

Confidential filing

Visit of the former Prime Minister, Mr Ahmed Osman.

MOROCCO

February 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
14-2-80							
11.3.80.							
12-3-80							
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Morocco, BK



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 March 1980

Call by Mr. Ahmed Osman

Mr. Ahmed Osman, a former Prime Minister of Morocco, paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister this morning. He was accompanied by the Moroccan Ambassador. One or two points which came up during the discussion are, perhaps, worth recording.

Mr. Osman said that the Moroccan Army were in control of the situation in the Sahara. Moroccan units were attacked occasionally but the activities of the enemy were essentially terrorist in nature. The Polisario were being financed by Libya and Algeria and provided with arms from the Soviet Union. The Soviet intervention, while more discreet than that in Afghanistan, was part of an overall programme to destabilise the region. The threat to Morocco was also directly linked with the developing situation in Algeria. There were at present two or three conflicting political tendencies there. The Moroccan Government hoped that the position could be resolved. It would be helpful if there was someone there in a position of authority with whom it was possible to talk.

Mr. Osman said that the Moroccan Government had helped to foster contacts between Israel and President Sadat. But since the Camp David Agreement, they had associated themselves with the general Arab position. The Camp David Agreement would not suffice to resolve the Arab/Israel dispute. A European initiative might be helpful. The Prime Minister

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said that the dangers in the area had greatly increased since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. All those with whom she had talked from the Arab countries had told her that the situation would be much easier to deal with if progress could be made towards a solution of the Arab/Israel dispute.

Mr. Osman said that there were problems in his Government's relations with the European Community. Although there was an association agreement, the Community adopted a protectionist attitude towards some of Morocco's exports. The provisions in the agreement for consultation were not being observed satisfactorily. Moreover, Morocco was deeply worried about the consequences for their trade of the enlargement of the Community to include Spain, Greece and Portugal. The Moroccan Ambassador commented that British imports of phosphates had fallen in recent years. However, the Moroccan authorities enjoyed good relations with the Departments of Trade and Industry. Discussions were in progress aimed at rectifying the situation.

Mr. Osman conveyed King Hassan's congratulations to the Prime Minister on the success achieved in Zimbabwe. The Moroccan Government thought the problem had been solved in a very elegant manner. The Prime Minister said that she hoped that what had been achieved in Rhodesia would not only be of benefit to that country. She hoped it would have the effect of bringing Africa and Europe closer together. The two Continents needed each other. She hoped that it would also underline the fact that those nations which wished to decide their own destiny should associate with the West. Those who sided with the Soviet Union were unlikely ever to be given the kind of choice which had been offered to the people of Rhodesia.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Morocco

11 March 1980

Morocco

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from the Ambassador of Morocco together with its enclosure.

I have acknowledged the Ambassador's letter. I do not think that any further action is required.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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11 March 1980

I am writing on the Prime Minister's behalf to thank you for your letter to her of 10 March. I shall of course bring your letter and its enclosure to her attention.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

His Excellency Mr. Badreddine Senoussi

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London, 10th March 1980.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London S.W.1.

