UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO WESTERN SAHARA VISITS REGION IN FEBRUARY 90

Johannes Mann, special representative to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar for the Western Sahara, is in that region this month in an effort to end the apparent stalemate in the peace process.

Mann, a Swiss citizen, will visit Morocco, the occupied territory and the free territory of the Western Sahara, and will undoubtedly confer with other interested parties to the conflict as has been done in the past.

Efforts to move forward on the referendum of the Sahrawis are seen as necessary. With the completion of the process of independence for Namibia, the Western Sahara remains one of the few areas on the docket of the 4th Committee of the UN.

UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar is working closely with OAU Chairman Hosni Mubarek of Egypt to bring a resolution to the conflict.

SPANISH SUPPORT COMMITTEE SEEKS INFORMATION ON SAHRAWIS WHO ARE IMPRISONED OR DISAPPEARED

Human rights activists in Spain associated with Support Committee activities for the Sahrawi people undertook a letter-writing campaign in September-November 1989 in an effort to find large numbers of Sahrawis who have disappeared since the start of the war between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

Postcards with pictures of those who have disappeared and the dates of their disappearance were mailed to Spanish and Moroccan authorities. In an attempt reminiscent of Amnesty International actions, other support groups throughout the world were asked to join in the effort to gain information about those who have disappeared.

Below is a copy of part of the cards sent:

DESAPARECIDOS SAHARAUIS
SWISS SUPPORT GROUPS ASSIST SAHRAWIS WITH SOLAR POWER IN SAHARAN DESERT

A pilot program with solar power in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria in March 1987 led Genevan technician-engineer Max Schneider and the Swiss Support Committee for the Sahrawi People to undertake a larger project: lighting for 25 kindergartens and as many dispensaries throughout the refugee camps.

The project included three aspects:
1. Capturing solar energy with solar panels,
2. Stocking the energy,
3. Redistribution of the energy.

A 7 1/2 ton container full of lighting materials for use with solar power left Geneva in July and arrived in the camps in the beginning of September. Schneider and two members of the Swiss Support Group went to the camps at the same time for the installation.

Financing of the project is being undertaken by several sources. First of these is the favorable price for the materials due to the project's being within the framework of "North-South" transfer of technology. The Swedish Red Cross had already supplied about half the cost of the project in September. The European Community, through a non-governmental Belgian organization, has also been asked for funds.

An important aspect of the project has been its learning dimension. During the pilot project Schneider had instructed three Sahrawi electricians in solar energy. The work of formation will continue during the construction of the solar network for the kindergartens and dispensaries. The Swiss engineer had also studied the actual terrain before designing the current project.

PEACE FOR THE SAHRAWI PEOPLE IN 1990

SWISS AUTHOR DESCRIBES HER SUPPORT WORK FOR SAHRAWI REFUGEES IN CAMPS

Christiane Perregaux, author of L'Ecole sahraouie: De la caravane à la guerre de liberation, noted in an interview in August in Algeria that the Swiss Support Committee was created in 1976 and that it has two branches, one German, the other French. The francophone branch is made up of individuals who contact the press, humanitarian groups and the Swiss Confederation. The German-speaking group is made up of several associations for assistance: Terre des Hommes, Entraide ouvriere, etc. She noted that a number of political parties have also established policies with regard to the conflict in Western Sahara.

Perregaux's book resulted from her research of several years and her several stays in the camps.

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The SPSC LETTER is in its 10th volume of publication.
PEACE PROCESS FOR WESTERN SAHARA CONTINUES DESPITE DIFFICULTIES: WILL 1990 BRING THE REFERENDUM?

An Editorial

As the winds of change touch every continent in this new decade of the 90's, the question arises as to whether the Sahrawis of Western Sahara will also benefit from this new spirit of democracy and cooperation growing throughout the world and existing between former enemies.

In Europe we see the reunification of Germany in the offing; multi-party elections in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe; the withdrawal of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia; the abandonment of the long-term parties/leaders by some nations in Eastern Europe; disarmament talks between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that might mean major reductions in military spending for both nations.

In South Africa it appears that apartheid is waning; the ANC is no longer persona (association) non grata; Nelson Mandela is free. Namibia becomes independent in March.

In North Africa Algeria has held multi-party elections; it is strengthening long-term ties with the West; it is expected that the economy will become more of a mixed economy than previously foreseen.

In Nicaragua the Sandinistas supported a multi-party free election. It appears there will be an orderly transfer of power.

