

A. SPAIN. — Announcement of Spanish Sahara Referendum. - Spanish Sahara Internal Developments. - Programme of Canary Islands Independence Movement.

It was announced in Madrid on Aug. 21 that a referendum to determine the future status of Spanish Sahara would be held in the territory in the first half of 1975 "under the auspices and guarantees of the United Nations".

The announcement had been preceded by several years of diplomatic exchanges between Spain and the interested North African States, notably Morocco, culminating in talks between the Spanish and Moroccan Prime Ministers in Madrid on Aug. 13.

While Morocco laid claim to the whole of the Spanish Sahara territory (which contained the world's largest known phosphate deposits), the southern province of Rio de Oro was claimed by the Mauritanian Government on the grounds that the inhabitants of that area were of the same racial stock as Mauritians. Following the settlement of certain longstanding border and other disputes between Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria in 1970, the Heads of State of these three countries had reaffirmed their determination to achieve the decolonization of both Spanish Sahara and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan Mediterranean coast [see 24125 A].

Added urgency was given to the Moroccan Government's claims on Spanish Sahara by the fact that commercial production from the phosphate mines at Bu-Craa had started in 1972 and was expected to reach a level of 10,000,000 tons a year in the late 1970s, thereby presenting serious competition to Morocco's established phosphates industry [see 24125 A].

As the world's largest producer of phosphates, with output in 1973 reaching almost 20,000,000 tons, of which nearly 17,000,000 tons were exported, Morocco had from Jan. 1, 1974, increased its price of phosphates from \$14 (the prevailing level since 1952) to \$42 a ton. Following the failure of earlier attempts by the Moroccan Office chérifien des phosphates (OCP) to persuade Spain to co-operate on the exploitation of phosphate resources, the OCP feared that increasing production from Spanish Sahara would undermine Morocco's strong position in the phosphate export market.

Earlier, in 1969, the enclave of Ifni, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, had been ceded to Morocco by Spain [see 23146 B ; 23398 B ; 23452 A], and the two countries had reached a fisheries agreement (in January 1969), which was abrogated at the end of 1972 [see 25866 A] but was renewed in January 1974 [see 26324 A].

In the autumn of 1973, the United Nations General Assembly had reiterated its demand for the self-determination of Spanish Sahara and had invited Spain to hold a referendum in the territory to this end, in consultation with the Governments of Morocco and Mauritania [see page 26344]. Although the Spanish Government had for several years accepted the principle of a referendum, it had hitherto consistently refused to specify a date for such a consultation.

Diplomatic Exchanges, 1970-73.

An important feature of diplomatic exchanges on the Spanish Sahara question in the period 1970-73 was increasing co-operation between Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria in support of the decolonization of the territory, although underlying differences as to its future thereafter remained outstanding.

President Mokhtar Ould Daddah of Mauritania, King Hassan II of Morocco and President Houari Boumedienne of Algeria held talks on Spanish Sahara in Nouadibou (Port-Etienne) on the Mauritanian-Spanish Sahara border on Sept. 14, 1970. A further meeting between the three Heads of State took place in Agadir (Morocco) on July 23-24, 1973.

The outcome of the Nouadibou meeting was a decision by the three countries to intensify their close collaboration on the Spanish Sahara question, notably by means of a permanent co-ordinating committee, acting "in conformity with United Nations resolutions".

A communiqué issued after the Agadir meeting reiterated the demand of the three States for a referendum in Spanish Sahara, to be conducted under U.N. supervision after the departure of the Spanish armed forces and administration, and also noted the previously expressed desire of Mauritania to join the Maghreb Permanent Consultative Committee.

Having been an observer at earlier meetings of the Maghreb Permanent Consultative Committee (which comprised as full members Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia—Libya having withdrawn in 1970 after having been a founder member), the Mauritanian Government had formally submitted an application for full membership of the grouping in December 1972.

It was reported that Mauritanian membership of the Maghreb union, into which the Spanish Sahara territory would be integrated in a way yet to be defined, was envisaged by the meeting as the most

appropriate solution, once Spanish rule had ended, to the conflicting territorial claims of Morocco and Mauritania.

In the same period, the Spanish Government endeavoured to improve its relations with Arab countries generally and with Mauritania and Morocco in particular.

During an official visit to Rabat by the then Spanish Foreign Minister, Sr. Gregorio López Bravo, Spain and Morocco on March 13, 1971, signed an agreement to set up a joint committee to promote economic, cultural, scientific and technical co-operation. At the conclusion of the visit on March 16, 1971, a joint communiqué referred to the intention of the two countries (i) to co-operate to "promote the creation of a Mediterranean awareness", and (ii) to consult each other on all questions related to the maintenance of peace and security in the Mediterranean, particularly in the Straits of Gibraltar.

A meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria held in Algiers on Jan. 4-6, 1972, agreed on a programme of diplomatic action to "hasten the liberation" of Spanish Sahara, but at the same time expressed awareness of the three countries' links with "neighbouring and traditionally friendly Spain" and offered to negotiate on the Spanish Sahara question provided the Spanish Government demonstrated a sincere wish to do so.

