63:

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The Western Sahara

David Lynn Price

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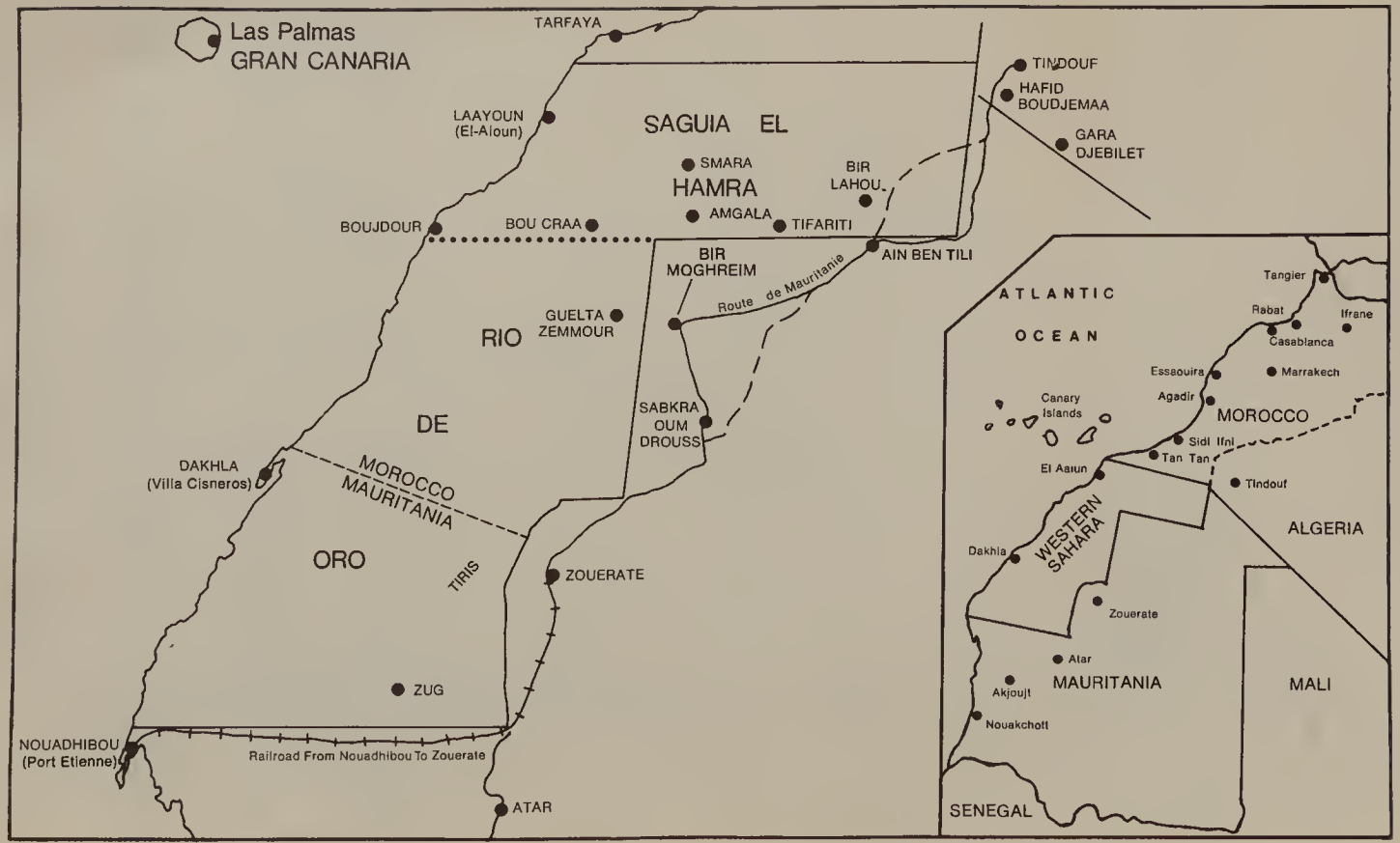
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PREFACE

The spotlight of public attention oscillates, often wildly, between crisis points in different parts of the globe. Official government policy too is frequently determined or strongly affected by the outcome of the struggle for attention-getting.

Behind the cataclysmic events reflecting the "upset of the day" there are, however, other crises that may not even be less significant than the "attention getters" but which, when allowed to fester, are capable of looming ever larger, destabilizing wider regions.

Such a crisis is the dispute over the Western (formerly Spanish) Sahara region. It is part of a larger and older rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, it disturbs the tranquillity of North Africa from Mauritania to Egypt, it touches on sensitive issues of African and Middle Eastern affairs. It also involves the substantial interests of the United States, France, and Spain, and potentially of the Soviet Union.

A French report of the 1930s called the Western Sahara "one of the least known" parts of the world, and this statement has lost little of its accuracy. David Lynn Price is one of very few people who do know this thinly populated but politically and economically important region, and his presentation makes a significant contribution to an understanding of the nature of this stubborn conflict.

As these lines are written, Algeria experiences a transition of leadership after the death of President Houari Boumedienne. Whether its new leader or leaders will carry on this quarrel with Morocco over the Western Sahara, sharpen it, or seek accommodation, will not be known for some time. 1979 could well be a period of decision.

Robert G. Neumann
U.S. Ambassador to Morocco
1973-1976

I. INTRODUCTION

For most of the year, the temperature in the Sahara is over 100 degrees (Fahrenheit). If there were shade and water, conditions would be tolerable. But the desert is a fearsome place; along the Atlantic coast sharp cliffs and empty bays give way to picturesque sand dunes but within 20 kilometers, the desert becomes stony, flat, and is without feature. Most days the scorching heat is intensified by a sand-laden wind that is desiccating and enervating. Nothing relieves the traveler's eye except mirages. Very occasionally, the monotonous landscape is broken by a dried-up riverbed (*oued* or *wadi*), or salt pan. In the western region of the Sahara, the rivers rarely run but when they do, they are usually in spate and of these, the most important is the Saguia el-Hamra. It rises 350 kilometers inland and drains into the sea at Laayoun. In its lower reaches the Saguia el-Hamra reaches a width of four kilometers. To the southeast, into Mauritania, the terrain becomes more rocky in the form of stark rock pinnacles of volcanic origin. There are few centers of population, and nomads still traverse the desert; hard-topped roads are even fewer and the only effective way of getting around the territory is by air. On the face of it, the entire region seems timeless—and worthless. But nationalism, a politicized Sahraoui society, European influence, and rich mineral reserves have provoked a desert war whose repercussions seriously threaten the stability of northwest Africa.

Territory

The contested area is called the Western Sahara in current diplomatic usage. Under Spanish rule it was divided into the Saguia el-Hamra region in the north and Rio de Oro in the south. These

areas are now administered by Morocco and Mauritania (see map) and their provincial capitals are, respectively, Laayoun (El Aioun) and Dakhla, formerly Villa Cisneros. The borders were agreed upon at the Tripartite Accord in Madrid, November 14, 1975, by Spain, Mauritania, and Morocco. Although the borders are precisely defined, and the agreement has been formally accepted by Morocco and Mauritania, their claims to sovereignty have not yet received broad international recognition. The two countries signed their own border agreement in Rabat, on April 14, 1976 (see Appendix 1). In this paper the term "southern Morocco" is used from time to time, and refers to that portion of the Western Sahara currently administered by Morocco.

People and Economy

Estimating the population of the Western Sahara is a formidable exercise, and since the time of the first European contacts with the area in the fifteenth century, only one census has ever been compiled. That census was taken by the Spanish in 1973-1974 and they concluded that this arid region sustains a population of 74,500 (Censo, 1974). The figure is now generally believed to be an underestimate because, since 1975, population movement has increased well beyond the traditional tribal limits and urbanization has attracted permanent settlers from northern Morocco. But Spanish and Moroccan authorities concede that it is difficult to estimate exactly the numbers who have become refugees as a result of the Sahara drought. The former Spanish governor, Colonel Rodriguez de Viguri, excluded the refugees from the census but the Moroccan government has claimed in its submission to the United Nations (UN) in May 1975 that they totalled approximately 35,000 (Le Monde, 1976). This would make the total Sahraoui population over 100,000. The question is, where are they all? The polemics of the conflict allege that thousands have been "driven" into Moroccan territory, or that additional thousands are "detained" by the Algerians in and around Tindouf. The argument over numbers underlines the need for another census to be conducted, but with the assistance of the UN. Because, if the census is an underestimate and if there are over 30,000 refugees, it will require an international operation to locate, settle, and to care for them. At present nearly

70,000 are in the Moroccan towns of Laayoun (48,000), Smara (9,000), Boujdour (5,000), and the Mauritanian town of Dakhla (6,000). The socio-economic system is largely tribal and pastoral, but it is changing rapidly, following the Moroccan exploitation of phosphates at Bou Craa, the Mauritanian mining of iron ore near Zouerate, and the impact of the development programs for the new provinces. Until 1975, the Sahraouis did not recognize geographical frontiers and responded only to the seasonal rhythm of grazing limits for their goats and camels. For the nomadic population (*les fils des nuages* or *ulad el mizna*), survival is precarious because the Western Sahara has still not recovered from a recent seven-year drought and it is continually threatened by desertification. The fragility of the Sahraoui socio-economic system meant that political loyalties were well below the level of nationalism or fidelity to the states of the region—Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali. Loyalty is to family, tribe, and Islam. As a result, the desert frontiers of the three main states involved are areas of population movement—a Sahraoui population, moreover, that consists of eight tribes, three of which are directly affected by the conflict. These tribes, the Reguibat (who are divided into two factions), the Izarguen, and the Delim dominate the region. In the past, the tribal political balance was irregular, and oscillated according to the fortunes of a particular tribe. A rough pattern of tribal supremacy has been that the Delim, who were raiders, dominated the more sedentary Reguibat factions and the Izarguen. Woven through the broad tribal patterns are the Tuareg nomads—*les hommes bleues*—whose migratory limits extend from the Atlantic coast to Mali, Niger, Chad, and southern Libya. But the great days of Tuareg supremacy, despite Colonel Khaddafi's romantic aspirations for a Tuareg republic, have been destroyed by French and Spanish imperialism, Arab and African nationalism, and economic privation.

II. SPANISH WITHDRAWAL

Local Nationalism

As in many Third-World conflicts, the principal cause of the Sahara problem was the impact of colonialism. At the beginning of this century, France and Spain carved up northwest Africa between them. The French were already established in Algeria, took over what is now Mauritania as part of *Afrique Occidentale Francaise* (AOF), and imposed a protectorate over central Morocco. Spain got much less: the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla; and the Rif region in the north; another enclave called Ifni; a desert protectorate called Tekna in the south; and even farther south, the Saguia el-Hamra and the Rio de Oro, now the Western Sahara.

The borders had a colonial simplicity; the frontiers of the Western Sahara "zig-zagged from Zag in the north to Zug in the south" in order to include the iron ore deposits of Zouerate in French-held territory (An Nahar, 1978). Straight lines were drawn around what were to become Mali and Mauritania. The Algerian-Moroccan border was left undetermined and remained as a dotted line in the French expectation that they would stay forever and hence a formal frontier was unnecessary. For years, the Tindouf area was administered by the French from Rabat as part of Morocco—until large iron ore deposits were discovered in the area. Tindouf was switched to the French administration in Algeria when the rise of Moroccan nationalism seemed certain to end the protectorate. This cynical and expedient act still rankles with Moroccan nationalists, and the traditional nationalist party, *Istiqlal,* has still not recognized the loss of Tindouf to Algeria. Not surprisingly, when Moroccan-Algerian tensions escalate, King Hassan has not discouraged the Istiqlal's threats to recover Tindouf—by force if necessary.

This act of geographical dexterity was accomplished by France without consulting the nomadic tribes of the region, to whom nationalism and frontiers were meaningless. But this attitude was soon to change. Morocco became independent in 1956 and the French and Spanish protectorates ended. However, southern Morocco remained under Spanish control because Spain feared the presence of the Moroccan Army of Liberation, formed primarily to fight the French. At this point it had become clear that compared to the French colonial tradition, Spanish colonial policy was weak. It lacked the crusading and elitist qualities of the French; without political vigor Spanish policy was opportunist, fitful, and deplorably underfinanced. On April 10, 1956, there was an anti-Spanish demonstration in Ifni that over the following months provoked a spate of serious clashes and selective assassinations of Spanish officials and their indigenous supporters (Mercer, 1976). On October 23, 1957, the Army of Liberation was reinforced by the new Moroccan government and with more arms, equipment, and cash, 2,000 guerillas took up positions near Ifni. After two months of bitter fighting, Spanish forces were pushed back to the capital, Sidi Ifni. As the Spanish garrisons fought a desperate battle for survival, Moroccan and Sahraoui guerillas were skirmishing at El Aioun, Villa Cisneros, and Tan Tan. The Spanish position in the south was saved by the French; on February 10, 1957, the two European powers began a concerted campaign against the guerillas. It was nearly a year before they could claim to have "pacified" the whole region again.

Diplomacy was resumed, and Spain, having seen the writing on the wall, signed an agreement with the late King Mohammed V in April 1958 and evacuated the Tekna protectorate and Tarfaya. For nearly 12 years the province was quiet, apart from a handful of minor incidents. On March 11, 1961, a Union Oil prospecting team was captured by Moroccan forces and taken to Tan Tan. Rabat claimed the affair was the work of patriotic tribesmen, but the soldiers were, in fact, Moroccan irregulars serving as a "liberation army." The prospectors were freed by King Hassan in Rabat on March 21, 1961, after which the irregulars were finally disbanded and integrated into the Royal Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Royalès,* FAR).

In 1961, King Hassan II succeeded his father, and on July 6 he signed an agreement with Ferhat Abbas, President of the *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne* (GPRA). That

pact was significant because it formally agreed that following Algerian independence the Moroccan-Algerian frontier would be settled. Both leaders also agreed that the Tindouf area would be restored to Morocco. In return Morocco gave the GPRA full support during the Franco-Algerian war. The cordial mood did not last; a year later when President Ahmed Ben Bella came to power in Algeria, he refused to return Tindouf to Morocco claiming that the King's accord with Ferhat Abbas would not be honored. This incensed the Moroccans and in 1962-1963, Moroccan troops inched their way across the desert toward Tindouf. Finally, in October-November 1963, a desert war flared between the two countries, ending in a military success for Morocco. (Ironically, the Algerian military commander at the time was an obscure colonel who had spent most of the Franco-Algerian war in Morocco. The colonel was Houari Boumedienne who became Algerian president two years later as a result of his own military coup.)

The Moroccan-Algerian clashes did not affect the Spanish presence in the south. Although Moroccan and Sahraoui troops and guerillas camped along the frontier they were too weak to challenge seriously the Spanish infantry. It looked as if a dreary stalemate was inevitable; however, a serious clash on June 18, 1970 escalated into a campaign of protracted anti-Spanish insurgency. It was not apparent at the time, but this marked the beginning of the end of Spanish rule. The colonial administration had organized a routine demonstration in El Aioun in favor of continued links with Spain. Moroccan sources claimed that a 2,000 strong Sahraoui group turned up in the capital to demonstrate against Spain and for King Hassan. Troops opened fire and killed 12 people; further Spanish counter-measures were draconian, as leading figures were arrested and several villages were destroyed. The alleged ringleader, Brahim Bassiri, was deported to Mauritania, according to the Spanish, but it is now thought he died in prison in the Canary Islands. The Spanish stated that the demonstration was staged by an underground group called *nidam* (the organization). Four demonstrators who fled to Nouakchott said later that it was staged by the Mauritanian-based *Front de Libération du Sahara sous Domination Coloniale Espagnole* (FLS).

Apart from the Moroccan irregulars, the FLS was probably the first of the anti-Spanish liberation movements that proliferated

between 1966 and 1973. The FLS was also anti-Moroccan because its sponsor, Mauritania, mistrusted Morocco's intentions in the Sahara, and was closely allied with Algeria. In December 1966 FLS was at the UN, supporting a resolution that called for independence for the Spanish Sahara. A few weeks later the FLS delegation returned via Morocco where—inexplicably—a secret deal was concluded bringing FLS under Moroccan control. Within two years FLS was dissolved, crippled by rival Mauritanian and Moroccan claims to the Sahara, a rivalry that the Spanish were able to exploit.

