On the eve of the sixth anniversary of the proclamation of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, the Sahrawi state in Western Sahara, S.A.D.R. Foreign Minister Ibrahim Hakim joined other foreign ministers of the O.A.U. as representative of a full-fledged member state at the O.A.U. Foreign Ministers Meeting in Addis Ababa this month. Despite protests from Morocco and some of its O.A.U. allies, and the departure of the Moroccan foreign minister from the meeting, the O.A.U. Secretary General's contention is that the S.A.D.R., recognized by over one half of the O.A.U. member states, is a member of the O.A.U. by reason of O.A.U. By-Laws. The S.A.D.R. flag now flies with the flags of the other 51 member states.

The admission of the S.A.D.R. to membership in the O.A.U. had been seen by most observers to be a matter of time. Moroccan reluctance to implement the Nairobi decision on the referendum in the Western Sahara and its intransigence in refusing to talk with Polisario so as to arrange a cease-fire so that the referendum could be held have angered a number of African states.

The recent support of the U.S. of the Moroccan position and the threatened increase of U.S. arms assistance to that nation may also have helped to bring about the admission of the S.A.D.R. to the O.A.U. African states have regarded the question of the Western Sahara to be one of decolonization and have viewed with some alarm the proposed escalation of that conflict.

Since November 1981 a number of high U.S. Pentagon and State Department officials have visited Morocco, and it has been reported in some news sources, the Western Sahara. Among Americans visiting recently were Francis West, Deputy Secretary of State, charged with international security, Bobby Ray Inman, Deputy Director of the C.I.A., Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, Alexander Haig, Secretary of State, two high-ranking generals and 23 other experts from the Pentagon and State.
EDITORIAL
DOES THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION REALLY SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL ATTEMPTS TO SETTLE THE WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT?

The Reagan Administration's dropping of language making continued sales of arms conditional on Moroccan moves to negotiate a settlement in the Western Sahara (see Africa News, February 15, 1982) is a clear demonstration of that Administration's intention to ignore peace initiatives undertaken by the O.A.U. and approved by the U.N. General Assembly.

The U.S. posture, prior to Mr. Reagan's taking office, was that the conflict should be resolved by the O.A.U. Now that it is apparent that O.A.U. support is for the principle of self-determination, and that Morocco has the worst of it militarily, this Administration in deed, if not completely in word, has gone back on the U.S. proposed resolution of the conflict.

The argument proffered by Secretary of State Haig is Libyan and Soviet involvement in the conflict. (See newspaper reports of Haig's recent meeting in Morocco with King Hassan.) Yet what is clear to most observers of the conflict, and what ought to be clear to U.S. intelligence gatherers, is that the Soviet Union remains a major trading partner of Morocco, has not recognized the Sahrawi State despite its support of the principle of self-determination, has not directly delivered any arms to the Polisario. It also must be known to U.S. intelligence gatherers that Algerian influence on Polisario is certainly as strong or stronger than Libyan. Further, despite the claims of Hassan that SAM 6 missiles were supplied to Polisario by Libya for the battles of Guelta Zemmour, U.S. military attaches in Rabat have not been allowed to see the wreckage of the planes shot down by Polisario nor the flight record black boxes. Not knowing at what height the planes were flying when shot down, it is not clear that SAM 6 were actually used.

U.S. officials also know, or should, that their hopes that Algeria will cease to support Polisario are not founded on reality. It is a hope that some U.S. officials have harbored since 1975, despite all evidence to the contrary. The February 12-18, 1982 issue of Révolution Africaine, the F.L.N. official magazine, stated again unequivocally the Algerian position, noting that President Chadli Bendjedid had repeated Algerian adherence to the principle of self-determination for the Sahrawis people in his state of the nation message. The magazine noted on the Polisario question that "Algeria is ready neither today nor tomorrow to repudiate its principles for in so doing it would repudiate itself. If this reality has not been understood, then those people involved should finally understand that the question to be asked is the following: Why is Morocco afraid of a referendum?" From 1975 Algeria has consistently held the point of view that the Sahrawis have the right of self-determination and that that right should be exercised freely by them.