The Spanish Government also, in the course of 1972, reached economic co-operation agreements with Algeria, leading to the formal signature in March 1974 of an agreement under which Spain was to buy 4,500 million cubic metres of Algerian natural gas a year over the next 20 years.

The Algerian Government had frequently declared that it had no territorial claims on Spanish Sahara, but was understood, nevertheless, to favour the creation of an independent State in the territory rather than its integration into Morocco or partition between Morocco and Mauritania.

Internal Spanish Sahara Developments.

Following the El Aaiún incident of June 1970 [see 24125 A], there were reports of further unrest within Spanish Sahara in the succeeding period. It was also reported that liberation movements committed to the overthrow of Spanish rule in North Africa had been established in Rabat and Nouakchott (the capitals of Morocco and Mauritania respectively).

In July 1971 anti-Spanish sources in Algiers claimed that six native soldiers of the Spanish forces in Spanish Sahara, including a sergeant, had recently been sentenced by a military tribunal sitting in the Canary Islands to various terms of imprisonment for the theft of arms and attending unauthorized meetings, although charges of treason and conspiracy had been dismissed. It was suggested that the accused had attended meetings of an organization called *Défense du peuple saharien* and had been among the instigators of the El Aaiún incident of June 1970.

Further disturbances were reported by the Moroccan Press to have occurred (i) in Villa Cisneros and El Aaiún on March 7, 1972, resulting in the death of eight demonstrators and 10 members of the Spanish forces, and (ii) east of El Aaiún on May 17, 1972, when a Spanish patrol clashed with nomads whom it was seeking to disarm.

Following reports in January 1971 that a Spanish Sahara liberation movement called "Nidam" had been in existence since 1969, *Le Monde* reported in July 1972 that an organization called *Mouvement de résistance des hommes bleus* (MOREHOB)—referring to the nomadic Reguibat or "blue people" who inhabited the territory [see 24125 A]—had been established in Rabat. In April 1973 it was reported by the same newspaper that MOREHOB had transferred its headquarters to Algiers, following differences with the Moroccan Government.

A further liberation movement—the *Front populaire pour la libération du Sahara*—was reported in August 1973 to be active from headquarters in Nouakchott.

In a statement issued on Aug. 18, 1973, a representative of the organization claimed that the real population of Spanish Sahara was 280,000, as against the finding of an official Spanish census conducted in 1972 of just under 60,000. [Opponents of Spanish rule had for several years claimed that large numbers of nomadic tribesmen had been expelled or excluded from Spanish Sahara, to increase the likelihood of the Spanish authorities obtaining a favourable response from the remaining population in a future referendum.]

The Spanish Government on Aug. 4, 1974, issued a statement denying reports that a breakdown in the conveyor belt system which carried phosphate from the mining centre at Bu-Craa to the coast had been caused by terrorist sabotage.

Declaration by General Franco. - Proposed Internal Autonomy of Spanish Sahara. - New Moroccan Diplomatic Offensive.

In a declaration to the Spanish Sahara General Assembly published on Sept. 27, 1973, the Spanish Head of State, General Franco, announced a programme of "progressive participation" by the people of the territory in the running of their affairs. The programme, which was to constitute a further stage in the "necessary preparation" for eventual self-determination, was to be worked out by the Assembly according to principles laid down by the Spanish Government.

The declaration, which was made in response to a petition (dated Feb. 20, 1973) from the Sahara Assembly reaffirming the territory's

right to self-determination allow the Assembly to press freedom of the Spanish Sahara and confirmed the economic and social developments.

In accordance with the Government announced Spanish Sahara would shortly towards full self-determination from the Moroccan was seeking to set up of the people.

Within the framework of a diplomatic campaign against the condemnation of Spanish population, King Hassan II of Morocco, warning him of Spanish Sahara.

In a speech on July 8, King Hassan said: "The creation of a 'puppet' King Hassan added that the territorial liberation."

On July 16 King Hassan, 50,000-strong Moroccan Ministers and Opposition in special diplomatic mission to seek support for the delegation of 17 chiefs of the Moroccan Government territory [see above].

In a response to Moroccan Representative at the UN on July 12 submitted by Kurt Waldheim, accused meditated annexation without regard to the self-determination, and responsibility if the two countries.

It was reported that Franco on July 28 sent the Spanish Sahara communication were

Spanish-Moroccan

As the crisis between Moroccan Prime Minister talks with his Spanish on Aug. 13. The Moroccan Laraki and Sr. Pedro and the Moroccan acting Spanish Head

A statement issued they had been "corrupt Western Sahara".

A week after the Ministry in Madrid of Jaime de Pinies had of the Government's Sahara in the first half the letter to Dr. Wa would be held "under United Nations".

After noting that the referendum should be Mauritania, the announcement would pursue its content done in the case of Moroccan dispositions for the re practices of the international

At the same time, it was allocating Sahara in Spanish Sahara. Several similar grants previous year.

The Moroccan cabinet announcement provoked a determination Mauritania, the former maker" for maintenance course of August, its own diplomatic campaign Spanish Sahara, with Mouknass, undertak

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