reveal to us that the chiefs of Islamic unity

are nothing but vulgar and sold themselves to the Americans, the English, and the Jews themselves, their supposed enemies. A coup of traitorous dervishes, but beneficial for the people who begin to see clearly.

Just think, a nice Algerian government, in which they would be caids (officials), more arrogant than the roumis (colonial) government, for the simple reason that an upstart is always harsher and more unforgiving than one who has already "arrived"! There is no avoiding it, Algerians want neither plague nor cholera, nor a government by roumi or that of a caid. Moreover, the majority of Kabyle workers know that a Muslim government, both religious and political, cannot take but a feudal character, so will therefore be primitive. All Muslim governments so far are proof of this.

Algerians will seek their own self-governance based on the village or Douar [tent village] without MPs or ministers who get fat at their expense, because the Algerian people freed from one yoke will not want to have another, and their federalist and libertarian temperament is the surest guarantee against that. It is in the mass of manual workers that a robust intelligence and nobleness of mind is found, while the horde of "intellectuals" is, in the vast majority, devoid of any generous sentiment.

As for Stalinists, they do not represent a strong force, their members are recruited solely among the fools or wretches. The native has little enthusiasm to be labelled, whether as a liar or a super-fascist .

For the collaborators, police officers, judges, caids and other slave drivers who live the high life on Algerian cheese, their fate is preordained: the rope/noose, although they are barely worth it.

For all these reasons, should my countrymen be considered authentic revolutionaries bordering on anarchy? No, because whilst they have a temperament which is undoubtedly federalist and libertarian, they lack education and culture, and our propaganda, which is indispensable to the rebellious spirits.