"Strategic interests" explanations that have dominated U.S. foreign policy apologia in the past seem to have little or no reference to current events.

In the past when U.S. officials have explained support of Morocco in its efforts to annex the Western Sahara, the explanation for this stance has been "long-term ties with Morocco" (in the same breath one can state that the same sort of long-term ties also existed with Tunis and Algiers); "East-West balance" (a concept that seems to be outmoded); links with a "more democratic government" (Morocco) as opposed as to a less democratic government (Algeria)? (As a side note one must note that Amnesty International has issued a report that is harshly critical of Morocco's human rights record. The 28-page document asserts that the government of King Hassan II has systematically tortured hundreds of prisoners and killed others during long periods of detention.)

Since the war began between Morocco and the Polisario Front in 1975, this writer can recall the numerous explanations given her in writing or orally in meetings with U.S. officials concerning the need to strengthen Morocco so that North Africa would not be dominated by a state with strong ties to the Soviet Union. The world that that kind of explanation belonged to is apparently dead now, if it even existed in 1975.

This long preface is given to underscore the longstanding need for the U.S. to rethink its North African policy, if it really has one, in terms of the political realities which truly exist. It is in the long-term and short-term interests of the U.S., it appears to this writer, to urge Morocco to fully cooperate with UN/OAU initiatives for a fair referendum, to withhold all delivery of arms to Morocco and to put a moratorium on arms sales to Morocco until the question of Western Sahara is resolved; and to vote with the majority of the UN General Assembly on the Western Sahara issue.

The U.S. has not been in the forefront of movements for popular
democracy in Africa since the days of Senator John Kennedy who called for self-determination for the Algerians. The U.S. has followed the lead of European, Asian, North American and South American nations——very slowly, and in the view of some observers, rather grudgingly, and often only at the behest of outrage by ordinary U.S. citizens who believe in the American dream of personal liberty, self-determination, the rights of peoples and equality before the law.

In the case of Western Sahara, the U.S. should finally abandon its outdated policy of tacit (and actual military) support of Morocco and become the advocate for a negotiated settlement of an on-going, troubling conflict which ought to be resolved to help that region lessen its economic difficulties, achieve stability, and develop a plausible "Greater Maghreb." By taking this action the U.S. could earn credibility among the non-aligned nations, the nations of the "South," and the nations of the African continent. It might even make those nations in Central America looking at us fearfully, relax a bit, and ease, if only slightly, the deficit at home.

A.L.

SAHRAWI REPRESENTATIVE IN GENEVA TO WORK WITH UN AND EUROPEAN AUTHORITIES

Salek Seghair, Polisario Representative to the UN in Geneva, has been located in Geneva for over a year. In an interview with M. Seghair, Nouvelles Sahraoises questioned the purposes of that presence.

Q: Why Sahrawi representation in Geneva?

A: For a long time there wasn't a Sahrawi representative in Geneva any more. Today it's become indispensable since the UN and the OAU have launched the peace process, agreed to in principle by Morocco and the Polisario Front. In addition, the representative for the UN for the peace plan is in Geneva and it is necessary to maintain contact with him. This peace process has raised much hope which continues with the Sahrawis. Further, since Morocco has representation in Geneva, it is necessary that the special representative of the UN also find a Sahrawi spokesman in the same city. (At the time of the interview, the special representative for the UN was M. Hector Gros Espiel. It is now Johannes Manz, also a Swiss citizen.)

It is from Geneva that the UN Mission left in October 1987, and Switzerland had offered the airplane which carried members of that Mission to Morocco, Algeria, Western Sahara and Mauritania to study the situation.

Q: Can you recall for us what has been done to try to find a political solution to this conflict which has gone on since 1976? (Actually, 1975)

A: There was the exploratory mission of the UN of October 1987, which I just mentioned. On August 30, 1988, there was acceptance in principle to the (UN/OAU ed.) peace plan by the two parties to the conflict, Morocco and the Polisario Front. At the beginning of this year (1989 ed.), there was a second visit of the region by the special representative of the UN, M. H. Gros Espiel, with a delegation from the UN; a visit which had as its purpose providing members of that Mission with a personal appreciation of the situation and of means of surmounting the obstacles which still exist for applying the peace plan. There have been a second and a third meeting between UN, OAU
and the two parties to the conflict to discuss these obstacles. Two questions which have been resolved are the following: who will have the right to vote and the formulation of the question which will be: Do you want independence or integration with Morocco? Despite these steps forward, there exist other obstacles to peace, however; notably that of direct negotiations which has not yet been taken seriously by Morocco, along with all other things tied to the Moroccan presence in the territory, i.e., presence of the Moroccan army, administration and colonists (in the occupied Western Sahara). These are huge obstacles to holding a referendum under the conditions set forth by the UN Secretary-General during the period of his visit to the region.

