

Ceuta, Where Less Would Be More (Part Two)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Spanish have even made things easier for these migrants. In mid-June, the Spanish Minister of the Interior, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, announced that he would remove the barbed wire on top of the security fences around Ceuta and Melilla, because – he said – it was too dangerous for those who were trying to breach the fence. He also promised to lower the height of the fence itself. After all, why should a security fence be too...too secure? In the brave new Spain of the Socialists, it's cruel to keep people out, people who have as much right to live in Spain as the Spanish do.

Not all of these migrants are from sub-Saharan Africa. Some Arabs come overland to Morocco from Algeria, hoping to make it to Ceuta. Some Moroccans, too, have chosen to take the royal road to riches that, they think, lies through Ceuta.

The Moroccans themselves have used sub-Saharan migrants as a bargaining chip in their relations with the countries of the E.U., just as Qaddafi did. They can make it harder, or easier, for the sub-Saharan migrants to make it to Ceuta. Under the previous ruler, King Hassan II, famous for his torture forts, the Moroccans would often round up sub-Saharan migrants and send them home, or even drop them unceremoniously in the desert, not caring whether they lived or died. His son has ended that last practice. But the Moroccan government can help keep the sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco well away from Ceuta, or even push them out of Morocco altogether, sending them to the countries they came from, and acting as the first line of defense blocking such migration, in exchange for economic

benefits from the countries of Europe – favorable trade deals, access to new markets, subsidies, foreign aid.

The pressure on Europe from sub-Saharan Africa is immense. In 1945, there were 250 million people in all of Africa; now there are 1.2 billion, and by 2050 that population will have doubled, to 2.4 billion. They are now coming to the Maghreb in order to get to Europe. The countries of North Africa, and especially, at this point, Morocco, are the first line of defense for Europe against this human wave. Many of those migrants will remain in Morocco, waiting for a chance to make it to Ceuta, and meanwhile, their presence creates ethnic tensions in the country.

Meanwhile, Ceuta remains the latest gateway of choice to Europe. Since the Spanish Socialists have made the security fence less effective, both by lowering its height and by removing the barbed wire, Ceuta has become even more inviting.

What should the Spanish do? They should reconsider their misplaced pride in still possessing two enclaves in Africa, and come to realize that Ceuta and Melilla are far more of a menace to Spain if they remain Spanish territory. Since the Spanish Socialists are clearly unwilling to take the stern measures that would be necessary to protect Ceuta from those regularly assaulting the security fence, they should transfer these enclaves to Morocco. It is the kind of thing the Socialist government should welcome ideologically, ridding Spain of its last colonial outposts. But it is, in essence, a transfer of territory that should also be welcomed by the Spanish right.

For the Moroccans, the transfer to them of Ceuta and Melilla would discourage sub-Saharan migrants from coming to Morocco in the first place. For these migrants would no longer be able to “step into Europe” by climbing over a fence into Ceuta. Ceuta would no longer need a fence; it would be just another unprepossessing part of Morocco. The Moroccans have suffered

from these sub-Saharan migrants arriving, and setting in, while they wait to assault the fence at Ceuta. There have been ethnic tensions, erupting into violence, between the Moroccans and these sub-Saharan Africans. They thus have a vested interest in making Ceuta (and Melilla) of no interest to sub-Saharan or Arab, especially Algerian, migrants.

At the same time, the transfer of Ceuta and Melilla could be presented by Morocco to the world as a great “victory,” closing down the last colonial outposts in North Africa, and presented by Spain, at the same time, as a selfless act of “friendship” toward Morocco.

Everyone – well, almost everyone – ends up happier. Spain, Morocco, the rest of Europe will all be better off. As for those sub-Saharan migrants, the kind who gain entry by throwing feces, blood, acid and quicklime on Spanish guards protecting Ceuta, who cares what they think? They have disturbed all of us long enough. Let them stew in their own....well, you know.

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