The next phase began on September 22, 1969, when President Ould Daddah of Mauritania arrived in Rabat to attend the Islamic Summit. The meeting was organized by King Hassan, who announced that he had never believed in the Istiqlal's claims to Mauritania; at the time the party was in opposition, thus his historical evidence was unlikely to be challenged. Mauritania's independence in 1960 had been opposed by Morocco but Ould Daddah's visit marked a new era of Moroccan-Mauritanian cooperation. Ould Daddah, however, was careful to maintain links with Algeria. Three months after the demonstration in El Aioun, King Hassan, President Ould Daddah, and President Boumedienne met in Nouadhibou (September 14, 1970) and agreed on a common strategy to "hasten the decolonization of the Western Sahara." The tempo of political agitation quickened. Two new groups were formed: a short-lived *Organisation de Libération de Saguia el-Hamra et Wadi el-Dahb* was organized by two unidentified Sahraouis in Algeria in January 1971; and the *Mouvement de Résistance des Hommes Bleues* (MOREHOB), organized by Edouard Moha, born in Smara in 1943, and a Sahraoui of the Reguibat tribe. Initially, MOREHOB attracted the support of a number of Moroccan intellectuals. It was recognised by the Organization for African Unity (OAU), but its platform—independence for the Tuaregs—was unacceptable to Morocco. Consequently, Moha moved his headquarters from Rabat to Algeria in April 1973. No military activity was recorded by MOREHOB, its political work was desultory, and in February 1975 Moha returned to Morocco, declared his allegiance to King Hassan, and dissolved his organization.

Still united in their opposition to Spanish rule, the king and the two presidents met in Algeria in January 1972, and in Agadir, Morocco in July 1973, in response to a Spanish plan to grant the

territory autonomy under the *jemaa,* a local assembly. The jemaa was a Spanish creation (1967) adopted from the tribal consultative system, and under Spanish rule, a jemaa representative sat in the Cortes in Madrid. Its first president was Khatri Said Ould Joumani. Yet another group was formed in El Aioun, the *Partido de Unidad Nacional Saraui* (PUNS), led by Khalihenna Ould Rachid, a young graduate of Madrid University. PUNS had the distinction of being the only political party authorized by General Franco outside the Falange and its dowdy offices are still to be seen in Rabat. Compared to 1963, relations between Morocco and Algeria ten years later were cordial; both leaders signed accords at Ifrane in 1973, whereby Morocco recognized the frontier drawn by the OAU after the 1963 war. They also agreed that both countries would jointly exploit Tindouf's iron ore and ship it out of the desert by rail across Morocco to the Atlantic. Algeria ratified the accords but Morocco did not. In retrospect, the Ifrane meeting was a cosmetic affair, indicative of the underlying mistrust between King Hassan and President Boumedienne. MOREHOB had also moved to Algiers, and militants of the Moroccan opposition party, *Parti du Progrés et du Socialisme* (PPS), had also found sanctuary in Algeria. In reality, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania were only tenuously united against the Spanish; each country had its own Sahraoui nationalist movement.

It is still unclear at exactly which point the three-country anti-Spanish front fell apart to be replaced by a pro-Algerian movement, opposed to Moroccon and Mauritanian control of the Sahara. At the Arab summit in Rabat in 1974 President Boumedienne was still supporting the king, and in the desert Sahraoui guerillas were stepping up their attacks against Spanish targets. There were riots and demonstrations in El Aioun and Villa Cisneros; in May 1973 Spanish garrisons at Tifariti and Bir Lahlou were attacked; in January 1974 the Spanish Foreign Legion fought a pitched battle with guerillas near Smara, and in October 1974 guerillas attacked and destroyed two of the motor control stations of the Bou Craa phosphate conveyor belt.

Spanish Politics

One explanation for the change may lie in the confused period of Spanish politics between 1974 and 1976. At this time, had the Franco

regime been faced only with Sahraoui dissidence, a hard-line policy might have ensured Spanish rule for a little longer. But Spain's neighbor, Portugal, was convulsed by political revolution, forcing it into a hectic scramble to get out of its African colonies. For two years the new Portuguese regime was decidedly radical, strongly supported by the Communist Party and by Marxist army officers in key positions. Political observers at the time concluded that the instability in Portugal would lead to general political decay in southern Europe, i.e., Portugal, Spain, and Italy. The lessons of the Portuguese colonial tradition had been commended to Spain—largely by supporters of Portugal—as a good example of racial integration and economic success. It was also somewhat older historically than that of Spain. But after the changes in Lisbon in 1974, this tradition was speedily dismantled in the face of nationalism and anti-colonialism. The Spanish presence in the Sahara was not deeply rooted, and the lack of any effort to develop the province is still apparent. There was no road-building program, water exploration and extraction were confined to El Aioun and the principal Spanish garrisons, health care was haphazard, and instead of strategically located clinics there were itinerant army doctors. The cultural and racial gap was unbridgeable and as Spanish rule came to a close, the towns of El Aioun and Villa Cisneros were ringed off by barbed-wire fences. Many Sahraouis are Spanish-speaking, but this is simply a technical accomplishment and not a cultural attitude similar to French or British colonial descendants.

In July 1974, King Hassan launched his campaign for the ". . . integration of the Sahara with the motherland" that led directly to the breakdown of the Spanish-Moroccan talks. Spain announced that it would hold a referendum to decide the future of the colonies, whereupon Morocco planned to bring in the International Court. Morocco and Mauritania signed a secret agreement, and in December the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 3292. It stated that Spain should not hold a referendum; the Court's advice should be sought instead, and a UN fact-finding mission should be sent to the Western Sahara.

In early 1975 the Algerians openly opposed Moroccan and Mauritanian claims at the Court. MOREHOB, which was still in Algiers, sent a memorandum to the Hague denouncing Morocco's "expansionist and annexationist designs" and accusing Rabat of

setting up bogus liberation movements like the *Front de Libération et de l'Unité* (FLU). This did not prevent Edouard Moha and his movement from returning to Morocco at the end of the year to join forces with FLU. Moha claimed he had been tricked by the Algerians who wanted to take over his movement and merge it with the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia-el-Hamra and Rio de Oro* (POLISARIO), originally an anti-Spanish movement formed in May 1973 at Nouakchott. Moha described the movement as a "creature of the Algerian regime," ostensibly campaigning for independence, but in reality planning to set up an Algerian satellite that would give Algeria access to the Atlantic and divide Morocco and Mauritania.

Hard evidence of Spanish and Algerian complicity has yet to be revealed, especially as Spain, since 1975, has been unusually reticent. Former high-ranking members of POLISARIO have remarked in personal conversations that there was a secret accord, in October 1975, between Algeria and Spain on the one hand and Algeria and POLISARIO on the other, in which the guerilla movement would go into the Western Sahara after the Spanish withdrawal. In effect, the aim was to turn the desert province into an Algerian protectorate. There is some evidence to support this view. In early 1975, Algeria launched a campaign to win over Spain with the help of its very able ambassador in Madrid, Abdulatif Khelladi. Algeria promoted extensive Spanish-Algerian economic cooperation, and also cultivated Spanish socialists, senior officers, and ministers in an attempt to minimize Morocco's considerable influence in Spain.

The UN mission visited the Sahara in May and June 1975. The mission's observers were from the Ivory Coast, Cuba, and Iran and their visit was marked by wild demonstrations in El Aioun, Smara, and Villa Cisneros. The demonstrations—organized by POLISARIO —demanded independence and a socialist state; waving flags and banners, demonstrators daubed slogans on buildings and raced around the territory in fleets of Land Rovers. The Spanish colonial administration professed to be surprised at the demonstrations but to some this now seems disingenuous. It was unlikely that such a highly-organized demonstration could have been arranged without the knowledge of the Spanish governor. There is also a suspicion that the Spanish authorities in the Sahara were divided among themselves over the future of the territory. Sahraouis, who were members

of the jemaa noted that one faction in the Spanish governor's office was determined to hold on to the territory while another secretly sympathized with POLISARIO.

The leader of PUNS, Khalihenna Ould Rachid, was convinced of Spanish-Algerian collusion and defected to Morocco, saying that POLISARIO was created by the Algerians and enjoyed the connivance of leftists in the Spanish military. The Spanish Governor, General Salazar, has subsequently claimed that he considered his mission to be to prevent an invasion of the area by FLU and Morocco, to withdraw his troops and then ". . . . let the Moroccans and the Algerians fight over it" (An Nahar, 1978). The Spanish government vacillated, Sahraoui insurgency increased, the Spanish army withdrew to coastal garrisons, Sahraoui troops mutinied, and deserters from the native *Policia Territorial* joined the ranks of POLISARIO. Then in November 1975 as General Franco lay dying, King Hassan mounted an audacious peaceful invasion of the Sahara —the Green March. The Spanish, fearing a protracted Portuguese-style anti-colonial insurgency, and obsessed with the succession to Franco accepted the fait accompli and on November 14, 1975, in Madrid, signed a tripartite agreement with Morocco and Mauritania. The secret negotiations over Spain's withdrawal have yet to be divulged and Spanish officials who were involved are still locked in controversy. In March 1978, a Spanish parliamentary enquiry stated that senior Spanish officials knew little more than the public did about Spanish-Moroccan negotiations in October 1975 (The Times, 1978a). The Spanish ambassador to the UN at that time, Jaime de Piniés, stated that he had learned from newspapers that a ministerial mission from Madrid had been sent to Rabat to discuss the Sahara at the same time as the Moroccan representative to the UN was announcing that a special envoy from Spain had discussed a solution with King Hassan, ". . . which would bear in mind Moroccan interests." Referring to the tripartite agreement, he said "I had no part in it and I was not informed about the Madrid pact." The former Secretary-General of the Sahara, Colonel Viguri, testified: "There are pressure groups that still exist who want the villain of the farce to be the Saharan people, but the villain can be found in higher places." He blamed "friends of the Franco family" for the "incomprehensible" decision to withdraw from the Sahara without holding the promised referendum on independence. He

identified the former Minister of the National Movement, Jose Solis, as a "standard bearer" of a group that favored handing over the territory to Morocco.

The Spanish ambassador to Morocco at the time, Martin Gamero, said that Senor Solis' visit to King Hassan "came out of the blue." The ambassador learned of the visit one hour before the minister arrived in Morocco. Senor Gamero referred to the Green March—in which thousands of Moroccan civilians entered the Sahara—as an ultimatum, saying that the Moroccan foreign minister had told him that if Spain resisted the peaceful invasion, it would be held responsible for any victims and that Moroccan armed forces would intervene. Senor Gamero added that he was unaware, until he listened to the evidence before the committee, that the Spanish government could have approved a plan for UN intervention on the very day the Green March entered the Sahara.

The full story is still unknown. A Western diplomat who was closely involved in the events of late 1975 believed that the explanation of the Solis mission by Colonel Viguri was unsatisfactory. With its morale already low because of the uncertainty of Franco's succession, the Spanish army saw the Sahara as a serious burden. What does seem probable is that Spain and Morocco had already colluded in a deal over the Sahara. It is also probable that although the Green March was an unpleasant surprise for Spain, both sides maintained close communication and thereby prevented further incidents.

III. RIVAL CLAIMS

Morocco

In modern history, Morocco first claimed the Sahara provinces —but only Tarfaya and Ifni—in 1956. But in earlier periods, e.g., the thirteenth century, Moroccan tribes extended their influence down to the Senegal river, inland to Timbuktu, across to Tunis, and up into Spain. Most of the country's rulers have originated in the south, and the present Alawite dynasty can trace its lineage to the district of Guelta Zemmour in Moroccan-occupied Sahara.

About 1895, a religious leader, Ma el-Ainin, built up a power base at Smara in defiance of the Spanish protectorate and advancing French forces. Although his allegiance to the Moroccan sultans was ambivalent, he did act as their agent (the 'blue sultan') and consolidated Moroccan control in the south until his death in 1910. When the French and Spanish protectorates ended in 1956, Moroccan nationalists of the Istiqlal party sent guerillas deep into the desert to recover the provinces. By the end of 1957 they had pushed Spanish forces back into the coastal settlements of Villa Cisneros, El Aioun, Tarfaya, and Ifni; the success was short-lived because in February 1958, the Moroccans were evicted from the Sahara by combined Spanish and French forces.

The late King Mohammed V persuaded Spain to evacuate the Tekna protectorate and Tarfaya in April 1958, and the Ifni enclave was handed over 11 years later. The king preferred to negotiate because of his friendship with General Franco, who had supported him against France, and also because he did not want to lose the initiative to the Istiqlal. He did not, however, drop his claims to the Sahara. He even joined with the Istiqlal in the party's campaign to annex Mauritania as well. The king and the party claimed that all the territory from Tarfaya down to the Senegal river had been part

of Morocco before the colonial era. During this period, Morocco tried unsuccessfully to oppose the creation of the state of Mauritania, which became independent in 1960. Essentially, the Moroccan claims rested on the historical argument that the Sahraouis had recognized the spiritual and temporal authority of the sultan, that Moroccan sultans had appointed *caids* in the region, and collected taxes. The Spanish colonization, it was argued, had thus occupied a territory inhabited by a people owing allegiance to the sultan; Spain should now withdraw, since imperial rule was no longer legitimate and the territory should become part of the Moroccan state (Knapp, 1977).

The discovery of phosphate deposits at Bou Craa in 1963 sharpened Morocco's interest in the south but hardened the position of the Spanish. Spain continued to resist Moroccan claims until Morocco had the question of the future of the Sahara placed on the agenda of the UN. In 1970 the UN passed a resolution sponsored by Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania that invited Spain to organize a plebiscite among the Sahraouis to determine the territory's future.

By 1974, the deterioration of Moroccan-Algerian relations, despite Algerian warmth at the Arab summit in October, the emergence of POLISARIO, and a changed Spanish policy, precipitated Moroccan activity. The diplomatic campaign began in earnest in July 1974, and there was an element of brinkmanship in King Hassan's timing. A year earlier he had survived yet another assassination bid (others occurred in July 1971, and August 1972), following accusations of corruption, repression, and elitism; the king, therefore, badly needed to rehabilitate his image. His strategy was popular with the domestic parties and the country was united against Spanish intransigence. For 15 months diplomatic lobbying was skillfully conducted by the king, but without result. In October 1975, the International Court of Justice announced its advisory opinion declaring that there had been evidence of some allegiance to the Moroccan sultans but not enough to establish a clear claim of Moroccan sovereignty or override the principle of self-determination as defined by the UN. The king recovered swiftly from his set-back and organized the Green March. On November 6, he assembled 350,000 unarmed volunteers for the peaceful invasion that stopped at the mined defense-line manned by the Spanish some 7 miles inside the border. UN alarm was calmed by the king's assurance that the invasion was symbolic, and on November 9 it was

called off (La Marche Verte, 1976). It is conceivable that by this time the king knew that a deal with Spain was assured. The march appeared to be a calculated risk and it was described as the "poker game of the century." But it does now seem to have had the tacit approval of certain Spanish government leaders, some of them close personal friends of King Hassan.

Algeria

As a nation-state, Algeria has not made any formal claim to the Western Sahara; however, since the recent conflict began the Algerian media has expounded the right of historical conquest in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet historical evidence shows that this conquest was no more than French-led Algerian patrols in pursuit of Reguibat and Delim raiders who operated from bases in southern Morocco (Trout, 1969). Thus, for the moment, there seem to be two motives for Algeria's claim: ideological and economic (Middle East International, 1976). President Boumedienne may have had a republican's dislike for the conservative monarchy of Morocco. In addition, Boumedienne may have been motivated by his memory of the severe beating Algerian troops, under his command, took in October 1963 during the Moroccan attempt to recover the iron ore deposits at Gara-Djebilet, southeast of Tindouf. In 1969, the OAU settled the dispute and both countries agreed to the joint exploitation of the Tindouf deposits; the agreement has yet to be implemented.

A pro-Algerian victory in the Western Sahara would permit Algerian access to the Bou Craa phosphate deposits, and to the Atlantic ports of Laayoun and Dakhla for the future transport of iron ore deposits from Tindouf. At the seventh Arab summit at Rabat in October 1974, President Boumedienne declared that no problem existed between Algeria and Morocco. At the summit he told Arab leaders that if Mauritania and Morocco were to "... adopt a formula for an accord between their two countries, to undertake liberation (of the Sahara) and delimit what will be the Moroccan zone and the Mauritanian zone, I will be one of the first to approve." The complete text of his speech was not released to the press but a careful reading of it reveals an exceptional cordiality toward the Moroccan and Mauritanian leaders. In retrospect, this statement may have been based on the conviction that (a) Spain would not

withdraw merely because of another UN resolution; (b) that Morocco and Mauritania would never agree; and (c) that Boumedienne believed that Mauritania was firmly on his side.