Now that Algeria is developing closer ties with France again, it would be foolish of the U.S. government to weaken its ties with an important trading partner (Algeria) by increasing tensions in Northwest Africa.

The solution to the problem is to let the referendum be held; to broaden U.S. ties to all nations in that area of the world, even to a new Polisario state if the Sahrawis should choose that option; to uphold the peace-making efforts of the O.A.U. and of the U.N. To do otherwise is to push nations into closer ties with the Soviet Union, the very thing Haig argues he is trying to avoid by the pro-Moroccan stance.
The following letter was sent to President Reagan on November 10, 1981, on the part of the Saharan Peoples Support Committee. To date, no reply has been received. (During President Carter's Administration, even if that Administration did not have a totally neutral policy towards the conflict, there was communication on it.) We urge you to send similar letters individually to Mr. Reagan, to your Senators and Representatives. A similar letter was sent to Senator Nancy Kassebaum on December 15, 1981. To date there has been no reply.

November 10, 1981

Dear Mr. President,

I read recently of the visit of Vernon Walters to Rabat and of the U.S. military mission last week to Morocco to consider providing Morocco with additional military equipment.

What the S.P.S.C. fears is that your Administration is considering further escalation of the conflict in Western Sahara, which has been predicted in U.S. Congressional Hearings on that issue since 1977. U.S. military commitments to Morocco in 1975 and 1976 made possible the invasion of the Western Sahara by Morocco. Continued U.S. military grants and sales since then, and, most notably, the sale of the sophisticated Westinghouse radar equipment that is used in the Western Sahara on the sand wall surrounding El Alun, Smara and Bu Craa, has brought about the need for more sophisticated equipment by the Polisario. A direct cause-effect relationship. More sophisticated equipment to Morocco may well mean more sophisticated equipment to the Polisario Front.

The issue of the Western Sahara is one of decolonization. As the State Department knows, and as foreign policy advisers in the White House must know, the U.N. General Assembly, the Organization for African Unity, the Non-aligned States, in short, every international body of note, has called the invasion of the Western Sahara by Morocco an invasion of the Sahrawi peoples' right to self-determination.

What most reports on the Guelta Zemmour battle (October, 1981) have glossed over, at least in the U.S. press, is that Guelta Zemmour is clearly located in the Western Sahara, not in Morocco. No international body recognizes Moroccan sovereignty of that region.

It was stated recently in the press that your Administration is re-adopting a human rights policy as part of its foreign policy. If that statement is more than rhetoric your Administration should use its leverage with Morocco to ensure that the referendum called for by the O.A.U. and the U.N. for the Sahrawis takes place. That is how to end the conflict. The alternative is continued escalation of the conflict.

May we remind you that self-determination is a human right that U.S. citizens have exercised and that you recently commemorated at Yorktown. It is that same right that the Sahrawis want to exercise and for which they have been fighting for a long time (since 1973 for the Polisario Front).

It would seem that U.S. long-term interests in the region of North and Northwest Africa would best be served by our not reversing our traditional support of self-determination for colonized peoples.

REVIEW: COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE INTERVIEW OF POLISARIO U.N. REPRESENTATIVE

The Communications Update interview of Abdullah Madjid, Polisario Representative at the U.N., by Liza Bear, gives, in its twenty-eight minutes duration, a clear synopsis of the issues in the war in the Western Sahara. Madjid underlines the fact that the Polisario Front is the only liberation movement in the territory, and, indeed, has been so since 1973. A brief history of the se­ denterization policy of the Spanish, the steps towards independence and a projected referendum in 1974-75, the costs of the war to Moroccan stability, are all discussed. (It is reported in the interview that about 40% of Morocco's budget is going for war costs and has resulted in some of the serious unrest among urban populations in that country. Around 80,000 Moroccan troops are needed to hold the tenth of the Sahrawi ter­ ritory that they still have.)