Q: In the media, there appears to be great discretion regarding the stubborn struggle of the Sahrawi people for its independence. There is, I believe, a lot for the Polisario representative in Switzerland to do?

A: The purpose of Sahrawi representation in Geneva is not only for a presence near the UN, but also to establish coherent and on-going contacts with Swiss authorities, and political and humanitarian organizations. Within this framework, the government as well as the political parties have appreciated the presence of a representative of the Polisario Front in the manner of all the European countries. Some contacts and ties have already been established with the DFAE, which led to a meeting between M. Jacobi of the DFAE and M. Bachir Mustapha Sayed, Secretary-of-State for Foreign Affairs of the SADR, as well as to an increase in Swiss humanitarian assistance to the Sahrawi refugees as well as to a promise to support by all means the peace plan of the UN.

Switzerland has already delivered a visitor's visa to the representative of the Polisario Front to Switzerland. There have also been fruitful contacts with federal members of parliament which have resulted in a visit to the refugee camps and the occupied territory in March 1989, which in turn led to an committed awareness of the Sahrawi cause in the Swiss Parliament and in Swiss political parties of nearly every tendency. For example, the Swiss Socialist Party supports direct negotiations (between Morocco and the Polisario Front) along with the Radical Party...

On the other hand, the humanitarian organizations which support the Sahrawi refugees, Terres des Hommes Suisse, OSEO, MCP, and still others, cities and communes such as Geneva, Meyrin, Chene-Bourg, find contact and information along with organization of trips into the camps facilitated by the presence of a Sahrawi representative in Geneva......


NEW WAVE OF SAHRAWIS HELD IN MOROCCO AND IN OCCUPIED WESTERN SAHARA

Sahrawis imprisoned since the beginning of 1989 are the following:

January 1989:

Azafati Mohamed Yehdih was living in an inn in Casablanca along with some of his compatriots who, with him, had been deported to that Moroccan city. Two policemen presented themselves at their place of residence and led Azafati Mohamed Yehdih away with them to an unknown destination. No word on Azafati Mohamed Yehdih since that
time.

May 1989:

A certain Laroussi, who had returned from Fez, the place of his deporta­tion, to visit his relatives in El Aiun (occupied territories), was arrested at the entrance to El Aiun.

July 1989:

M ejad Heida Ahmed, deported to Tangiers, was arrested as soon as he returned to the family home in El Aiun where he had been returned following a mental illness. The accusation against him is of having written "Long live the Polisario Front" on walls of the occupied capital.

Soueilem, Ould Loud, Heida, all three sons of Noumriya, were arrested following being accused of attempting to go the free territory of Western Sahara from Enhamid El-Ghozlan.

September 1989:

Salek Khadad Youssef, employee in the neighborhood of Smara, was incarcerated, and following his imprison­ment, two other women and one man (Lebeihi Khatri Abdallah, 28 years old, worker at Bou Craa, living in Zemla at El Aiun; Saadi Selama Ould Houssein Ould Elniya, unemployed, residing at Colomina Bieja Aiun; Minetou Mint Elmeslem Ould Sidi Hamad, 24 years old, living at Colomina Verdes, Rue Casablanca, No. 40, El Aiun) were also imprisoned.

October 1989:

Brahim Abdellahi Keziza, 21 years of age, residing at Colomina Verdes, was deported to Nador; Abdallah Maati Ahmed Labeid Breika, was deported to Meknes. Both are reported as disappeared.

Louh Serrah, deported to Sidi-Slimane; Mohamed Fadel, called Naana, deported to Tetouan; and Mint Serrakh; all three are reported as disappeared; their families have had no news of them.

Additional names continue to enlarge the already lengthy list of detentions which followed the visit of the UN Technical Mission on November 20, 1987. In this regard the following incarcerations are noted: Brahim Abderrahmane Boukina, 23 years old, student at El Aiun, Boulevard of the Mosque (formerly Diar Elcabildo); Mohamed Ould Mohamed Nagem Ould Cheiguer, 21 years old, married in El Aiun and residing in Smara, was incarcerated following a failed attempt to join the liberated territory from Smara.

For two years Hassena Ould Eskena, has disappeared from Casablanca where he was living. His spouse, Legreina Mint Hassena, residing in Smara, has had no news.