The last point was an illusion. As Spanish rule came to a close, Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania began to negotiate. The Algerian leader rightly suspected a sell-out, and just before the Madrid agreement President Boumedienne met President Ould Daddah at Colomb Bechar and threatened him with untold consequences unless he abandoned Morocco. The Mauritanian leader subsequently stated that Boumedienne asserted he would send "tens of thousands" of Algerian troops to help POLISARIO dislodge Morocco and Mauritania from the Sahara. President Ould Daddah stood his ground, partitioned the territory in 1975, and signed a defense pact with Morocco in 1977.

Since 1975 and early 1976, there have been no direct Algerian claims to the territory. Instead, Algerian support for POLISARIO in the Western Sahara can be more accurately described as a wish to *deny* the Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. Algerian media statements were meant to convey the impression that Morocco's historical claim was weak and that Algeria could, if it wished, make an equally strong claim. Moreover, since the conflict began Algeria's relations with France—a key political and economic factor—have deteriorated. And since November 1977, when President Sadat of Egypt made his historic visit to Jerusalem, Algeria's foreign policy has been under intense pressure in efforts to try and coordinate an Arab states' "rejection front" opposed to Egypt.

Mauritania

Current Mauritanian-Moroccan accord is in marked contrast to the mutual suspicion of 20 years ago. In 1956 Morocco claimed not only the Sahara but large areas of Mauritanian territory as well. Mauritania—which only became independent in 1960—has historic tribal links with the territory. In the eleventh century, Mauritania and the Sahara were conquered by the powerful Berber tribes of Jdala and Lemtuna who produced a combined fighting force, the Almoravides. In the twelfth century the Almoravides subjected the whole of Morocco as well as the Arab empire in southern Spain. The cultural and ethnic patterns visible in contemporary Mauritania

testify to the Arab and African empires to which it was exposed. Until 1960, the country had no previous history as a nation-state. It was a tribal community of Arabs, Saharan Berbers (Tuaregs), arabized Berbers, blacks who are not Africans but descendants of an old Saharan race, and African blacks who are descendants of slaves. The north is predominantly Arab or Sahraoui, and the south predominantly African. The socio-economic system in the north may be described as nomadic. The south, however, is settled and given over to arable farming. Historically, as well as in social and economic terms, the modern state of Mauritania may be identified as a western extension of the Sahara.

The indigenous population of Mauritania and of the Western Sahara are of the same ethnic stock and could therefore claim historical rights to statehood as a nationality. One school of thought questions whether a century-long conquest, conducted nearly a millennium ago, would be a tenable claim in contemporary international law. Although the joint border agreement of April 1976 has yet to be ratified by the international community, the arrangement seems to have become an accomplished fact. There is no prospect that Morocco will relinquish its segment of the Sahara, but the legitimacy of Mauritania's claim to the territory was revived in mid-1978.

On 10 July the regime of President Ould Daddah was bloodlessly overthrown and was succeeded by a group of officers led by Colonel Ould Salek. POLISARIO declared a cease-fire against Mauritania in an attempt to drive a wedge between Rabat and Nouakchott. As rumors of peace negotiations arose, France proposed some kind of Sahraoui province federated with Mauritania. Its location was reported to be a part of the region claimed by Mauritania in the Western Sahara, known as Tiris el-Gharbiya. However, Ould Salek renewed his links with Morocco and in August 1978, Morocco and Mauritania declared their opposition to a *new, independent* state, but neither excluded the possibility of a federated state with limited autonomy. In the Mauritanian view this amounts to a willingness to "reabsorb the Saharan people" (Arabia and the Gulf, 1978a).

IV. POLISARIO

Origins

As with most militant groups in the developing world, the origin of the movements in the Western Sahara lie in the nationalist feelings of the children of Sahraoui merchants and traders, who received higher education in Morocco, Spain, and France. Between 1966 and 1973, the main militant groups were the FLS, MOREHOB, and PUNS; none were effective because they lacked military support and were divided by internal squabbles and interstate rivalry. The *Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro* (POLISARIO) dates its formation from May 10, 1973 at Nouakchott and its first recorded action was against Spanish troops at El Khanga, Tifariti, and Bir Lahlou on May 25, 1973. It published a communique in Nouakchott on July 20, 1973, which stated that its guerillas had attacked several Spanish forts and that it was campaigning for a UN referendum to cede Rio de Oro to Mauritania. It held its first congress in August that year; however, no clear political program emerged until the second congress at Ain ben-Tili in August (25 to 31) 1974, when it was decided that POLISARIO should seek an independent, non-aligned state; its 27-point program proposed, *inter alia,* scientific socialism, land reform, a mobilization of "the masses," and a charter for human rights and for the liberation of women. Given the socio-economic system of the Sahraoui and the sizeable territory, the program was fanciful. In five years the movement has held four congresses, two of them in Mauritania and the other two in "liberated territory," which most observers believe to be southern Algeria.

POLISARIO's first prominent leader was El Ouali Mustapha Said, (b.1945), a member of the Reguibat tribe, with links also to the Ma el-Ainin tribe. In his early years, El Ouali was a strict Moslem and

an admirer of the extreme right-wing Moslem Brotherhood. His politics were anti-colonialist, i.e., anti-Spanish, and his first attempt to set up a Sahraoui state received political support from Mauritania and military aid from Libya. For two years after its formation, POLISARIO's links with Morocco and Mauritania were friendly. But by June 1975 it was an open secret that Morocco, Mauritania, and Spain were considering a deal for partitioning the territory. In an attempt to head off the prospect of a sell-out, POLISARIO negotiated at Tindouf with the president of the *Jemaa*, Khatri Said Ould Joumani, but there was no agreement. El Ouali then tried to make a deal with the Spanish; he met the Spanish governor, General Salazar, but, to this day, no reliable account of those talks has appeared. Between spring and autumn 1975, POLISARIO, prompted by Algeria, had moved its headquarters to Tindouf. El Ouali, at this time, was joined by two prominent Mauritanian exiles: Ahmed Baba Miské, former ambassador to the UN, and Ibrahim Ould Darwish, a labor activist whose political effort in Mauritania was to establish liaison between the governing party and the labor organizations (Gaudio, 1977).

POLISARIO's structure is rudimentary: there is a Provisional National Council but effective control rests with a seven-man Executive Committee, itself drawn from a 21-member Political Bureau. How far this body represents the Sahraoui is uncertain because the controlling elite is not exclusively Sahraoui but Mauritanian, Malian, Algerian, and Moroccan. At the highest level of the movement, it is clear that Sahraouis are in the minority; the ranks of the paramilitary are even more variegated and include Sahraouis of the three main tribal confederations, refugees, and Sahraoui deserters from the Spanish Foreign Legion. Between 1973 and 1975, POLISARIO's numbers were steady at about 800 but by mid-1978 had risen to about 5,000, although this figure was falling because of defections. In mid-1978, several returnees, in separate interviews, described how Algerian troops control camps in Tindouf. There were 16 camps, each with 800 people, making a total of 12,800 in all. Over half of them were nomads, refugees from the Sahel drought. Most of the defectors estimated that POLISARIO—in mid-1978—had a strength of about 5,000 and the largest single group at Tindouf was from the Algerian faction of the Reguibat tribe—about 50 percent. The remainder was a mixture of other tribes. The first leader,

El Ouali, was killed in June 1976 after an abortive raid on Nouakchott; he was temporarily replaced by Mahfoud Laroussi, the movement's military organizer; he in turn was replaced on August 28, 1976, by Mohammed Abdelaziz, of whom little is known.

Training, Support, and Propaganda

POLISARIO is in every sense an Algerian creation and nearly all the military training and recruiting is carried out at Tindouf and at the refugee and training camps of Hafid Boudjemaa and Hassi Robinet—the latter is 120 miles from Tindouf. A few, mainly the political cadres, are trained outside Algeria, in Syria and Libya. Advanced weapons training, such as use of SAM missiles, is provided by Algerian instructors at the military air base near Tindouf, where a squadron of aging MiG-15s is operative. Algeria is the sole material supporter of the guerillas. Defectors, prisoners, surrendered enemy personnel (SEPs), and nomads have testified to the presence of Cubans, North Vietnamese, and East Germans at Tindouf. This testimony, however, should be treated with scepticism because no independent evidence, e.g., Western press reports, has been presented. When Fidel Castro visited Algiers in March 1977 and September 1978, he met POLISARIO representatives and supported the Sahraoui claim to self-determination. That expression of support, however, is well short of actually committing cash, weapons, and advisors.

Weaponry is mixed, but mainly Soviet, and includes light automatic rifles, heavy machine-guns, mines, incendiaries, explosives, and SAM missiles. Periodically, Moroccan Air Force jet fighters have been shot down by missile fire. At least two F-5s have been shot down and their pilots taken prisoner (January 1976 and September 1978); Mauritanian transport aircraft have also been casualties. POLISARIO's mobility is made possible by Land Rovers, some supplied by Algeria, but mostly captured or stolen from the departed Spanish forces, the Moroccan army, or the commercial companies at work in the Sahara. In November 1977, two guerillas surrendered to the Moroccans. Both were from the Izarguen tribe and brought in their Kalashnikovs and Algerian training manuals. In their testimony they described how a typical four-man guerilla unit was supervised and controlled by an Algerian officer. They also revealed that Sahraouis from Morocco and Mauritania were in a minority in

POLISARIO compared to nomads from Mali, Niger, Libya, and Algeria. This seems to support the Moroccan claim that the Algerians have diluted the Sahraoui element by recruiting "Tuareg mercenaries" from areas well beyond the accepted Sahraoui tribal frontiers.

The propaganda war is strident; POLISARIO is given time on Algerian radio as the *Voice of Free Sahara* and this is underpinned by the Algerian media both for domestic consumption and the international press corps. POLISARIO can also count on the diplomatic support of North Korea, the Seychelles, and eight African states: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Togo. To further legitimize POLISARIO, Algeria arranged the proclamation on February 27, 1976, of the *République Arabe Sahraouie Democratique* (RASD). The ceremony was held at midnight in "liberated territory," allegedly at Bir Lahlou in the Western Sahara, 90 miles from Algeria. El Ouali later said it was "near" Bir Lahlou but in reality the ceremony seems to have taken place in Algeria. Foreign newsmen who were present could not verify the location because it was in the middle of the night. The Moroccans took newsmen to Bir Lahlou five days later in daylight and they saw no signs of POLISARIO or the RASD.

The RASD "government," announced on 5 March 1976, consisted of Mohammed Lamine Ould Ahmed (Premier) born in Tantan, Morocco; Brahim Ghali Ould Mustapha (Defense Minister) born in Smara; Mahfoud Laroussi (Minister of the Interior and Justice) born in Aoussert; Hakim Brahim (Foreign Minister) born in Mauritania; Mohammed Salem Ould Salek (Information Minister) born near Smara; and three permanent secretaries: Moulay Ahmed Ould Babi (Finance, Trade and Supplies), Salek Ould Boubeh (Health, Education and Social Affairs) who was killed in a clash at Guelta Zemmour April 24, 1976, and Hamoudi Ahmed Ould Baba (Energy and Communications) (see Appendix 2). All these names are aliases or *noms de guerre.*

The RASD "government" would appear to have only skimpy support. None of its leaders appear to have been members of the jemaa, the Sahraoui assembly alternative to RASD. Considerable doubt remains about the role of the jemaa during the critical troubles of November 1975—January 1976. At the time of the Green March, the jemaa was an assembly of 103 members. On November 28, 1975,

the assembly met at Guelta Zemmour and one version (An-Nahar, 1978) reports that 74 tribal leaders present voted unanimously in favor of the Moroccan/Mauritanian take over. POLISARIO claimed that 67 of the 103 members had fled to Algeria and so claimed the vote was a farce. The 67 members, according to the Algerian version, then signed documents that denounced the takeover. A third version is the statement of Bechir Ould Brahim, who claims that on November 28, while on a visit to Guelta Zemmour to rally support for King Hassan, he was abducted by POLISARIO. He was beaten and bound and taken via Mahbes and Tindouf to Algiers. Eighty-six tribal leaders were also rounded up by POLISARIO. Bechir met President Boumedienne and later reported that the Algerian leader said that "the Western Sahara is part of Algeria." Bechir was returned to Tindouf and displayed outward support for Boumedienne; however, on January 11 or 12, 1976 he escaped across the border, made his way to Boujdour, and reached Laayoun on January 13, where he declared his allegiance to Morocco. Since that time a majority of the dissenters returned to Morocco and to local governments. Most of them profess disillusionment at the Algerian role in using POLISARIO for its own ends. Other members, more prosaically, point out that they returned because the Moroccan development plan will give them political and financial incentives. Tribal fluidity, however, places Sahraouis on both sides. Senior members of the jemaa freely admitted that they had relatives among the guerillas; one member—who was a deputy and merchant —expressed his exasperation at his brother's membership in the guerilla group but was confident that it would only be a matter of time before they were reunited as business partners in bustling Laayoun.

Tactics

The nature of the environment imposes rigid constraints on the military tactics, as do available manpower, equipment, and targets. Between May 1973 and November 1975, POLISARIO activity was fitful, uncoordinated, and consisted mainly of propaganda visits to desert settlements and long-range fusillades at Spanish garrisons. The Moroccan-Mauritanian partition and Algeria's opposition to it produced a qualitative change in POLISARIO activity.

The sudden arrival of thousands of Moroccan troops in the Western Sahara in November 1975 took the Algerians and the guerillas by surprise. The latter withdrew to Tindouf where they were armed, trained, medicated, and indoctrinated by regular Algerian troops. But their early, joint operations were not very successful. On January 27, 1976, a major clash occurred between Moroccan and Algerian troops at Amgala, a waterhole, 180 miles from the Algerian border. A large column of vehicles of the regular Algerian army was engaged by the Moroccans. The Algerians claimed that the column was on a mercy mission "taking supplies to Saharan refugees." The Algerians were beaten and Morocco took foreign newsmen to the scene where they saw quantities of land-mines made in China, and mortars, recoilless cannons, SAM-7 missiles, and numerous crates of ammunition made in the Soviet Union. All the equipment bore either Libyan or Algerian army markings. On February 15, the Algerians returned to Amgala and fought a second pitched battle, which they also lost. Among casualties in both clashes were 99 Algerian army prisoners taken by the Moroccans. Moroccan prisoners, captured by Algeria, are detained at Tindouf and are kept separate from the civilians.

The defeats at Amgala were a serious reverse for Algeria and POLISARIO. After the second clash, King Hassan called on Algeria either to accept the tripartite agreement or declare war. With an eye to the future, the king had ordered in January, 25 *Mirage* fighters, with options on 50 more. POLISARIO reorganized, and resorted to hit-and-run attacks against Moroccan targets. Originally, it planned a strategy of capturing villages and settlements but the attacks were little more than gestures of armed propaganda because POLISARIO had neither the numbers nor the popularity to hold the towns; in addition, the guerillas compromised their mobility. There is no serious prospect of POLISARIO defeating the combined conventional forces of Morocco (89,000) and Mauritania (8,000)—Morocco has 20,000 troops in the south and 9,000 in Mauritania—and the failure of the 1976 offensives exposed the poverty of the military option (Military Balance, 1978-1979).

Vulnerable to Moroccan air-strikes and long-range desert patrols, the guerillas chose the easier tactic of economic attrition, especially against Mauritania. Another principal target is the phosphate complex at Bou Craa. The conveyor belt was attacked in early 1976,

and the guerillas blew up sections of the belt; they also destroyed some of the pylons that carry power to the two mines from a coastal power station, forcing the mines to close. Since then the phosphate has been transported by truck, security patrols along the phosphate route have increased, and the exodus of key workers, unnerved by earlier attacks, has now diminished. But the belt remains vulnerable; in June 1978, one of the control stations, about 20 kilometers south of Laayoun, was destroyed.

"It is hard to find the POLISARIO groups," observed Colonel Bennani, the commander in chief of Morocco's forces in the Sahara, "as they are very small, just two or three vehicles. They come together into larger groups to mount attacks." He said that these normally took place after sunset, allowing the attackers to retreat under cover of darkness, dispersing in several directions to avoid interception (Financial Times, 1978c).

By mid-1978, five sections of the conveyor belt—a total of 5.5 kilometers—had been destroyed, electrical machinery in two control stations had been damaged, and 17 power pylons had been sabotaged. But the *Fosboucraa* management was confident that the belt would be in operation by October 1978. Arguably, Morocco's phosphate trade can carry the loss of the *Fosboucraa* exports for a limited period. In the record year of 1974, the Moroccan export figure was 19.7 million tons of which Bou Craa exported 5 million tons. Morocco's phosphate reserves, 4,000 million tonnes, (metric tons) are the largest in the world, yet only four percent are located in the Sahara.

