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Abd-el-Krim is Sultan Mohammed, if You Please

"This Sultan was no Barbarian and no fool," exclaims an adventurous correspondent who managed to penetrate the fastness of the embattled Rifians and obtain an audience with their ruler, the troublesome person known to Christians as Abd-el-Krim. This name, it seems, is properly that of his father. It belongs to the son by tribal custom, but only when preceded by his own baptismal name, Mohammed, signifying the bearer's sonship. Whence we gather that it is perfectly proper to speak of this belligerent gentleman as Mohammed ben Abd-el-Krim, but that it is a breach of Rifian manners to designate him by the paternal name alone, as the Western world is doing. Writers who baptize it to "Krim" should steer clear of his realm or they may find themselves bound in Morocco. The Sultan, as he calls himself, was found by Vincent Sheean, the correspondent above quoted, at Alt Kamar—"the largest collection of houses and people I had seen since leaving French Morocco." He mentions that the village housed between twelve and thirteen hundred Spanish prisoners then and has acquired from six to eight hundred since. Also that there was a garrison of four hundred Rifian guardsmen "of the oldest and best-trained troops, fanatically devoted to the Sultan."

Mr. Sheean had been guided to the place, through difficult and dangerous country, by the warlike ruler's brother-in-law, Sidi Mohammed, who arranged for the interview and presented his royal kinsman in advance with a list of questions prepared by the correspondent. He tells us that the Sultan's house was "a structure of mud like all the rest," and the following is his account, in Asia, of his arrival at the royal residence:

Sidi Mohammed and I dismounted at the outer gate, and four Rifian guards saluted. He spoke to them, and we were led through a courtyard similar to that in the Sultan's house at Adrar. Beyond this was another courtyard, and at the end of that a room before which another guard stood. This room we entered without removing our sandals. It was a square room, with a table and three chairs, the first I had seen in the Rif. The table was covered with papers, and behind it was Mohammed ben Abd-el-Krim.

He looked at us with a slow, appraising gaze, brown eyes set penetratingly at last upon the Christian visitor. He was a short, dark Rifian of perhaps what would pass for medium height elsewhere. He was inclined to stoutness and dressed with the greatest simplicity in brown homespun djellabas and spotless white linen. He extended his hand; I touched it with mine and raised my fingers to my lips, Rifian fashion.

"The Sultan prefers to conduct the conversation in our own language, and I shall translate into French," Sidi Mohammed said.

Mohammed ben Abd-el-Krim examined the paper before him. It was a sheet of foolscap, on which my six questions had been written; the margins were covered with notations in Arabic script. Sidi Mohammed had told me that these questions had been examined by the diwan the day before and that the Sultan's answers could be taken as definitive. The first question had been a request for a statement on the relations of the Rif with the Pan-Islamic movement.

"The Pan-Islamic movement does not exist," he said, to be sure, and categorical. This: Abd-el-Krim spoke levelly, in a low, firm voice, using the Shilluk tongue. "The Pan-Islamic movement does not exist. All the talk about Pan-Islamism has as its sole object to frighten the French and the English into an attitude of opposition to the Rif Government in its struggle with Spain. We have no relations whatever with any movement in French Morocco, Algeria, Tunis or Egypt, and we do not intend to attempt establishing such relations. Our struggle is exclusively national, and our real enemy is Spain."

"An for peace, it can come whenever Spain is willing," he went on, referring to my second question. "But we have certain irredelible demands. First and foremost—every Spanish soldier in Morocco, from the Atlantic to the eastern frontier, must be withdrawn to the two presidios of Ceuta and Melilla or to Spain. The Spanish protectorate protects nothing, not even the Spanish soldier. If Spain will surrender her claim to this spurious protectorate, we are willing to go into peace negotiations on the following terms:

"First, the independence and national sovereignty of the Rif must be clearly recognized.

"Second, all territory from the Melilla zone to the zone of Ceuta and Tangier must be attributed to the Rif."

"Third, we are bound by sacred promises to the tortured populations of the Azores—opposite Gibraltar—and Spanish countries to liberate them from Spanish rule, and we shall do so, no matter how long it takes. But once Spain has surrendered her so-called protectorate, we are willing to consent to any arrangement within

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reason—any compromise, that is—for the government of the coast zone from Tangier to the French frontier: Spain is entitled to the province of Ceuta and Melilla, which are practically Spanish now after all these centuries, but to nothing else. The rest of Morocco must be governed by our own magistrates which can be evolved to a compromise settlement."

Mr. Sheean remarks that the Rifian ruler made these statements slowly, carefully and with great deliberation, stopping after each sentence or long clause while Sidi Mohammed translated. "It was a long process, particularly as I made notes of practically every word." And he continued:

I had plenty of time to study that remarkable face as he spoke. Shrewdness I saw, great shrewdness and biting intelligence, allied to a certain healthy cautiousness, which made Mohammed resemble, faintly, Sidi Mohammed. He was not the flamboyant and prophet-like creature one might have expected.