Although the program format is essentially the interview, certain visuals are used, maps, including that of Morocco's claimed "Greater Morocco," pictures of Sahrawi refugees, the Sahrawi flag.

The interview was recorded prior to the discussion of the Western Sahara at the U.N. in the fall of 1981. There is a discussion of the proposed referendum and the difficulty of implementing a cease-fire when Morocco refuses to talk with the Polisario Front.

The program is a valuable visual intro­ duction to the question of Western Sahara.

§§§§See Page 4 for more information§§§§§
Support Committee members will be able to get videotape copies at cost of an interview with Abdullah Madjid, Polisario representative at the United Nations in New York (1981).

Persons wishing to get a copy should write:
Communications Update
108 Leonard Street/ 13th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10013

Copies are available in VHS, Beta or 3/4 inch format for $25 per copy or $15 if people send a blank cassette.

This cost is for support committee members. If university departments want to rent a copy for use in a classroom or for a public showing, persons involved should contact Communications Update for costs.

In English

FILM IN FRENCH AVAILABLE ON THE CONFLICT IN WESTERN SAHARA

VIVRE AU SAHARA, a recently completed French film, is presently available for distribution from Les Films du Village, 5, passage Montgallet, 75012 Paris. The film presents the life of the Sahrawis in the refugee camps, shows the Polisario in combat, explains some of the historical background to the conflict. A number of Sahrawis are interviewed in the film.

In the description published by Les Films du Village, the distributors note that the Sahrawis, forced to flee to Algeria in 1975, have begun to erase the former tribal divisions which existed. It notes that the struggle for independence/self-determination has helped to forge the cultural and political unity of the Sahrawis. It notes that Polisario currently controls 90% of the territory of Western Sahara and is continuing to attack the walled and electronically reinforced useful triangle. The film suggests that the diplomatic battle is that of implementation of the referendum agreed to by King Hassan in 1981, but which he is attempting to subvert.

In English

NEW BOOK IS SCHOLARLY PRESENTATION OF ISSUES IN THE CONFLICT IN WESTERN SAHARA

Maurice Barbier's Le Conflit du Sahara Occidental, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1982, provides a clear, scholarly look at the conflict over the former Spanish Sahara which dates from the 1970's. Using the most complete bibliography I have seen to date, representing the viewpoints of all parties to the conflict as well as documents in at least five languages, Barbier examines the following issues: the territory and how it was originally defined, the population, the resources of the territory, historical background to the conflict including Moroccan claims of a "Greater Morocco," the period of Spanish colonization and the first movements toward decolonization, the outbreak of the conflict, preceded by a study of the U.N. Mission in 1975 and the consultative opinion of the International Court of Justice, the Green March and subsequent diplomatic and military action, the declaration of the Sahrawi state (the R.A.S.D.), the internationalization of the conflict, the withdrawal of Mauritania from the conflict, the role of the West and other nations in the struggle, the actions of the U.N. and the O.A.U. Barbier ends the book with an essay interpreting the meaning of the conflict.

Much of the bibliography is annotated. Barbier's work is the most important work on the conflict in Western Sahara to date. It is an objective study which should be required reading for those wanting to understand the conflict or for those engaged in government policy formation. The book is in French and is available from L'Harmattan, 7, Rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique, 75005, Paris, and costs 130 francs.

A. L.

WATCH FOR IT ON P.B.S.

WHAT? A ONE HOUR FILM ON WESTERN SAHARA.

THE FIRST U.S.-MADE FILM ON THE CONFLICT IN WESTERN SAHARA.

WHERE? P.B.S./N.E.T. ON APRIL 14, 1982, at 8:00 P.M.

IT'S TITLE? BLOOD AND SAND, WAR IN THE SAHARA.

Filmmaker: Sharon Sopher