Since 1976, POLISARIO has melted away into the relative security of the rugged terrain of the Guelta Zemmour massif near the Mauritanian border. Its operations in the Moroccan-held Sahara have been sporadic. The outskirts of Laayoun were shelled in November 1977 and the phosphate belt was attacked in 1978, but direct clashes have been few. In late August there was a controversial incident when Moroccan troops were ambushed in the *oued* Dra. The Moroccan Foreign Ministry claimed that Algerian troops crossed into Moroccan territory. The Algerians denied that any of their troops were involved. However, POLISARIO announced that it would hold a press conference at which Moroccan troops, captured in the incident, would be displayed. POLISARIO spokesman, Omar Hadrami, promised that journalists would be free to interview

the prisoners. The foreign press corps is still waiting to be invited.

Fighting a losing battle in the Moroccan part of the Western Sahara, POLISARIO, in early 1977, chose the easier tactic of economic attrition against Mauritania, the weaker partner. That country's size, emptiness, small army, and fragile economy have made it a sitting target. Its iron ore deposits are at Zouerate, nearly 400 miles from the port of Nouadhibou, and in 1976 the vital rail link between the mines and the coast was attacked three times. In February 1977, guerillas blew up three locomotives. As Mauritania earns 80 percent of its foreign exchange from iron ore exports, the government has been forced to stockpile nearly six months' supply at the port.

POLISARIO's direct military operations in Mauritania have been disastrous. On June 8, 1976, a large guerilla column made an 800-mile trip across the desert to the outskirts of Nouakchott and lobbed 37 mortar shells into the town. It was a strong force—500 to 600 men and 100 vehicles—but the attack was beaten off and, while retreating, the guerillas were decimated by Mauritanian troops; the leader, El Ouali, was killed.

For nearly a year guerilla operations against Mauritania fell away, but on May 1, 1977, the Zouerate iron mining center was attacked and two French nationals were killed and six others taken hostage. That raid was the first in which Europeans were killed and its consequences exacerbated existing tensions between Algeria and France. President Mokhtar Ould Daddah was himself a target on July 3 when guerillas shelled the presidential palace in Nouakchott. That attack was probably designed to coincide with the OAU summit in Libreville, where Algeria tried to place the Sahara dispute on the agenda.

The geographic remoteness of the territory is an obstacle to POLISARIO in widening the insurgency. Moreover, it has not succeeded in weaving a terrorist network in Moroccan cities, although one activist was arrested in a secondary school in Inezgane, a suburb of Agadir. Its foreign operations have been confined to the attempted assassination of the Mauritanian ambassador to France on July 7, 1977; the gunmen claimed to be members of the "Mustapha El Ouali Sayed International Brigade."

Propaganda attempts to convince the Sahraouis that POLISARIO is fighting a "popular war" have also misfired. Recruitment for the organization is accomplished through money, indoctrination,

and intimidation. Defectors, in interviews, have given various reasons for joining the guerillas. One, a camel-herder from Smara, described how he had been forcibly abducted by POLISARIO in March 1976. He was a target because he had some standing and influence as a tribal elder. He was taken, bound, to Tindouf where he was tortured and kept tied. He still bore signs of fierce welts on his wrists and ankles. He claimed to know of more people who had died under torture. He said that four tried to escape but were captured, and they denounced 45 others who had been in on the escape plot. Their fate is unknown. The Smara tribesman eventually escaped his captors.

Another defector originally joined because he was a friend of El Ouali and was sympathetic to the cause. However, he left the movement after 9 months because it was totally controlled by the Algerian army. Both defectors stated that the POLISARIO camps are swollen by nomads who are refugees from the Sahel drought, and once in the camps they are not allowed to leave. Neither defector was able to throw any light on the fate of RASD Minister of the Interior, Mahfoud Laroussi, who was arrested by the Algerians in August 1977. It seems that he had strongly criticized Algeria's control of the guerilla movement.

Intimidation has also damaged Sahraoui society. In late 1975 and early 1976, POLISARIO abducted women—some never returned and are believed killed. Because of the Sahraoui socio-economic system women play a much larger economic role than is customary in such societies—it is a matriarchal society in all but name—consequently, abducting the women cuts at the very roots of that society. If peace is restored to the Sahara, it is probable that a mood of blood and vengeance between the Sahraoui and former terrorists will be a major security problem for Morocco and Mauritania.

V. RESPONSE TO POLISARIO

Morocco

Military

In the weeks following the Green March, the build up of Moroccan troops was rapid but uncoordinated. It was also expensive; policing the new territory required additional troops and FAR rose from 73,000 in 1975 to 84,650 by mid-1976, increasing the defense budget from $258 million to $345.9 million (Military Balance, 1976-1977; 1977-1978). Few developing countries can afford their defense programs and Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania are no exceptions.

Saturating the area with troops had a significant political effect on the Saharouis, who respect strength, and the Moroccan victory at Amgala made converts (Washington Review, 1978). FAR's initial tactics, however, were over-enthusiastic and costly. Inching out from Laayoun, FAR was in unfamiliar territory, had little local intelligence, and responded to resistance with uncompromising firepower. The inexperience, size, and caution of FAR made it an easy target for guerilla raids, especially against the army's communications. A distinctive feature of the conflict has been the ferocity of the battles.

In the first few months of 1976, Moroccan, Mauritanian, and POLISARIO losses were high; between January 1976 and August 1977, FAR lost about 800 men, Mauritania lost a similar number, and POLISARIO losses were slightly higher. In two years the guerillas claim to have killed over 20,000 Moroccan troops—a figure

equal to the entire Moroccan force in the area, or twice the Mauritanian army. The only official Moroccan figures ever revealed (4 June 1977) were "between 215 and 270 casualties"; those figures are too low and most diplomatic observers in Rabat suggest figures of 1,200 to 1,500. If the casualties were higher, the "traffic in coffins would cause political problems." Periodically the casualties, FAR's defensive tactics, the conditions of service, and official silence have led to eruptions of indiscipline and desertion, especially by Moroccan troops of northern origin. Several families have given the government awkward moments when they query why their sons are returned for burial or to have wounds treated. Motivating the army is crucial and some changes have been made. Since 1977, troops in the south have been regularly rotated and given double pay. Morale is high, the officer corps is youthful, strongly motivated, and in addition to fighting a war is imbued with a pioneering spirit toward the development program.

The Algerian defeat at Amgala restored the army's morale, and gradually FAR moved out into the Sahara along the tracks and into the principal settlements and by March 1976 was patrolling the Algerian border. Currently the troops' role is mainly one of policing, surveillance, regular patrolling, and interdiction along the border, the main tracks, and roads. They are supported by aerial reconnaissance and strike aircraft, and POLISARIO defectors admit that Morocco's incessant aerial vigilance inflicts major physical damage; it also lowers the morale of the guerillas who complain at Algeria's careful rationing of SAM missiles.

FAR units nevertheless remain vulnerable to ambush and long-range mortar attack; in February 1977, a Moroccan F-5 was shot down and a few weeks later a FAR patrol was ambushed; on 14 October 60 Moroccan troops were killed in an ambush at Sabkra Oum Drouss while on their way to relieve a Mauritanian unit. That ambush, and the attack on French advisers working at the Zouerate iron-ore installations, dramatically shifted the balance of forces. On October 27, France flew 2,400 troops to Senegal, supported by *Jaguar* strike aircraft, and from there they were dispatched to protect French nationals in Morocco and Mauritania. Since that time the Jaguars have been in action on at least six sorties. One sortie in May 1978 drew a strong Algerian protest but French Foreign Minister Louis de Guiringaud declared that while France wanted to have

bilateral relations with Algeria, its policies in Africa could not be dictated by Franco-Algerian cooperation: "France wants to have political independence and will maintain it."

The attack of October 1977 was also significant because of King Hassan's threat to exercise the "right of pursuit" in the future if the "Algerian mercenaries" were to violate Moroccan or Mauritanian frontiers. Fortunately, despite provocations this threat has not been carried out. There have been several incidents; in November 1977 Laayoun was shelled; in June 1978, the phosphate conveyor belt was attacked; on August 27, Moroccan troops were ambushed along the *oued* Dra; and on 29 September, Moroccan forces clashed with either POLISARIO guerillas or Algerian troops at Hassi and Telemsi, close to the border. In an energetic protest to President Boumedienne, King Hassan accused the Algerian armed forces of violating the frontier to attack a Moroccan army supply column. Moroccan officials stated that Algerian troops crossed the border twice, and in the second attack used tanks and armored vehicles.

Many of FAR's junior officers have considered striking into Algeria and destroying the bases at Tindouf, but the political consequences of such an assault would be incalculable and, presumably, have been carefully assessed in Rabat. Nevertheless, the Moroccan response to Algerian armed subversion is not purely military. In an area the size of the Moroccan part of the Western Sahara, FAR's 20,000 troops deployed there are fully stretched. If a military solution were to be pursued, Morocco would have to move in nearly three times the manpower, at vast cost and at the expense of the civil aid program and to the detriment of the fragile socio-economic system now emerging.

Civil Aid

Morocco's answer to Algeria in the Western Sahara is the *Plan d'Urgence*. Drawn up in May 1977 and approved in June, the plan is a cash development program. The plan was drawn up with the advice and assistance of local Sahraoui chieftains. The basic feasibility studies were done between May and September 1976 and all the projects have been started. Some were meant to be completed by the end of 1977 and the remainder by late 1978. However, the initial optimism was misplaced because the scale of modernization and the cost were much greater than anticipated. Moreover, the oc-

casional guerilla raid does have a deterrent effect. Nevertheless, those administrators in the field who are charged with carrying out the plan seem ebullient.

The plan—whose aim is to settle a nomadic population by providing amenities and services at Laayoun, Smara, and Boujdour—has a budget of $364 million. Most of this will be spent on projects to provide water—location, extraction, purification, desalination, and distribution—to be carried out by the Ministry of Public Works and Communications (Economap, 1977). There are problems, not the least of which is cost. Desalination is the least cost-effective method of producing water, but it is the only solution for Boujdour, which is on the coast. At Laayoun and Smara the problem is the depth at which the water lies; in the case of Smara, at 1,000 meters. But in July 1977, the *Office Nationale de l'Eau Potable* (ONEP) discovered a reservoir northwest of Laayoun only 400 meters below ground. Apart from the cost of extraction, there will also arise the problem of depletion becausc the water resources are nonrenewable.

In close support of the water program are health care and education. When the Spanish withdrew they left no public service amenity. Arid zone infections like trachoma and tuberculois—which the Spanish treated as a common cold—are prevalent, but a flying doctor service, and resident medical orderlies loaned by the military have begun to check the spread of infectious diseases. Self-care is still a problem because, in general, nomads who are hospitalized have little concept of personal hygiene and wounds, fractures, and infections, therefore, take longer to heal. The learning process is slow.

Once the water program and distribution network are completed, and the public services begin to develop, the socio-economic system in the Sahara will become more sedentary. In three years, Laayoun, the provincial capital, has become a busy town and resembles a vast construction yard. A British parliamentary delegation toured the Sahara provinces in June 1978 and was favorably impressed with the development plans. One MP said that the desert was being urbanized, and pointed to Laayoun's first-ever traffic jam. More seriously, the governor's office revealed that it had received 3,000 building applications in 12 months, four of them from women. Basic brick-on-brick building is done by the Sahraouis, but design, finishing, and quality control are done by artisans from northern Mo-

rocco. Now that trade has returned to Laayoun, the governor's problem is to try to persuade the local traders to think big and to look further afield, for example, to the Canary Isles or the urban centers of the north instead of the oases and caravan posts of the interior.

In November 1977, the plan's progress was reviewed at a regional conference in Smara and reports were encouraging. In short, the grassroots nature of the development program had already begun to improve the quality of life for the Sahraouis. Roads, houses, schools, hospitals, fish and vegetable markets, mosques, and ports are all at various stages of construction. In the village square at Smara, in July 1978, 33 shops were selling everything from baby food to hardware and light machinery. In this fashion, the development program has had a dramatic effect on population movement and the scale and pace of construction, and this is where the danger lies. The plan has been designed for a regional population of about 74,000. The figure is generally believed to be an underestimate. If the Plan d'Urgence is successful, and if the figures are wrong, the danger is that the system could be swamped by a steady influx of nomads whose traditional socio-economic patterns have been destroyed by politics and drought.

There is some uncertainty about how much of the program can be implemented, mainly because of the cost. Some development cash will be generated by phosphate exports, but the Western Sahara also has known iron ore deposits of some 70 million tons and there are indications of oil (Middle East Economic Digest, 1978). In August 1978, Occidental Petroleum of the United States, signed a preliminary agreement with Morocco for the exploitation of shale oil from two fields in the south. Both fields lie about 60 miles from the Atlantic coast: the first, 20 miles south of Marrakesh and the second, about 60 miles north of the old Spanish Sahara border (Financial Times, 1978b). Other off-shore oil-prospecting licences have been granted to British Petroleum (BP) and to Phillips Petroleum of the United States, covering 35,000 square kilometers off the Western Sahara coast between Laayoun and Boujdour.

King Hassan regards the Moroccan part of the Western Sahara as an area where strategic, political, and economic priorities are tightly woven. Logically, military considerations have influenced the development program. An aerial survey has been conducted

along the coast north of the Mauritanian city of Dakhla to find a suitable site for a naval base; airports are being extended and an ambitious road-building scheme is under way. By far the most ambitious is a 940-kilometer hard-topped road leading south from Bou Craa to Guelta Zemmour, and across the border to link with Zouerate and Atar. Construction has not yet started, but studies have begun under a joint Moroccan-Mauritanian committee. Eventually, the road will link up with Senegal, thus making it Morocco's first direct road link with black Africa. The Moroccan tourist authorities are enthusiastic at the prospect.

In the late twentieth century it seems a novelty to consider building railways, but Morocco has decided to construct a north-south track, linking Laayoun and Marrakesh, at a cost of $19 million. Further south, a coastal route from Laayoun to Dakhla is also being studied.

The Sahara coast teems with fish; French engineers working on development projects, who went sea fishing with rod and line, were disappointed to discover that the fishing was so easy it could be done with a pail. The local fish market in Laayoun is small, and only about 40,000 tons are landed annually. The expanding fishing projects—especially sardine fishing—will probably concentrate on the established ports at Agadir and Essaouira. Nevertheless, four ports are planned for the south at Laayoun, Boujdour, Tarfaya, and Tan Tan. The last two ports are already being built and the *Office Nationale des Peches* (ONP) plans to equip Laayoun with 25 100-ton sardine boats, several refrigerated trawlers, and a 1,000-ton onshore refrigeration unit. The ONP has estimated that the potential annual catch in southern waters could be as high as 400,000 tons.

The success of the civil aid program is self-evident, although Moroccan authorities tend to overestimate progress, and POLISARIO habitually decries it. On October 10, 1978, military sources in Laayoun stated that since 1975, 18,000 Sahraouis had enlisted in the FAR and had been assigned to special units called "Commandos of the Green March" (BBC, 1978d). This is certainly an overestimate but the defection rate to Morocco is high as Sahraouis weigh the choice of economic opportunity and a consumer society in Laayoun, or privation and desert terrorism with Algeria and POLISARIO. Morocco's conservative monarchy is making political changes in the

Western Sahara that could radically alter anything that Algeria or its proxy have imposed.

Political Consensus

In November 1976, Morocco opened a year-long election process that aimed to set new democratic standards. The pyramidal process began at the grass roots with the selection of representatives at village, regional, and provincial levels, together with trade and agricultural representatives. In June 1977, came the decisive election for the parties from which ministers were appointed. Of a population of 16.7 million, 6.5 million went to the June polls in the first general election since 1970. Not surprisingly, the official results gave a landslide victory to the "monarchist" parties, with 140 of the 264 seats in the Parliament (Chamber of Representatives). The losers were the leftists. When the Parliament opened in October 1977, the king remained as the highest executive, assisted by the key offices of Prime Minister, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Interior, and an elite group of trusted palace advisers. The government managed to satisfy nearly every major political group. Of the ministers 14 are *Independant,* five are from the *Istiqlal* party, including Secretary-General Mohammed Boucetta, four from the rural-based *Mouvement Populaire* (MP), and four from the major national labor movement, the *Union Marocaine du Travail* (UMT). The 264 deputies are elected for a 4 year term, which is the duration of parliament. It is divided into government and opposition parties. The main loyalist parties are the Istiqlal (50 seats), which is Morocco's traditional nationalist party; the MP (44 seats), popularly known as the Berber party but which more accurately draws its support from the rural areas; and the Independants. In October 1978, at a congress in Casablanca, the Independants regrouped into a formal party, known as the *Rassemblement Nationale des Independants* (RNI) and it elected Prime Minister Ahmed Osman as its first president. The opposition is principally formed by the *Union Socialiste des Forces Populairs* (USFP) and the *Partie du Progres et du Socialisme* (PPS), the former Communist Party.