"We purpose to continue our present form of government, when peace is finally instituted," he said, attacking the third question. "I suppose you call this system an absolute monarchy. We shall continue to rule by absolute monarchy; it has been demonstrated to be the best for our people. Eventually, in time, we intend to transform the government into a constitutional monarchy; we hope to establish a representative legislature like the Grand National Assembly at Angora. But not yet; not for at least a generation."

"The name 'Rif Republic' is a sad case of bad naming," he explained. "It was given us first by the English newspapers and by some of our well-meaning English agents. We never had a republic in the western sense and never contemplated one. In fact, the Spanish word republica has been adopted into our language to designate small local groups, even smaller than tribes—like the Spanish officers' juntas. We have several 'republics' in every company of Rifian infantry, for instance."

"As for the authority of the Sultan of Morocco, so-called, we do not recognize the sovereignty of Mulai Yusef, and we do not intend ever to recognize that sovereignty. Mulai Yusef's dominion over Morocco is a fable which all the Powers have agreed to believe out of deference to France."

"Even if we were prepared to admit the authority of a Moroccan Arab Sultan who is under the thumb of Marshal Lyautey, you must remember that Mulai Yusef has no title what-

ever to the throne. Both of his elder brothers, lawful rulers, were removed from power; his brother, Mulai Hafid, now in Spain, was forcibly deposed by the French because he was not sufficiently docile. Do you think we, an independent and proud people, conscious of our great past, will ever bow to the authority of a puppet like Yusef? If any Sultan of Fez had the right to command in the Rif, it would not be Yusef; it would be his brother Hafid. But we do not admit the basic principle of their sovereignty: the Rif is independent by nature."

He approached next the question that was, perhaps, the most difficult of all—a definition of the attitude of the Rif toward the French. If I had known what I know now, that the Rif was even then being pushed by its Arab border allies into the war with France, this statement would have taken on extra significance.

"We have no intention of attacking French Morocco," he declared. "To me, war with France is inadvisable—unless we are attacked. If we are attacked, we shall defend ourselves. But such an eventuality is too remote to be contemplated. It is certainly not in the interest of France to attack us. We extend a friendly hand to France, and we sincerely hope our friendship will be accepted. Certain requirements must be met, however, before such a friendship can be practical."

"Frontier difficulties, such as those in the Bent Zeruul country, can never be avoided under present conditions. But I affirm that we have never yet attacked a French corps or friendly tribes and that not one Rif regular soldier has ever crossed the actual French frontier as established by the French advance posts."

"Frontier skirmishes can be avoided by only one means—that is, by regular delimitation of the frontiers. This, we suggest, should be made one of the conditions of peace when the inevitable conference comes. A frontier commission should be established to draw practical boundary lines between our country and French Morocco. The present frontier was drawn in 1904 by the negotiators of the Franco-Spanish Treaty. We do not recognize that treaty and can not recognize that boundary, which passes through the middle of tribes and sometimes in the middle of villages. I can guarantee that, if a practical and natural frontier regulated by rivers and mountains were established, we should never again have any trouble with France."

"We are reminded here that the Sultan's statement was made by a man 'constantly under pressure from both sides,' and the writer adds that it needed no great penetration to see the two parties at the court of Abd-el-Krim: 'the one, represented by Hamid Boudra and Lialil bel Hadj, was warlike and wished no peace with either Spain or France; the other, represented by Sidi Mohammed, wished peace at almost any price that would conserve the national integrity of the Rif itself.' Further, we read: Sidi Mohammed's party never cared particularly for the conquest of the Djebala and was always the strongest influence in maintaining peace on the French frontier. Abd-el-Krim himself was taking middle ground."

"If Spain wishes peace," said the Sultan, having ended the formal part of the interview, "he can ask for an armistice and call a conference to establish the terms of peace. If Spain wishes war, we are ready for war for an indefinite term of years. We have enough arms and ammunition to last us for the next two years, and the supply will never cease so long as Spanish soldiers have anything to lose. Besides, we are confident that six months' time will be sufficient to give us the rest of northern Morocco. We do not wish war, but we shall fight until peace can come on terms acceptable to a free and independent nation."

"The Spanish retreat just completed has given us the allegiance of the whole of the Djebala—not to speak of our two thousand Spanish prisoners and our many thousands of newly captured rifles and machine-guns as well as our great gains in material treasure. We are at the very least three times as strong as we were last August. Every tribe in western Morocco has joined us, save only one—Raisuli's tribe, the Bent Arouis, which we are now preparing to conquer by force."

This mention of the conquest of Raisuli was a stirring aside. The Sultan refused to discuss it; he went on to talk of the organization of the Rif Government, confirming many of the statements made to me by his viziers and explaining the "Soviet gold" and "German officers' myths. He talked of the mineral wealth of the Rif country and expressed the devout hope that American capital would see the ad-

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