Brahim Ould Mohamed Bechir Ould Sbaa, Electro-technician and former worker at Bou Craa, has been among the disappeared since 1981. Recent news reports are that he is detained in Kenitra.

SAHRAWI CHILDREN IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY FOLLOW PATTERN OF INTIFADA AND SOWETO YOUTH PROTESTS

Reports from Polisario authorities in November 1989 note the arrest and torture of young Sahrawis under the age of 14 in Dakhla and El Aiun.

In Dakhla, one child was arrested and tortured, according to reports. Following his admissions under torture, other youngsters were arrested and imprisoned for a week.
The crimes for which the children were accused were the following: setting fire to the Hospital Center, March 3, in Dakhla, breaking windows in the room, El Farah, a meeting place for the local occupation authorities, tearing up pictures of King Hassan II and the Moroccan flag, and destroying posters and some furniture in the office of the head of the "National Promotion Club" in protest at the continued occupation by Moroccan authorities of the Western Sahara.

The eight Dakhla children held were: Samba Mahmoud, Ahmed Baba Fdeil, Attigou Mohamed Berray, Zein Mohamed M'Bareck, Abdelfattah Mohamed Abdellahi, Ould Lemherig Ould Taliab Oumar, Abeidou Ould M'Heini Ould Souedatt.

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In El Aiun 50 children attacked the "festivities" held by Moroccan officials to celebrate the Moroccan Green March of 1975.

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Other children have lost their lives to mines planted to prevent Sahrawi residents from leaving the occupied territory to go to the free territory of the Western Sahara. Recently Sid'Ahmed Ould Sidi Omar died in the neighborhood of Hassi Bouguefa, in the region of Aousserd, following the explosion of one of these mines.

INFORMATION ON THE SADR IN US NEWS

Anne Lippert, editor of SPSC LETTER, was interviewed on Voice of America on October 12, 1989 and January 26, 1990 concerning events in Western Sahara.

Major Carlos Wilson, a free-lance writer, was awarded Bryant Spann Memorial Prize from the Eugene V. Debs Foundation at a ceremony at the Hulman Civic University Center in Terre Haute, Indiana, November 4, 1989. Wilson's prize was for his article, "America's Secret African War," that appeared in On the Issues, in 1989.

FREED MOROCCAN PRISONERS REQUEST REPATRIATION TO MOROCCO AND FAMILIES

The 200 Moroccan prisoners of war who were released by Sahrawi authorities on June 17, 1989, but were forbidden entry to their own nation by King Hassan II, according to reports, have written European Heads of State requesting their intervention with Moroccan authorities so that these men, some of whom have been in prison for over 10 years, might finally be reunited with their families.

The Moroccan prisoners have also written to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, requesting his assistance.

Red Cross authorities were prepared to assist with the repatriation last June, but on the day the men were to leave Sahrawi territory, it was reported that Moroccan officials refused to accept the men.

SADR AUTHORITIES AT DECEMBER OAU MEET

A Sahrawi delegation led by Mohamed Sidati, Minister for Foreign Affairs and member of the Polisario Front, took part in the deliberations of the Steering Committee of the OAU December 7 - 8, 1989. This 18th session concentrated mainly on the economic problems confronting Africa. The committee consists of 27 member states and is currently presided by Egypt.
SADR GOVERNMENT COMMENTS ON STATUS OF PEACE PROCESS, NEGOTIATIONS WITH KING HASSAN OF MOROCCO: PROGRESS FOR 1990?

In a communique following the November 4, 1989 meeting of the SADR government under the chairmanship of SADR President Mohamed Abdelaziz, SADR authorities reviewed the current status of the Sahrawi people's struggle "for self-determination and independence of their country and sovereignty over the entire SADR territory, defined according to internationally recognized frontiers."

Signaled in their discussion were recent military successes by Polisario forces in September and October (Guelta Zemmour and Hausa), and the international consensus of the 4th Committee of the UN General Assembly, which called for the continuation of direct dialogue between Sahrawis and Moroccans and removal of obstacles hindering the efforts of the UN Secretary General and the Chairman of the OAU.

In the communique, SADR officials accused Morocco, current chair of the Arab Maghreb Union, of placing hurdles in the way of an integrated Maghreb and of seeking to acquire financial support to continue the war in Western Sahara. SADR officials also expressed appreciation to the people and government of Algeria for their support and firm stance of solidarity with the Sahrawi people, and to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar for his sincere and positive quest for peace in the world, particularly in Namibia and Western Sahara.