It is interesting to note that in the elections in 1976-1977, foreign policy issues were almost ignored during the campaign. Because it was a general election, the Sahraouis were consulted, and in Laayoun they were included on the electoral roll. Observers who

witnessed the Sahraoui voting in Laayoun in June 1977 reported that the process was orderly and popular. During random questioning, the Sahraouis were quite clear why they were voting and understood the issues explained to them.

The first two sessions of Parliament—October 1977 and April 1978—were largely experimental, and most diplomatic observers in Rabat believed it was too early to judge their effectiveness. The USFP was very critical, and the party newspaper, *Liberation,* attacked the government for failing to pass any serious legislation and called on it to take action on foreign policy, economic affairs, human rights, and national planning (Liberation, 1978). Moroccan ministers pointed out that the USFP—with 16 seats—was only one of several parties and, therefore, could not speak for the majority. That is true, but the USFP does have a larger percentage of intellectuals than the other parties and its views were supported by events. At the time the criticism was made—June 1978—there was no sign of a solution to the Sahara conflict; inflation, a trade deficit, and strikes have caused problems, and the Five-Year plan which was to have been presented in 1978 was delayed, then revised to become a Three-Year plan, and it was finally announced in the king's speech on 4 June. On the last point, Parliament was not consulted. The degree of legislative authority that the Parliament will be granted will depend on the king. Because he reigns and rules he is unlikely to become a constitutional monarch like the European model. He is known, however, to be keen to see the democratic experiment work because it will relieve him of many bureaucratic chores. Also, by creating a cautious political dialogue, he may attract technocrats into the system (Bouteleb, 1978). The king is aware that in creating the Parliament he has started a revolutionary process in the Arab world. Bahrain and Kuwait had national assemblies but they were dissolved in 1975 and 1976 respectively, because they became too turbulent. Dissolution could be the fate of the Moroccan Parliament but that will depend on the rate of change that the king and the opposition parties prefer. Moroccan MP's regard Algeria's military regime as having more than a tinge of public relations. Algeria, so the Moroccan argument runs, is a professed political model for the Third World, but all democratic political parties are banned except for the ruling party, which is dominated by the military.

Mauritania

For many good reasons, European observers have pointed to Mauritania as the Sahara's soft underbelly (Arabia and the Gulf, 1977). The country has a total population of 1.45 million. In 1975 its armed forces numbered 2,500, but by mid-1976 there was a rapid increase to 7,450 as POLISARIO attacks intensified. Currently, the number is 15,000 but the army lacks training, is poorly paid and motivated. It has been stiffened, however, by French counter-insurgency advisers and by 9,000 Moroccan troops inside Mauritania, based at Bir Moghrein, Ain ben Tili, Akjoujt, and Zouerate, and at Dakhla in the Mauritanian part of the Western Sahara.

Nor surprisingly, Mauritania's large arid spaces—almost twice the size of France—and its weak army and fragile economy have exposed it to fast-moving sabotage attacks. The iron ore deposits at Zouerate are 650 kilometers from the port of Nouadhibou, and the railway link has been repeatedly attacked. Between 1976-1978, 150 ore freight trains were cancelled because of attacks. In real terms this is equivalent to 1,575,000 tons of ore, worth about $22 million, and some 18 percent of the total iron ore for 1977. Sabotage attacks on the railway have forced Mauritania to cut into its stockpile at Nouadhibou, which has a capacity of 2.5 million tons, to try to keep up the level of foreign sales. This stockpile was reduced by 1 million tons in 1977.

Mauritania's weakness persuaded that country to seek common security with Morocco. After the Zouerate attacks on May 1, both governments signed on May 13, 1977 at Nouakchott, a military assistance agreement. The first working session took place on June 19 at Nouakchott, in which the prime ministers, foreign ministers, and defense ministers participated (L'Opinion, 1977). Details of the High Defense Committee were secret but it is probable that arrangements were made for joint border security measures—including hot pursuit into either country of POLISARIO fugitives—training and assistance, intelligence-sharing, and surveillance of infiltration routes. After the July attack on the presidential palace, 600 Moroccan troops were sent to protect the installations at Zouerate. Since then the FAR presence has been increased to 9,000 troops.

Nevertheless, the cost of the war, economic sabotage, mismanagement, and the disastrous consequences of a seven-year drought all

began to erode the position of President Ould Daddah. On July 10, 1978, he was overthrown in a bloodless coup by Lt. Col. Mustapha Ould Salek, who led a "Military Committee of National Correction." President Salek's early statements revealed that the war had nearly broken Mauritania financially. By the end of 1977 the country's external debt had reached $467 million, and by April 1978 the Ould Daddah government found it difficult even to pay army wages and civil service salaries. Immediately after coming to power, the new regime negotiated $35 million of emergency aid—$15 million from Morocco and $10 million each from France and Libya (Financial Times, 1978).

The new 18-member junta suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament, promising to hold free elections within 6 months. President Salek was slow to respond to POLISARIO's cease-fire. On July 29, Mayor Thiam el Hadj, a member of the new military committee, visited Rabat, where he revealed details of a message sent by President Ould Salek to King Hassan. In part the message said ". . . the heads of state we have contacted have shown a great deal of understanding toward us and are disposed to collaborate in our programs and help us to effect a recovery in all sections that concern us and to arrive at a just, honorable, and global peace." Just a month after he came to power, the new president spoke to the Arab press and outlined his views on the conflict and his future policy. He conceded that the coup of July 10 was arranged with the knowledge of France and Morocco but no officers or advisers of either country were involved. He stated that there were about 30 French advisers assisting Mauritania in its counter-insurgency operation and he was prepared to accept more if the French were to offer them. Contacts with Morocco had already taken place, and in the second week of August, he and the Moroccan defense chief, Colonel Ahmed Dlimi, met at a session of the joint defense committee.

Following the defense talks, the Moroccans redeployed their forces in Mauritania; a 600-strong contingent at Akjoujt, which had been protecting the copper mines, moved north, back to the border. The explanation given by Mauritania for the redeployment was that the copper mines had closed down on May 31 for economic reasons; the mines had not been profitable for some time and they are notoriously difficult to work. The troops were believed to be

redeployed eventually for the protection of the iron ore mines at Zouerate, where 2,500 Moroccan troops were already stationed as a security cordon.

In his first statement on the Sahara conflict since the July coup, King Hassan on August 20 warned that he would not accept any settlement that posed a threat to Morocco's frontiers. While he carefully spelled out his support for Mauritania's desire for peace, he declared he would not tolerate along his borders a regime whose ideology differed from that of Morocco and Mauritania. The king was referring to the widely-circulated French-inspired proposal of creating a Sahara mini-state that would be federated with Mauritania—the region known as Tiris el-Gharbia that was ceded to Mauritania by the Tripartite Declaration of November 1975. The king's counsellor, Reda Guedira, met President Ould Salek on August 22 and repeated the monarch's conditions. Significantly, the king advised the president not to be "seduced" by Libya, which had given Mauritania an outright cash gift after the coup and had been acting as a go-between with POLISARIO. Ahmed Ould Wafi, a member of the Mauritanian military committee, was reported to have been in Libya where he had talked with Colonel Khaddafi on August 10.

In mid-1978, Mauritania was in a difficult position. On August 17, President Ould Salek said that he was not opposed to a referendum in Tiris el-Gharbia. If a referendum were to be held, it would lead initially to frontier changes and would violate the conditions stated by King Hassan on August 20. Although a referendum might appease POLISARIO and allow Mauritania to withdraw from the war, the country could become a sanctuary and transit zone for guerillas striking at Moroccan targets, thus provoking Moroccan retaliation and hot pursuit into Mauritania. Economically, Mauritania was in no position to continue the war, and throughout the summer and autumn, it vacillated between Morocco's hard line and POLISARIO's cease-fire offer. On the one hand, President Ould Salek reiterated his commitment to the joint defense pact and stated that he would not take any unilateral action without first consulting Morocco. On the other hand, his emissaries were meeting POLISARIO representatives in European capitals in exploratory talks. Within Mauritania, officers known to be pro-Moroccan were reportedly being isolated from the troops. One, Colonel Moubarak,

a former inspector-general of the armed forces before the coup, had been posted as ambassador to Bonn.

If Mauritania does negotiate a separate agreement with POLISARIO, Morocco might well occupy the Tiris el-Gharbia where it already has 3,000 troops. The Moroccan government has hinted that this would be likely if such an agreement were to be made. Most Mauritanians believe that the drought and the agricultural disaster are far more serious than the war. Even in a good year only 1 percent of its land is cultivable and food imports are now a way of life. In 1977, only one-tenth of the principal subsistence foods—millet and sorghum—was harvested. Thus far in 1978, the rainfall has been more regular and the prospects are slightly brighter, but the long years of drought have destroyed the nomadic socio-economic system. Only 23 percent of the population is now nomadic compared to 78 percent in 1959. Nouakchott is a squalid prospect as thousands of refugees sprawl around the capital in tents and shanty towns. The capital was planned for 15,000 people when it was founded 20 years ago; in September 1978, officials estimated that the population had risen to 200,000 (Arab News, 1978).

Mauritania will probably continue to sit on the fence, while others like the OAU will try to find a solution to the conflict. In early September 1978, Mauritanian Foreign Minister Cheikhna Ould Mohammed Laghdaf visited Spain and stated that his country was totally opposed to the creation of a new, independent state in the region. He also confirmed that he did not consider POLISARIO a legitimate partner to peace negotiations, adding that ". . . it would be impossible to attempt a peaceful solution without Morocco."

While the Mauritanians were still trying to decide their next steps, the Fourth Congress of POLISARIO was held on September 25-28 in the Oued al-Nasir, allegedly in "liberated territory" but in reality in south Algeria, three hours drive from Tindouf. Among the 400 supporters who attended the Congress were 40 foreign visitors and journalists. Despite the usual verbiage often associated with such meetings a discernible manifesto emerged and was broadcast over Algiers radio, containing the following main points: POLISARIO was to continue its ceasefire in Mauritania; Mauritania was called on to recognize RASD's sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders and to respect territorial unity; and

the recovery of the area occupied by Mauritania (Tiris el-Gharbia) along with the withdrawal of Mauritanian forces to the borders between Mauritania and the Western Sahara was called for. The political statement also confirmed that any settlement must be based on the Sahraouis' right to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty. The theme of the Congress was to try to split the Moroccan-Mauritanian alliance by maintaining the ceasefire. Despite the Mauritanian admission of secret contacts with POLISARIO, the foreign minister pointed out that the contacts were at low level and were done ". . . in collaboration with Morocco, its friend and ally." Not surprisingly, POLISARIO began to suspect a sell-out. Ibrahim Hakim, POLISARIO's "foreign minister," said in Paris that the new Mauritanian regime ". . . is taking advantage of the ceasefire . . . to build up its army again." He warned the new government to change its attitudes. It was now apparent, he said, that the intention was to pull out of the war without actually making peace. "The Front," he added in a prepared statement, "had learned with surprise and legitimate regret that the desire for peace shown by the new regime, when it seized power, hid its real intentions" (The Times, 1978d).

Despite its military composition, the new regime in Mauritania is decidely pro-business; its foreign minister is also president of the *Confédération des Employeurs et Artisans de Mauritanie* (CEAM). The military regime has also continued the policy of the former government by inviting foreign and private investment in state companies. In April 1978, 49 percent of the *Societe Nationale Industrielle et Miniére* (SNIM) was subscribed to by foreign interests such as the Arab Mining Company, the Islamic Development Bank, and banks and companies in Iraq, Kuwait, and Libya. On his accession, President Ould Salek himself promised to encourage "private initiative in the context of a liberal economy."

Algeria

President Boumedienne's motives in supporting POLISARIO were not easily discernible. He and King Hassan met each other on several occasions, and although their personal relationships were hostile they were far from irreparable. Clearly, transporting iron ore from the Tindouf areas through Morocco to the Atlantic coast rather than taking it north to the Mediterranean would be economi-

cally advantageous to both countries. French economists have proposed an economic zone for Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania for the exploitation of mineral reserves at Gara Djebilet. Boumedienne's motive could have been to acquire more territory, but Algeria claims to be a radical, socialist democracy and such a state is not supposed to have territorial designs.

The truth probably is to be found in the personality of President Boumedienne and in Algeria's serious domestic problems. His radical agrarian reforms have not worked; it is one thing to socialize wealth but there is no way of successfully socializing poverty. Algeria's principal resources, oil and gas, produce 90 percent of its revenue, but their successful marketing and distribution depend critically on foreign contracts with the United States, Europe, and Japan. Recently, American banks have been reluctant to lend the state shipping company any more money to buy liquid gas carriers; in June 1977, Japan decided not to offer any more credit to Algeria, and in July that year, the U.S. Federal Power Commission (FPC) equivocated on the question of imports of Algerian liquified natural gas. The FPC's former power of decision now rests with the newly created U.S. Department of Energy.

In 1977, Algeria signed contracts with two U.S. companies, El Paso and Tenneco, and both were expected to be implemented by December 1977. The United States insisted that the delays were purely economic; i.e., to protect the U.S. national gas industry, but the Algerians are sceptical. In their view, the refusal of the United States to grant permits was connected with the Sahara conflict. The vice-president of the state oil company, SONATRACH, Nordine Ait Laoussine, said "It seems to me that the U.S. Government's stand on Algerian gas is basically geopolitical" (Financial Times, 1978a).

Although its standing in the Third World remains high, Algeria's domestic condition has become unstable since 1976, due to a combination of economic problems, internal dissent, and the territorial dispute with Morocco. On March 9, 1976, four veterans of Algeria's independence struggle published a manifesto, *New Appeal to the Algerian People.* (The principals of that struggle were Ferhat Abbas and Youssef Ben Khedda). The economic shortcomings of the regime, Algeria's links with Cuba, and the expensive campaign in the Sahara were sharply criticized in that manifesto. The most

serious criticism was aimed at what dissenters called the personality cult and totalitarian rule of President Boumedienne; the Algerian leader was seen as promoting a foreign adventure in the Sahara to distract attention from a worsening situation. The manifesto could not have appeared at a more awkward time for the regime because it was published just as the Revolutionary Council was putting the final touches to a new constitution designed to perpetuate Algeria's "revolutionary" regime. Although there seemed to be no connection, the appearance of serious political dissidence followed several bomb explosions in January that year. The premises of the government newspaper, *El Mondjahid,* were bombed on January 3 and within days four people were arrested. On February 24, a leaflet supporting the saboteurs' action was published in the Moroccan newspaper, *Le Matin du Sahara.* It claimed to be the news-sheet of the *United Liberation Front for a New Algeria* (FLUNA) which is composed of pro-French Algerians. While drawing attention to the organization's bomb attacks, FLUNA said that "... these bombings mark the beginning of an armed struggle by FLUNA, which has never recognized either a government imposed by force or a policy inspired by a Marxist-Leninist ideal."

Not surprisingly, in this feverish atmosphere all four signatories of the March manifesto were placed under house arrest. But their political and historical prestige within Algeria was indicative of serious and growing opposition. The manifesto attracted widespread but discreet support within the French-trained administration. Political disturbances in August 1977 were unconvincingly dismissed as football hooliganism, and that same month the POLISARIO "minister of the interior" was detained by the Algerians; his fate is unknown. The Algerian opposition is uncompromising; it wants conciliation over the Sahara and is critical of the Western financial involvement in Algeria that has put the foreign debt at over $7 billion. At this rate, Algeria will have to seek financial assistance, probably from the Persian Gulf states; however, any aid granted will undoubtedly have political strings.

From the beginning of 1978, the Algerian leader became increasingly more isolated. Algeria has a widening trade deficit with France; violence between Algerian immigrant workers and the French population has provoked abrasive dialogues between Paris and Algiers, and the Sahara conflict has precipitated French-

Algerian animosity. On the Pan-Arab front, Algeria has sided with the "rejection front" states in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following the Camp David accords in September 1978 between Egypt and Israel, Algeria allied itself with those states—Libya, Syria, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—opposed to a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement.

The combination of external pressures and domestic strains began to tell in early 1978. In May, on the occasion of POLISARIO's fifth anniversary, Western correspondents commented on Algeria's declining interest in the movement. The anniversary festivities were held 40 kilometers from Tindouf. The men, women, and children were enthusiastic even though only 350 of the POLISARIO's guerillas were on parade with their captured equipment (The Times, 1978c). A Libyan delegate turned up and was loudly applauded, but a few dissenters complained that Libya had still not recognized RASD. What did alarm POLISARIO was the low status of the Algerian delegate, Djeboul Melaika. As director for relations with foreign liberation movements, his presence implied that POLISARIO and RASD were being treated as an independent state. If Algeria is losing interest in POLISARIO it is probably because no Algerian is prepared to go to war for the movement. The danger of open conflict with Morocco is always possible as long as POLISARIO is allowed to operate from Algerian sanctuaries. Diplomatic observers in Algeria have reported that Algerians themselves have been heard to ask why POLISARIO will not agree to negotiate. On several occasions solutions have been proposed that would have given the movement part of what it wants, but POLISARIO has, so far, refused.

Within Algeria, President Boumedienne's popular support was not widespread, and according to French and Arab diplomatic sources, there was some doubt about the loyalty of the armed forces. In December 1977, there was an abortive military coup led by Colonel Tahar Zbiri; this attempt to topple President Boumedienne was not the first. In 1968, a group of officers led by Amar Mellah were equally unsuccessful, and although Commandant Mellah was sentenced to death, he was reprieved and given life imprisonment; he is still a focus of opposition within the armed forces, as is former Algerian leader Ahmed Ben Bella. Ousted by Colonel Boumedienne

in 1965, Ben Bella has been under house arrest ever since; periodically, the Arab and French press revive speculative stories about him.

The summer of 1978 was a difficult one for Algeria; during Ramadan, food prices rose steeply, small businessmen and shopkeepers protested to the government, and transport formerly provided for high-school pupils and students was withdrawn. Then in mid-October, the Arab and European press ran several stories on the mysterious disappearance of President Boumedienne. The first stories appeared on October 14 and 15 reporting that the Algerian leader had not appeared in public since September 24—a period of nearly three weeks, which was uncharacteristic. On the evening of October 15, road blocks appeared in Algiers, especially on all main roads leading south. No official explanation was given, but Western diplomats believed that the security precautions were taken because of the transfer, from one prison to another, of the mutinous officers who had been sentenced after the events of 1968 and 1977. Twenty-four hours later, the Soviet news agency, *TASS* (1978), revealed that President Boumedienne had arrived in Moscow. The official explanation was that he was in Moscow on "rejection front" business to discuss the Camp David accords. However, a Finnish government spokesman claimed that the Algerian leader was seriously ill and had been in Moscow for at least a week. Apparently the Finnish Prime Minister, who had been due to visit Algeria, had been asked to postpone the visit because of President Boumedienne's ill-health.

There was obviously something wrong with the Algerian body-politic; the Algerian Arab language daily, *Chaab* (October 17) vehemently denounced "domestic reactionaries" and the "enemies of the revolution." The article continued ". . . our most dangerous enemies are those who infiltrate state organizations. The only way to end this gangrene is to amputate it." If there are serious Algerian internal problems they may explain Algeria's moderate official statements toward Morocco. On October 2, King Hassan sent a letter to President Boumedienne protesting the clashes of September 29 when Moroccan troops were ambushed, according to Morocco, by Algerians. President Boumedienne replied (October 4), denying that Algerian troops had been involved. He said that no Algerian soldiers had ever crossed the border—set in 1972—and added that there were no contentious issues between his country and Morocco.

(This was the tenor of his speech at the Rabat summit in October 1974.) "Algeria remained true to its treaties with Morocco but upheld the right of the Saharan people to self-determination," the letter continued, and he called for a "political solution to a political problem" (Arabia and The Gulf, 1978b). This was the first time that President Boumedienne had replied to King Hassan since late 1975. What was significant about the letter was its conciliatory tone. Earlier, in July at the OAU summit in Khartoum, Algeria refrained from any provocative comments on the conflict. The low-key presidential response was maintained by *El Moudjahid* (October 4): ". . . the moment has come to make a solemn appeal to all parties to the conflict to seek a joint, political solution to the problem." On the same day, ambassadors of those countries that are members of the UN Security Council were summoned to the Algerian Foreign Ministry and told of the Algerian position on the conflict; they were also given an official denial of Algerian complicity in the September clashes. This mood was continued at the UN by Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika on October 16, when he called for a political solution to the Western Sahara.

VI. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Arab World

Unlike some European states, Arab countries have generally stayed clear of the conflict and probably have a greater understanding of the issues involved. The Arab view is that the conflict is not between East and West, but between the Moroccan and Algerian nationalism that is damaging what Saudi Arabia calls the "higher Arab interest," namely Arab unity.

Cultivating Arab diplomatic and financial support has not been a problem for Morocco. As a monarchy, Morocco enjoys the goodwill of the conservative Gulf states, notably Saudi Arabia, which has set up (August 1977) a joint Moroccan-Saudi investment company with a capital of $50 million to invest in industry, agriculture, and commerce. Saudi Arabia has also provided generous subsidies for arms purchases.

Rabat is a popular and influential pan-Arab conference center, and some of the more significant political decisions have emerged from Rabat—e.g., the Jordanian concessions over the West Bank to the PLO in October 1974. Gulf rulers spend a lot of time in Morocco—particularly Fez, Marrakesh, and Tangiers—and the Saudi and Kuwaiti royal families are major real-estate investors in the country.

King Hassan's standing in the Arab world has risen since 1973 when he sent troops to the Golan Heights. Morocco has frequently acted as a conduit for secret negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Following the signing of the Camp David accords in September 1978, the first Arab leader President Sadat called on was King Hassan. In contrast, Algeria has allied itself with the rejection states opposed to Camp David, and has provided sanctuary for Arab

terrorists and highjackers. In September 1978, the West German airline, *Lufthansa*, refused to fly into Algiers unless it was allowed to provide its own security measures. The Saudi partiality for the Moroccan position led to a frosty exchange between Algeria and Saudi Arabia in June 1978, following Algerian and Soviet press comments on Saudi support for Morocco. The Saudi Information Minister, Mohammed Abdul Yamani, reminded Algeria of his kingdom's role in the Middle East dispute and Saudi support for Arab regimes. More tartly, he recalled how the Algerian revolutionaries in the late 1950s came to Saudi Arabia for financial and military aid: ". . . so the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stripped, I repeat stripped, some sections of its army and sent weapons on Saudi ships to Libya and then the weapons reached the revolutionaries" (BBC, 1978a). The Algerians were unrepentant and returned to the attack: "Saudi Arabia, which is doing its utmost to help and support the Moroccan and Mauritanian invasion armies in the Western Sahara, is trying to kill two birds with one stone. It is trying to support the reactionary Rabat and Nouakchott regimes with the aim of consolidating the occupation of Western Sahara." Moreover, the real villainy of Saudi Arabia was that it was ". . . trying by all methods and means available to confront all progressive movements in the Arab homeland" (BBC, 1978c). Of all the Arab media, the only other outbursts of this nature come from Libya or the PDRY.

For several years Maghreb politicians and rulers have floated the idea of Maghreb unity—that is, a regional political and economic grouping to include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. There is no immediate prospect that such a group will be formed because of bilateral differences, one of which is over the Sahara conflict. Libya has been an interesting bystander in that dispute. In the early seventies, Colonel Khaddafi was an unrelenting opponent of King Hassan, and as each leader exchanged bloodthirsty threats, Moroccan-Libyan relations sank to the level of name-calling. During this period, Libya was a sanctuary for Moroccan dissidents. Since 1975, in contrast, Libya has consistently refused to recognize RASD; it has provided medical aid, some cash, and weapons to POLISARIO, but they have been carefully rationed. Much more Libyan aid has been given to Mauritania. Immediately after the July coup in Nouakchott, Colonel Khaddafi stepped in with a $10 million

loan; he has also proposed from time to time a peace plan for the Western Sahara. The details have not been revealed but it is understood to include some kind of regional administration for the territory.

At the end of 1976, President Boumedienne visited Tripoli and conferred with the Libyan leader; he later claimed that there was complete solidarity between Libya and Algeria. A communique recorded agreement to defend one another's territory if either were attacked. Since 1977, however, the main plank of Algerian-Libyan cooperation has been an anti-Sadat alliance. Even before President Sadat visited Jerusalem, Libyan and Egyptian forces had clashed at the border (July 21). If the Libyan record of foreign policy is any guide, an Algerian-Libyan alliance will be short-lived, as are most Libyan-sponsored schemes.

At a diplomatic level, Morocco's relations with Libya are correct, and since 1976 have been steadily improving. The two countries have diplomatic relations—unlike Morocco and Algeria whose relations were broken off in February 1976—and Morocco sent large and influential delegations to the Libyan anniversary celebrations on September 1. It is possible that Libyan restraint over the Sahara conflict is due to Colonel Khaddafi's hope to unite the Maghreb, to become a key mediator in the desert war, and to do so because of his principal commitment to the Arab cause and his running battles with President Sadat.

Africa

African states do not regard the conflict in the Western Sahara as very significant when compared to the critical fighting in central and southern Africa. In geographic terms, the countries of the Maghreb are justified in identifying themselves as African but in transnational behavior and national composition, they are Arab Islamic states. In that context, Saudi Arabia sees the conflict in the Western Sahara as a manifestation of Arab disunity rather than an African problem.

Nevertheless, for Morocco there is some diplomatic advantage to be gained by playing the African card. In the continent, Morocco's case in the Sahara began badly in 1975. Nine states recognized POLISARIO, and Morocco's prospects did not improve following an unsuccessful coup in Benin in January 1977 which

was Rabat-inspired. (Benin is a professed Marxist republic that supports POLISARIO.) The attempted coup was a clumsy and foolish incident in which Moroccan complicity was confirmed by the UN and OAU. A few months later, however, Morocco's reputation was salvaged in May when 1,700 troops were dispatched to Zaire's Shaba province. Their task was to assist President Mobutu in fighting off a Marxist-sponsored invasion from Angola. FAR's intervention was brief but effective, and nine men were lost. The gravity of the threat was confirmed when Zaire expelled East German diplomats, suspended relations, and accused that government of arming the Shaba guerillas (Washington Post, 1977). Subsequently, Morocco received African support at the OAU summit at Libreville in July 1977, when POLISARIO was excluded. (At that meeting, the OAU decided to hold a special summit on the Western Sahara, but it has not yet convened.) In June 1978, Moroccan troops were again in action in Zaire. In response to another appeal from President Mobutu and the OAU, Morocco contributed 1,200 troops, together with troops from Gabon and Senegal, to form a pan-African force to protect Shaba province against a further invasion of rebels from Angola. The troops left Agadir in American transport aircraft on June 4, and the contingent was later stiffened by paratroopers of the French Foreign Legion. There was much less for the Moroccan troops to do on the second occasion; however, the political goodwill earned by Morocco in Africa was confirmed in October by the UN's intention to deploy Moroccan troops as a peace-keeping force in South-West Africa, or Namibia.

At the July 1978 OAU summit in Khartoum, the subject of the Western Sahara was not on the original agenda; following Algerian lobbying it was included. The polemics were muted, however, because the issue was upstaged by an acrimonious exchange between Libya and Chad. (The latter claimed that Libya had invaded its northern territories; Libya replied that it had historical rights to the territories.) The conference was attentive to the Western Sahara issue, and following a motion tabled by Mali, a mediation team was appointed, the *Comité des Sages* (popularly known as the "five wise men"), composed of Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania. This committee started its work in mid-1978 and visited the countries involved in the conflict, as well as France and Spain.

Europe: Spain and France

Following the Spanish withdrawal from the Sahara in February 1976, Spain rapidly shed its responsibilities for the territory and King Juan Carlos has reaffirmed the legitimacy of the tripartite accord of November 1975. For two years Spanish-Moroccan relations were tranquil, in spite of Spanish socialists' opposition to the accord and support for some kind of Sahraoui territorial autonomy.

In June 1978, Spanish Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez made an official visit to Morocco; the bilateral talks were cordial and encouraging and plans were made for a visit to Morocco by the Spanish king. The tensions between Spain and Algeria improved the climate for the Moroccan-Spanish discussions. Since the beginning of 1978, Spanish fishermen sailing off the Sahara coast had become targets for POLISARIO guerillas operating from rubber boats. In April, eight fishermen were abducted after their vessel was machine-gunned. In August, there were more attacks, but this time six Spanish fishermen were killed and the Spanish navy deployed two frigates to protect their nationals. The Spanish government, under pressure from public opinion, pressed Algeria to curb the guerillas. The Algerians disclaimed all responsibility but the Spanish were not impressed. Morocco was the direct beneficiary of the sharp exchanges.

In recent years, a barometer of Spanish-Moroccan relations has been the Moroccan attitude toward the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and the Canary Isles. In good times, the Moroccan government is acquiescent; in bad times, national fervor is whipped up and and a Moroccan takeover seems imminent. Similarly, the Canary Isles are either Spanish or they are due for liberation; it all depends on how King Hassan and the Spanish government are getting on at the particular time.

In the fall of 1978, however, the passage became bumpy. It began with the attendance of Javier Ruperez, a member of Spain's ruling Central Democratic Union (UCD), at POLISARIO's Fourth Congress in September. His visit was significant because he is also a political adviser to the Spanish prime minister. His attendance was read as a sign of a Spanish desire to be more even-handed in its attitude towards the Sahara. Some POLISARIO delegates went

out on a limb and said that Spain was about to recognize the movement and allow it to open an office in Madrid. To avoid political embarrassment to Senor Ruperez, neither Algeria nor POLISARIO invited the Canary Isles independence movement (MPAIAC) to the Congress. During the visit of Prime Minister Suarez in June, he publicly thanked Morocco for its support for the "Spanishness" of the Canary Isles.

However, the consequences of the Ruperez visit continued; in early October, Moroccan Foreign Minister Mohammed Boucetta delivered a lecture at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., in which he drew attention to the Spanish enclaves. This remark was picked up and distorted by the Spanish press and was the direct cause for the postponement of the visit of Juan Carlos to Morocco. At the same time, Moroccan media pointedly drew attention to the proximity of the Canary Isles to the Moroccan coastline. The Moroccan reaction arose out of an inaccurate reading of the true purpose of Senor Ruperez's visit to Algeria; two weeks after the Congress ended, he returned to Algeria and negotiated the release of the Spanish fishermen who had been captured in April. They returned to Madrid on October 15. The deal was that their release was in return for the UCD's recognition of POLISARIO. This particular exchange was well handled by the Algerians and it restored some of the prestige that they had lost with Madrid in late 1977 and early 1978. Moroccan spokesmen made light of the postponement of the Spanish king's visit and said that the visit would still take place, but toward the end of the year.

Spanish sensitivity over the Sahara is acute and is likely to remain so given the unexplained and occasionally obscure maneuvers that took place in the closing months of Franco's rule. Although the UCD has recognized the guerillas, it is far from certain that the Spanish government will follow. Since the beginning of 1978, Spain has become increasingly concerned about the defense of the Canaries, where the bulk of the Spanish Foreign Legion is already stationed. Increasing the defense of the archipelago is a logical follow-up to Spanish withdrawal from the Sahara in 1975. There has been growing unease at the implications a potential POLISARIO victory might have on moves for independence within the Canaries. The independence movement, MPAIAC, increased its terrorist attacks in early 1978 against targets connected with tourism, one of the

main sources of income for the islands' depressed economy. Consequently, in April 1978, Spain announced plans to construct a major new naval base in the islands. The base is to be built on Gran Canaria and will be able to accommodate the entire Spanish fleet. The cost will be about $180 million. Government spokesmen were quick to point out that the base had nothing to do with Western defense policy and added that the Canaries were outside NATO's defense zone. There is, however, a widespread feeling, especially among the Spanish opposition, that NATO is interested in the strategic development of the archipelago. As a piece of real estate, the islands offer a useful potential base for controlling the shipping route round the Cape and are well placed to monitor Soviet air and naval activity in and off West Africa.