SPD CONGRESS MEETS IN BREMEN AND CALLS FOR ACTION ON SAHARAN CONFLICT

At the close of the working meetings of the Congress of the SPD held in Bremen November 11 and 12, 1989, members of the Congress adopted a resolution on the Western Sahara conflict:

Noting with concern the impasse to which the international peace plan on the Western Sahara has fallen prey and the reassumption of armed combat following this impasse,

Congratulating the international unanimity recently realized in the Fourth Commission of the 44th General Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Western Sahara,

The SPD reaffirms its unconditional support of the just cause of the Sahrawi people and launches an urgent appeal to the two parties to the conflict (Morocco and the Polisario Front) to take up again as soon as possible direct negotiations between the two parties so as to permit the success of the Mission of the UN Secretary-General and the Acting Chairman of the OAU who are trying to find a peaceful solution to this fratricidal conflict.

Requests the government of the Federal Republic of Germany to uphold more concretely and efficaciously the international peace plan on Western Sahara and to increase its humanitarian assistance to the Sahrawi refugees.
**Publication Update on the Liberation Struggle of the Sahrawi People...1989**


Zoubir and Wilson do a masterly job of telescoping the 14-year-old conflict between the Polisario Front and Morocco in some twelve pages of text. They provide the reader with historical background to the conflict, information concerning Spain's role in the decolonization process, details about the Polisario Front, the Moroccan perspective in the conflict, the interest of both Mauritania and Algeria in the region, U.S. interests in the conflict, UN/OAU peace efforts and their own conclusion. The authors believe: "The Polisario Front desires an end to the military, political stalemate and is likely to abide by the referendum's outcome, a position shared by Algeria. As shown by the recent UN vote, Morocco's military supporters favor the referendum or at least have abstained from voting thereby sending a signal of at least not opposing the peace plan. Strong elements in Morocco favor the referendum as well---enough so that a gentle nudge by President Bush would bring the referendum vote into reality." (p.38)

Although the Polisario Front resumed military operations in September 1989, it appears that the authors' analysis holds. They urge greater U.S. encouragement of the referendum.

"Sahrawi Women's Role in the Western Sahara Struggle," Carlos Wilson, pax et libertas, Volume 54, Number 2, June 1989, pp. 6-7.

Wilson, who has visited the Western Sahara and the Sahrawi refugee camps writes about how Sahrawi women have played an important role in the refugee camps; how they have been involved in the education of the people; how they participate fully in the political processes of the Sahrawis. The article also appeared in German.


This special issue of the Bulletin of Peace Proposals discusses the withdrawal of foreign military forces from countries in the Third World. Conflicts on three continents are analyzed: Afghanistan, Central America, Sri Lanka, Namibia, Indo-China, and Western Sahara.

The newsletter is available to individuals from SAGE Publications, P.O. Box 5096, Newbury Park, CA 91359 USA for $9.


This quarterly review is published by Third World Resources, an affiliated project of the Data Center that collects, catalogs, annotates and publicizes resources from around the
world on Third World regions and issues. Volume 5, No. 2 costs $2.50.


Reference is made to the conflict in Western Sahara in the context of the Arab Maghreb Union. Romdhani briefly refers to the possibility and need for resolution of that conflict. Ware says that "conventional military aid (in the region) is misplaced. The weak Maghrebi economies, which Greater Maghreb cooperation is meant to strengthen, and cannot absorb more military materiel without putting an intolerable strain on the already overextended resources Maghrebi countries apply to the service of their debt."


As usual, Africa News does an excellent review of the status of the conflict in Western Sahara. Included in the review is an analysis of the referendum in Morocco last November to postpone parliamentary elections for two years, the Polisario's resumption of large-scale military attacks in Western Sahara in September, October, and November, the points of dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front concerning the referendum, and a 1989 calendar of events in the peace process.

An individual subscription to Africa News is available for $30 by writing P.O. Box 3851, Durham, NC 27702.

MATERIALS SENT TO SPSC LETTER FROM MOROCCAN CORRESPONDENT IN RABAT

The following materials have been received in recent months from the Ministry of Information in Morocco from former Polisario official Omar Hadrami:

1. Non-official translation of "Sahara/Renegades; Press Conference Given by "Polisario" Officials"


3. "An Interview with Omar Hadrami, founder of the Polisario. The Reasons for His Return to Morocco"

4. "H.M. Hassan II calls his people to accept the postponement of legislative elections for 2 years"

The above documents were dated November 1989.