Because of the Spanish enclaves, the Canaries, and the importance of Moroccan support for the Spanish position on Gibraltar, Spain will probably seek to remain on good terms with Rabat. Moreover, many northern and southern Moroccans—from Tangiers to Boujdour—still retain strong cultural links with Spain. There are a few ministers in Morocco whose second language is Spanish, not French. Those misunderstandings that arise will be carefully handled. It is unlikely that the future of the Western Sahara will be a serious impediment to Spanish relations with the Maghreb and the Arab world in general.

Overwhelmingly more significant than the Spanish influence is that of France, which colonized Morocco and Algeria; French commercial influence has been overtaken by the United States, but French political influence in Rabat and Algiers is probably as important as that of the Arab states. Officially, the view of the French government is one of non-interference; however, in practical terms it is decidely pro-Moroccan.

In December 1975, five French tourists were missing in the Western Sahara. Algeria at first claimed that they had been killed by Moroccan troops, but in December 1977 the UN and President Boumedienne confirmed that the tourists had been killed in a POLISARIO ambush. French opinion, however, had already begun to harden toward Algeria. On May 1, 1977, the iron-mining center at Zouerate was attacked; two French nationals were killed, and six others taken hostage. The raid was the first in which Europeans were killed, and its consequences exacerbated existing tensions

between Algeria and France. In October, two more French technicians were abducted by POLISARIO; at this point relations between France and Algeria reached the breaking point. Following the abduction of the French nationals, President Boumedienne expected France to negotiate with the guerillas, thus legitimiziang POLISARIO. France refused, expelled eight POLISARIO militants from France, sent troops to Senegal and Mauritania in October, and in December ordered Jaguar air strikes against guerilla columns and supply points in Mauritania.

Algeria, faced with the French military response, accused France of duplicity, neocolonialism, imperialism, and a host of other sins; it overlooked the point that the French intervention was approved by Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, and the Ivory Coast. The deteriorating relationship had repercussions within France. In December 1977, a right-wing group calling itself *Delta* organized terrorist attacks on Algerians in France; in Paris an employee of the *Algerians in Europe Friendship Organization* was killed; in Lorraine a plastic bomb explosion damaged an Algerian workers' hostel; and in Nice another explosion destroyed a bar used by North African immigrants.

The Algerian Government retaliated with diplomatic protests and economic sanctions against France. In January 1978 Algeria decided to exclude, as far as possible, French imports, except where contracts were in an advanced stage of negotiation; there was, however, no marked effect on French policy. In fact, as early as 1976, Algeria had been trying to reduce its dependence on French goods, which accounted for about 30 percent of all imports. Algerian dissatisfaction at the trade imbalance was further aggravated when France began to import Saudi oil instead of Algerian crude. It was more than a coincidence that the partial boycott was imposed on the occasion of the visit of the French Minister of Industry to Riyadh.

In February 1978, France decided to review its ties with Algeria. President Giscard D'Estaing called for new agreements to deal with the problems of 800,000 Algerians resident in France, French property in Algeria, and economic cooperation. The offer did nothing to reduce the tension, however, because in early May, French *Jaguars* were again in action. Between May 1 and 5, the fighters made three sorties against a POLISARIO column, north-

west of Zouerate. They destroyed nearly all the heavily armed vehicles in the column—about 50—and killed several guerillas. There was no doubt that *Mirage IV* reconnaissance flights and *Jaguar* strafing attacks had demoralized and seriously damaged POLISARIO. In the first five months of 1978, the guerillas had launched five long-range raiding forces with a total of 150 vehicles and three of the groups were destroyed; the remaining two dispersed into smaller units. In all cases, initial contact was made by Mauritanian troops, and the aircraft were sent in when the Mauritanians asked for close air support.

In reply to Algerian criticism, French Foreign Minister Louis de Guiringaud outlined his government's African policy. It is significant that in the last two years, France is the only Western power to have a vigorous and clear policy toward Africa, and the intervention in Mauritania should be seen in the terms of that policy. The foreign minister stated that it was impossible to play a role in world affairs without taking some risks. He defended French military intervention because of France's deliberate support for those countries with which cooperation agreements had been signed. Referring to the strong Algerian reaction, he said that while France wanted to have bilateral relations with Algeria, its policies in Africa could not be dictated by Franco-Algerian cooperation: "France wants to have political independence and will maintain it" (The Times, 1978b).

In support of that policy, France agreed on May 10 to supply Morocco with an unspecified number of *Crotale* anti-aircraft missiles, worth about $200 million. French instructors were to be sent with them. Fifty *Mirages* are being delivered and some have arrived and are based at Smara, and across the border in Mauritania; 24 *Alpha* jet-support aircraft are on order, and the Moroccan Air Force has French-made *Fouga* fighters and *Puma* combat helicopters. France kept its options open, however, and by June rumors were circulating of a French inspired peace solution to the conflict. The July coup in Mauritania boosted speculation of improving Franco-Algerian relations.

In July and August, Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika twice visited Paris, and the visits were followed by a distinct improvement in the tone of exchanges between the two countries. On his second visit, Bouteflika went out of his way to conciliate France, saying that there was a "dynamism for peace" and praising

France's role as a mediator—the role we have always conceived of for France in the region." He gave no clear idea of any solution that might be in the offing, though he referred several times to France's support for Mauritania's 1960 frontier and for the principle of self-determination. He also commented that it would be up to France to persuade Morocco to fall into line with any proposed solution. The day after he left Paris, the President of the Ivory Coast, M. Houphouet Boigny, was at the Elysée. He was brought into the Sahara discussions because of his role in the West African francophone community and his influence in the OAU.

In November 1978, therefore, France's stand on the Western Sahara conflict. The USSR, however, is interested in Morocco. One fighters were still in Senegal and Mauritania but, behind the scenes, France was diligently lobbying African and Arab states as well as the main parties to the conflict, to come to the conference table.

Other European countries have kept clear of the conflict; some European socialists, however, have openly supported the guerillas, which may assist the POLISARIO information campaign but does not affect the military balance. In April 1978, the National Executive Party (NEP) of the British ruling Labour Party agreed to support POLISARIO; this did not, however, amount to British government recognition. If anything, the UK's political and economic links with Morocco increased. In 1978, three major British trade delegations visited Morocco and were accompanied by the deputy ministers of the Department of Trade and the Foreign Office. Morocco's pro-European stance is a result of a desire to gain entry for its exports into the European Economic Community (EEC).

Soviet Union

Despite its aggressive Cuban-supported adventures in Africa, the Soviet Union has been surprisingly uninvolved in the Western Sahara conflict. The USSR, however is interested in Morocco. One aspect of Moscow's policy toward the kingdom was its strong support in the "fish war" with Spain in 1973, and since that time it has entered into a joint Soviet-Moroccan fishing company. Moscow has not, however, publicized its views on the Sahara war. When the UN voted on the conflict issue in December 1975, the Soviet Union supported Algeria's motion in favor of self-determination. But Moscow has not recognized POLISARIO nor has it

invited any of the movement's representatives to Moscow. The Soviet interest in Morocco is primarily economic; the USSR is Morocco's second largest supplier of crude oil (after Iraq) and is a major purchaser of Moroccan phosphates.

If a strategic advantage were to emerge from the conflict, the Soviet Union would probably capitalize upon it, but no such advantage has yet been presented. In October 1977, when French troops were flown to the Sahara, the Soviet Ambassador to Senegal said that the USSR would "condemn any military intervention in the Western Sahara."

In December 1974, the two countries signed a $5 billion agreement for supplies of 5 million tonnes of Moroccan phosphate starting in 1980, doubling to 10 million tonnes from 1990 to 2005. Moscow was to help exploit the phosphate deposits and to supply timber, oil, and medical products in return. In July 1977, the agreement was taken a step further when the Soviet Union agreed to provide $250 million as a loan to develop an open-cast mine and to construct a new port and railway to serve the mine.

The next stage in the trading relationship opened in January 1978, in a deal described by King Hassan as the "contract of the century." The contract was a long-term barter deal involving a Soviet investment of $2 billion in a phosphate mine at Meskala, south Morocco. It is the largest single investment in Morocco since independence in 1956, and is probably the largest single investment by the Soviet Union in the developing world. The contract makes a lot of economic sense for the Soviet Union because of the poor location of its own phosphate mines in the Khola peninsula and in the Kara Tau area of southern Kazakhstan. The Russians will build and equip the mine, and in addition will build a railway linking it to a new harbor at Essaouira. Production capacity will be 10 million tons annually and the Meskala mines are expected to begin production in the mid-1980s starting with 2 million tonnes.

Another accord signed the same month by the two countries, committed the Russians to provide training facilities for Moroccans in the phosphate industry. The advantages are obvious; the agreement guarantees a capitve market for Moroccan phosphate and by-products; it also means that a huge investment was acquired on generous long-term credit. These two enormous deals gave Morocco a coincidental propaganda advantage over Algeria at the time.

While the second agreement was being negotiated in Moscow, the Algerian leader was also in the Soviet capital (January 12 to 14) on Arab "rejection" front business. His main purpose was to shop for arms, paid for by Libya, but destined for Syria. The joint communique was typical of the *genre* and carefully spelled out its terms. However, on the Sahara issue, the visit was diplomatically unproductive for President Boumedienne. The Soviet Union refused to recognize POLISARIO or RASD: "The sides expressed concern over the increase of tension in the Western Sahara. They spoke in support for the earliest possible peaceful settlement of the Western Sahara problems through the exercise of the principle of self-determination by the people of the territory in accordance with UN resolution" (BBC, 1978b). The Soviet circumspection toward Algeria is probably a result of Soviet caution in general in the Arab world. Soviet failures in Egypt, Sudan, and possibly Iraq, are a factor; in addition, Moscow has traditionally sacrificed guerilla movements and Communist parties in the interest of state-to-state relations. A regular visitor to Morocco, Mr. Chvedov, head of the African Department of the Soviet Foreign Affairs Ministry, met with King Hassan and the foreign minister in May 1977, and stated that the position of the two countries was close. If the joint phosphate contract develops it is probable that the Soviet Union will become interested in the Bou Craa deposits, and if this proves to be the case, the last thing Moscow would wish is to expose Soviet engineers to POLISARIO terrorism. Within Morocco, the left-wing opposition and the PPS of Ali Yata have generally supported the king against Algeria.

The Soviet Union's commercial interest in Morocco is balanced by its military and ideological commitment to Algeria. The USSR's commercial involvement in Algeria is much less than in Morocco. The OECD and the CIA have estimated that in the period between 1954 and 1976, Algeria received Soviet economic assistance to the value of $708 million—after India, Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Pakistan. That figure included an offer of $290 million, made in 1976, to promote an aluminium industry. There are approximately 1,700 Soviet advisors in the Algerian air force, but the Soviet Union has not signed any major arms deal with Algeria for three years; recent CIA estimates, however, have noted sophisticated air-defense equipment arriving in Algeria. Soviet interest in the SALT

talks and European security means that in the near future, the Soviet Union will be reluctant to be drawn deeper into the Arab world through the Sahara dispute.

China's interest in the area is similar to that of the Soviet Union in that it enjoys good relations with the regional states, especially Mauritania. China gives no military aid to Nouakchott, although it is the main provider (after Saudi Arabia) of aid of a practical nature. Former President Ould Daddah was a frequent visitor to Peking and he has stated that "China is the state which is helping Mauritania the most" (Le Monde, 1977). He explained the extent of Chinese aid in the form of rice-field experiments, water surveys, town planning, medical laboratories, a power station, three hospitals, a sports stadium, and the development of Nouakchott harbor.

United States

In the Middle East, the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy, especially since 1973, has been to seek a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition the United States wishes to maintain cordial relations with those states that either have oil (Saudi Arabia and Iran) or pro-Western sympathies (Jordan and Morocco).

The American involvement in Morocco began in November 1942 when General George Patton's soldiers stormed ashore in a fierce battle with French Vichy forces. More than 100,000 U.S. troops landed in Morocco and Algeria—Operation Torch—in an allied invasion that was one of the turning points in World War II. The battle took place around a huge French naval base, then known as Port Lyautey, 20 miles north of Rabat. When the French left Morocco, Port Lyautey was renamed Kenitra and became a major U.S. military base. The U.S. Navy set up communication centers at Bouknadel and Sidi Yahia. When Morocco became independent in 1956, Moroccan leftists and nationalists mounted a campaign against the base, accusing the United States of provoking a possible Soviet strike against Morocco by stockpiling nuclear bombs at Kenitra. In 1965, the base was downgraded to "a community facility." In a much publicized exchange with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, the king blandly assured the Kremlin that there was no such thing as an American base in Morocco. Moroccan officials referred to Kenitra as a "training base" and claimed that the American servicemen

stationed there were exclusively employed to train Moroccan troops. But the development of satellite communications and bases in Spain made the Moroccan bases redundant, and on September 30, 1978 the three bases were closed down. The only obligation remaining is that the Moroccans retain the aircraft warning lights on two towers in Kenitra, and pass on U.S. dismissal payments to more than 1,000 Moroccans once employed on the bases. Remaining equipment has been handed over to FAR, which will continue to operate a training center at Kenitra.

Although the U.S. bases have closed, arms sales to Morocco will continue; in fiscal year 1977, the United States sold arms worth $35.7 million; and for FY 1978, the figure will rise to $45 million. Morocco's defense budget was increased by 80 percent in December 1977 to $640 million. The United States was asked for $100 million but the U.S. allocation of foreign military sales credit is much less than Morocco hoped for. The Sahara conflict and U.S. arms sales have raised problems for American-Moroccan relations. The United States has not yet formally recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the new territories, although it does recognize Morocco's "administrative control" over the area. POLISARIO spokesmen counter by saying that they were in touch with Washington in December 1977. (They travelled on Algerian passports). At that time, the State Department said it did not recognize POLISARIO and had no contact with its representatives except to issue visas.

In September 1977 Morocco asked for counter-insurgency aircraft *(Bronco)* and more helicopters, but the United States withheld approval. Reluctant to see the war escalate, the U.S. government did not wish to be seen openly supporting Morocco in an inter-Arab conflict, and an old arms sales constraint was revived: no U.S. weapons could be used beyond the recipient's borders. This last point was a weak argument when set against U.S. arms sales to the Middle East as a regional policy; however, it was enough to persuade King Hassan to call off a scheduled trip to the United States in December 1977. There were other factors, principally the repercussions of President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, contributing to the decision to postpone the trip. The king's visit was rescheduled for November 1978, but the need for specialist military equipment had been overtaken; Morocco continued to enjoy

French aerial support and there were plans to convert some helicopters into rocket-firing gunships.

In January 1978, U.S. Energy Secretary James Schlesinger visited Morocco on his way back from Saudi Arabia and acknowledged the ". . . dynamic and constructive role of Morocco's foreign policy." As if to mark his visit, POLISARIO attacked a civilian convoy near Zag, in south Morocco and killed four—a senseless blunder with no military or propaganda value.

King Hassan will probably get more hardware, but not immediately. At present, the largest arms deal is a $200 million air defense system, but that contract is a straight commercial deal with Westinghouse. In the long term, the United States will continue to offer political support to Morocco not only because of the moderate Moroccan role in the Middle East but also as a counter to the Soviet and Cuban involvement in Algeria. A pro-American Morocco will also be a factor in U.S. naval strategy in the Mediterranean. In commercial terms, Algerian oil and gas is more attractive to the United States than any Moroccan resource; however, the geopolitics of the Middle East and the Western Mediterranean favor closer U.S.-Moroccan ties for the moment.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Mediation

Starting a war is a fairly simple exercise compared to ending it. In the Western Sahara, political disagreement between Morocco and Algeria began in 1974; military clashes, however, did not start until January 1976. It was 18 months before the first attempts to end the war became visible. In his press conference in November 1977, King Hassan revealed that in August and September, he had made direct contact with POLISARIO leaders. A senior Sahraoui, Ibrahim Hakim, twice met the King at Ifrane and offered to end hostilities against Morocco in return for a free hand in Mauritania. The king rejected the deal because he suspected that it was an Algerian scheme, and it also ignored the bilateral defense pact between Morocco and Mauritania.

That summer, the OAU mediation team began its work, and the French intervention led to an escalation of the conflict. The period from August 1977 to June 1978 was sterile until the king in an interview with *Al-Siyassah* (Kuwait), on June 26, revealed that contacts had taken place in Europe among Morocco, Algeria, and POLISARIO. Since then events have moved quickly.

Following the July 10 Mauritanian coup, President Giscard D'Estaing formally notified Mauritania of French support for a tripartite conference to end the conflict, saying that France would be prepared to host the conference if the three parties agreed. Exerting pressure, the French president also inferred that Morocco already approved such a conference and that Algeria agreed in principle. The French offer followed visits to Paris by Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Sallem Jalloud and Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika. During the OAU summit in Khartoum that

month, President Boumedienne refrained from criticizing Morocco and confined himself to a routine disapproval of European presence in the Sahara. In response, the Moroccan government was conciliatory and said that the country wanted a peaceful settlement and that Morocco was ready to offer Algeria, in return, access to Saharan phosphates, and ". . . much more in economic benefits in the context of Maghreb economic unity."

In August the new Mauritanian leader, Colonel Ould Salek, expressed his appreciation for the French peace initiative and also paid tribute to Saudi Arabia. As if by osmosis, Saudi diplomatic sources started to leak news of peace negotiations and the French plan. The plan called for the creation of a Sahraoui state in the Mauritanian occupied territory Tiris el-Gharbia, to be federated with Mauritania. The Moroccans countered by saying that they would never accept barriers separating Morocco and Mauritania, but everything else was open to discussion.

The unilateral ceasefire declared by POLISARIO (July 12) against Mauritania had achieved some success after two months. French-inspired reports suggested that POLISARIO and Mauritania had had secret talks in France and Switzerland. This dragged a reluctant admission from the Mauritanians that "low level contacts" had taken place between September 9 and 16. It was probably true to say that any talks held were more in the nature of exploratory meetings than actual negotiations.

Not to be outdone, King Hassan was quick off the mark. In an interview with the Paris-based *Al Watan al Arabi* (September 30 to October 6), the king proposed an end to the war by taking the guerilla leaders into the Moroccan government. "As far as we are concerned, the solution is easy. If they (the POLISARIO leaders) agree, we will instruct the Prime Minister to reshuffle the government in accordance with the constitution and to reserve for them, ministerial posts. . . . This would not constitute a problem. It would only be a matter of five minutes. Let them come, they will be made ministers and they will be welcome." But just in case the guerillas may have thought that the king was weakening, he reiterated that the Western Sahara was not negotiable.

Not to be outdone, the Algerians responded. Frontier clashes in late September provoked correspondence between King Hassan and President Boumedienne. The king is a diligent letter writer and

the Algerians have not always replied; however, in early October, the Algerian president, foreign minister, and press were all conciliatory. However, Arab diplomatic sources believed that the mood of moderation was illusory and that what was really happening was an intensification of the information war. In October, the Moroccan information minister was changed for the third time in 12 months. The new appointee, Abdelhadi Boutaleb, was reported to be one of the king's most influential advisers and was expected to spearhead a more vigorous information campaign in the international media to gain support for Morocco's case over the Sahara. The main effort was to be directed at the English-speaking world.

The Mauritanians kept their heads down and avoided all provocative comment. By mid-October, POLISARIO was becoming impatient with the Nouakchott regime. In an interview with *El Moudjahid,* POLISARIO's deputy secretary-general stated that the secret peace talks held with Mauritania in September had not gone well because the Mauritanians were opposed to the POLISARIO concept of yet another partition of the Sahara. Subsequently, POLISARIO leader Ibrahim Hakim, said that talks with Mauritania had failed because of the "intransigence" of the Mauritanians. He claimed that the regime of President Ould Salek had tried to benefit from the ceasefire by building up armed forces. Mauritania was given an ultimatum to recognize POLISARIO's claims or face a resumption of the fighting. In the wings, Sudanese leader, President Nimeiry was visiting Spain (October 11 to 14), where he told a news conference that ". . . I feel optimistic that the situation in the Sahara will be solved very soon." Following his peace-making tour, President Nimeiry announced that the Comité des Sages would meet in Khartoum at the end of November and discuss its findings.

Economic Cooperation

A settlement is urgent because none of the countries can afford the financial and human costs of the disputes. In June 1978, King Hassan announced a package of austerity measures that had been preceded by several months of strikes and rumors. For most of the year, inflation ran at about 20 percent and in April, railway workers staged a 48 hour strike in support of a 15 percent claim. Employees at Royal Air Maroc (RAM) also went on strike for higher

wages. On May 26, there was a general students' strike that followed strikes by the teachers' union and by phosphate workers. The king stated that one reason for the economic crisis was the cost of the war, put at $772 million. He also blamed financial troubles on a succession of four poor harvests and drought that cost $20 million in cereal imports, neutralizing the income from the phosphate exports despite a doubling of the price. The $260 million investment in the Western Sahara and the continuing cost of oil imports were also cited. As a result, the king announced that the new five-year plan would be scrapped. Due to be implemented in 1978, the five-year plan was replaced by a three-year "transitional" plan to be financed by a maximum of national savings instead of by foreign aid. To improve the inflow of foreign currency, especially from 350,000 Moroccan workers in Europe, the *dirham* was given a preferential rate, putting it on a par with the French *franc*. This was equivalent to a devaluation of 7.3 percent but it applied only to workers' transfers and not to any other commercial operation. The emphasis on domestically-generated funds obscured the position of EEC aid to Morocco; since 1976 the EEC has granted $175 million to Morocco in the form of gifts and long term loans and the king is unlikely to jeopardize that agreement. But the long term prospects for Morocco and other Maghreb states for EEC trade are disappointing. Greece and Spain will shortly enter the EEC and their exports will directly compete with those of the North African countries.

Algeria's economic outlook is slightly better because of oil and natural gas exports—53.5 million tons in 1977, an increase of 3.2 percent on the previous year. In other respects, however, Algeria resembles Morocco in size of population (16 and 17 million respectively), agricultural problems, rural drift, overcrowded urban centers, inadequate social services, illiteracy, and shortage of skilled labor. In January 1979, Algeria's fourth Four-Year Development Plan will be launched.

Since independence, agricultural development has been almost exclusively concentrated in a narrow belt along the coast and has had a direct effect on the expansion of towns like Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. The locally generated growth has been aggravated by the population drift from the land. Algiers was designed for 0.7 million people but must now accommodate an estimated 2

million. The rural way of life in developing countries is harsh, boring, and low-paid; hence, the only people left to work the land are the aged, the very young, and women. In 1978 President Boumedienne commented ". . . the living conditions of our urban masses are certainly difficult but for the rural masses who make up the majority of the population they are even worse. This is a situation which cannot continue" (The Middle East, 1978). Algerian sources have estimated that the current rate of population transfer from the countryside to the cities is about 130,000 annually. By 1980, the figure is expected to reach 150,000. The figure for Morocco is only slightly lower; the trend and implications, however, are the same. By the year 2000, 60 percent will live in towns while a dwindling 40 percent will live in rural areas. In both Morocco and Algeria this implies an urban growth of 5 to 7 percent a year, which means that more houses must be built. In Algeria, the present housing deficit is put at over 0.5 million units and 100,000 apartments will be needed every year for the next 10 years. Finding building sites will be a problem because urban sprawl depletes the valuable farming land surrounding the cities. The Algerian Ministry of Agriculture has estimated that over 100,000 hectares have been lost in the last 10 years.

In Morocco, according to the World Bank (Annual Report, September 1978), the demand for housing has overtaken supply, forcing the government to concentrate on slum clearance and to upgrade housing in the shanty towns. For the period 1978-1982, the Bank has loaned $18 million for a project to improve the living conditions of 60,000 people living in squatter settlements in Rabat. The loan provides for the upgrading, through self-help, of squatter housing, development of a 12-hectare experimental site and services scheme, extension of basic social infrastructure, and essential urban services at costs the people can afford. Efforts are also being made to provide basic manual skills, expand commercial installations, and create local employment. In this manner, 2,500 jobs will be created, thus raising the income of the urban poor.

The Bank is also assisting Algeria, particularly with water supply and sewerage systems in Algiers. At present, wastewaters from Greater Algiers are discharged untreated into Algiers Bay and the El Harrach river, and waterborne diseases are endemic. The sewerage project will reduce water pollution, which in turn will bring into

use land that was unsuitable, reduce diseases, and recycle sewage for irrigation. Between them, Morocco and Algeria receive World Bank loans of $84.5 million and $172 million respectively. Aid for Mauritania from the same source was $104.4 million.

Because of the domestic problems in all three countries, administering the Sahara provinces will remain a problem long after a peace agreement is signed. Any regional agreement to end the conflict should also consider meeting the most serious long-term threat to the Sahara provinces—desertification. The road from Laayoun to the port illustrates, on a very small scale, the nature of the problem. Even when the lightest breeze blows, sand drifts across the road and in less than an hour it becomes impassable. Groups of Sahraoui laborers sweep the road forlornly, and uselessly; attempts have been made to restrain the sand by planting trees which the wind blows down, or by pouring heavy crude oil onto the dunes.

At Nairobi, in September 1977, the UN Conference on Desertification (UNCOD), presented a forbidding prospect of "desert creep." Each year the world loses an area the size of Massachusetts as the desert advances. The Maghreb states—Morocco, Algeria, and Libya —have started agricultural experiments in the Sahara but the inevitable growth of population, intensification of agriculture, mechanisation, expansion of herds, and the weather will inevitably exhaust the land available and lower the nonrenewable water resources. Desert agricultural schemes are very expensive and require capital investments far higher than any expected return from agricultural exports.

All the countries, including Mauritania, face a monumental task in combating the desert and international assistance is fundamental. The Nairobi conference outlined two ambitious projects for green belts north and south of the Sahara. The southern belt includes a plan to rehabilitate the nomadic pastoral tradition and to experiment with the techniques of settled agriculture. Morocco and Libya have begun to pick at the edges of the problem but they need assistance; the war must be ended, the population settled. Regional cooperation and development is long overdue. A suitable model could be the 16-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which also includes the francophone West African Community—Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta. To date it is the most ambitious effort at regional inte-

gration in the area. The aim is to establish common markets with particular emphasis on industrial development. The member states are diverse in their resources and levels of economic development, with comparatively rich coastal countries in partnership with poor landlocked countries. Each treaty provides for fair sharing in the benefits of regional development, with mechanisms to compensate for losses in revenue. Development funds are also provided for the poorer countries.

A Sahraoui State

The desert is emptying fast. Resources are being eroded or lost, the population is emigrating to the towns, and the traditional socio-economic system is dissolving. If a Sahraoui state were to be created it would be one of the poorest and most under-populated states in the world. It is also questionable whether the population would stay put; it would probably drift into the urban centers of North and West Africa. The signs already exist. Morocco's Plan d'Urgence is being carefully watched because it could be overwhelmed by nomads and refugees. Some Moroccan planners have a real fear that every nomad in the region might come into the Moroccan settlements. Consequently, regional cooperation and international assistance will be essential for solving what is basically a humanitarian problem. Some Sahraouis have adapted to urban conditions with surprising speed.

On 27 December, President Boumedienne died, aged 51, after three months' illness. There was no obvious successor and a collegiate system has taken over the responsibility for interim government. Because the former president had also been Minister of Defense, his illness had already forced one change in the administration; on 23 November, responsibility for "military affairs" was entrusted to Colonel Benjeddid Chadli. However, the post of President, according to most foreign comment, would be decided between two contenders. The first is Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whose commitment to the Sahara conflict was much less than that of the former president. The other contender is more shadowy, but possibly more powerful in domestic politics, Colonel Mohammed Salah Yahiaoui, responsible for party matters. Yahiaoui is known as a nationalist, an ideologue determined to arabize Algerian institutions and deeply involved in the politicization of the armed forces. More importantly, Colonel Yahiaoui is reported to enjoy the support

of Colonel Slimane Hoffman, head of the secret service, and the Libyan leader, Colonel Khaddafi. His attitude on the Sahara conflict is unrecorded, but if he becomes president his fierce nationalism may lead to increased support for POLISARIO. Conversely, if Colonel Khaddafi really does have any influence on Colonel Yahiaoui it could end the conflict.

Moroccan determination not to compromise its frontiers, the relative poverty of the Sahara and the undetermined population, the absence as yet of Sahraoui nationalism, all mean that a viable Sahraoui state is an unlikely prospect. More conceivable is a Sahraoui region federated with Mauritania. Politically it would look north and east, but economically it would trade with the south and west—a pattern rather similar to Sudan. Morocco has offered POLISARIO leaders places in its administration. The questions of trust and revenge would not be immediately resolved but there are countless examples in the developing world of former guerillas entering government. Africa has more than a sprinkling of examples. At present, Algeria is conciliatory, POLISARIO's ceasefire in Mauritania still holds, Morocco is prepared to negotiate conditionally, and the OAU's mediation team has completed its work. They will need to move quickly because the speed at which the desert drifts, and the population moves, will leave an empty desert with pointless sacrifices. In the end, the battle for the Sahara and its community will not be won by Rabat, Algiers, or Nouakchott, but by botanists, soil chemists, veterinarians, water engineers, and the international aid organizations.

APPENDIX 1

(Free Translation)

Convention delimiting the frontiers between the States of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Kingdom of Morocco.

His Excellency, the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and His Majesty the King of Morocco,

In agreement with the recommendations of 16 October 1975 of the International Court of Justice which recognised the traditional ties of allegiance between the King of Morocco and certain tribes of the Sahara and the territorial rights of those tribes within Mauritania,

Confirming the declaration of principles signed at Madrid on 14 November 1975 and transferring the interior administration to Morocco and Mauritania with the co-operation of the *Jemaa* of those responsibilities formerly held in the Sahara by Spain,

Considering the views of the *Jemaa* following an extraordinary session of 26 February 1976,

Deciding to arrange the present convention and nominating, as plenipotentiaries: Hamdi Ould Mouknass, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Ahmed Laraki, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who having been granted full powers, agreed to the following terms:

Article 1—The contracting parties agree that the frontier between the two countries shall be drawn by a line from the intersection of the 24th parallel (north) and the Atlantic coast to the 13th meridian (west) and the 23rd parallel (north); the intersection of this line with the Mauritanian frontier constituting the southern boundary of Morocco. From this point, the joint boundary shall extend northwards to the location determined by the map co-ordinates 824/500 and 959.

Article 2—The State boundary described in Article 1, marks the territorial limits, and equally, delimits the air space and sub-terrain of the territories. The continental shelf shall be measured from the 24th parallel (north).

Article 3—A mixed Moroccan-Mauritanian commission shall be formed to examine and negotiate the terms of the convention as set out in Article 1.

Article 4—On completion of its work, the joint Commission will present its finding, on the establishment of the Moroccan-Mauritanian frontier. That finding shall be added to this convention.

Article 5—This convention will take effect from the date of the exchange of articles of ratification according to the constitutional procedures in force in both countries.

Article 6—When the convention is ratified, it will be registered with the United Nations according to the terms of Article 102 of the United Nations Charter.

Rabat, 14 rebia 11 1396 (14 April 1976)

For the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
Hamdi Ould Mouknass

For the Kingdom of Morocco
Dr. Ahmed Laraki

APPENDIX 2

The Revolutionary Command Council of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) issued a statement yesterday [9th October 1978] announcing the formation of a SADR Government emanating from the fourth general people's congress of the Polisario Front. The composition of the Government is as follows:

Prime Minister:	Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed.
Minister of Defence:	Ibrahim Ghali Ould Mustafa.
Minister of Justice:	Mohamed Ould Ziou.
Minister of Foreign Affairs:	Ibrahim Hakim.
Minister of Information:	Mohamed Salem Ould Salek.
Minister and Adviser at the Cabinet:	Mohamed Ould Saydati.
Secretary General of the Ministry of Trade:	Moulay Ahmed Ould Baba.
Secretary General of the Ministry of Health:	Salek Ould Bouyah.
Secretary General of the Ministry of Communications and Power:	Hamoudi Ould Ahmed Baba.
Secretary General of the Ministry of Education:	Ali Ould Mahmoud.

The statement said the members of the new SADR Government had held their first meeting in the liberated areas on 4th and 5th October to study the national and international situation in the light of the historic resolutions adopted by the fourth general people's congress of the Polisario Front. In conclusion the statement emphasized that, as in the past, the SADR Government was determined to apply the resolutions of the general people's congress and the policy outlined by it.

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The Western Sahara

The Western Sahara recently has become a region of political and military conflict between three nations—two Arab, one African—and a desert guerilla movement. Frontiers, mineral resources, ideology, and nationalism are turbulent ingredients in a region where implacable national laws still apply. The strategic balance of northwest Africa has been threatened by the prospect of open warfare between Algeria and Morocco; the former colonial powers—France and Spain—still play a role in resolving the conflict. The United States has not yet made its position entirely clear.

David Lynn Price

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