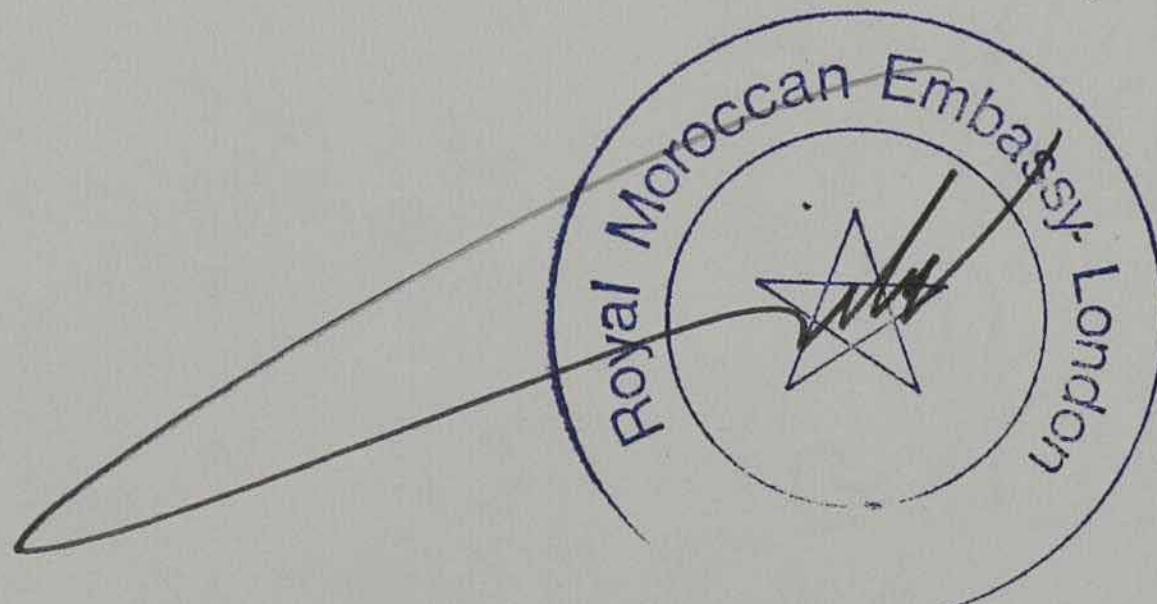
Dear Prime Minister,

It is with great pleasure that I have learnt of your decision to meet our former Moroccan Prime Minister and current Chairman of the Independents' Movement, Mr. Ahmed Osman, during his stay in the United Kingdom this week.

In anticipation of this meeting, I am taking the liberty of enclosing for your perusal a copy of the letter which I recently sent to each Conservative Party Member of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and which contains information of vital importance to a fair appraisal of the situation, past and present, in North-West Africa.

Please accept, dear Prime Minister, my sincere wishes for a warm and fruitful discussion with Mr. Osman, and the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Badreddine Senoussi
Ambassador

London, 5th February 1980

I have been made aware that some of your colleagues at the European Parliament are about to sponsor two Draft Resolutions with a view to condemning Morocco for what is erroneously labelled "occupation of the Western Sahara" and recognising a puppet state called the "Sahrawi Republic".

Such a move, if successful, will only deepen further the injustice caused to the entire Moroccan nation and widen the threat of an expanding confrontation in North West Africa. It would be even more regrettable that such a situation should be created because of misjudgment or inadequate appraisal of what really lies behind the Sahara issue. This is why I submit to you the following facts:

THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR CENTURIES AS A FULLY-FLEDGED STATE WITHIN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED BOUNDARIES. Its recent history, however, was marked by a unique type of colonisation. One of its most outstanding features was the fact that no less than 12 foreign powers took part in the assault on its sovereignty. But two of these, France and Spain, managed to establish a joint protectorate and divided the country into different zones of influence. Consequently, independence was regained by Morocco only in successive stages. The latest of such efforts to complete territorial integrity culminated in the recovery of the Sahara. Unfortunately, violence and propaganda have now made it difficult to mention the Western Sahara without referring to "Polisario". So what is "Polisario", one may ask?

LET US FIRST REMEMBER THAT NEITHER THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION, NOR SUCH BODIES AS THE O.A.U., THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES, AND THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION, HAVE RECOGNISED IT AS A LIBERATION MOVEMENT. WHY?

Because a liberation movement normally resists the colonial power and eventually takes up arms to force it out of its territory. Oddly enough, "Polisario" came into existence only AFTER the coloniser had been driven out by Moroccan

nationalists. "POLISARIO" NEVER FIRED A SHOT AT THE SPANISH OCCUPIER FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT IT DID NOT EXIST. It was in fact pieced together by Algeria and Libya, who pooled their efforts, funds and propaganda machinery to provide it with mercenaries, weapons and training. Now it has developed into a powerful force of destabilisation and destruction, using Algerian territory to launch its treacherous assaults on Moroccan towns and villages.

Moreover it is quite surprising that Algeria discovered the existence of a "Sahrawi people" only in 1974, that is, after Morocco had successfully fought the legal battle of decolonisation against Spain. Algeria's hostility to the Moroccan-Spanish agreement was in blatant contradiction with a pledge solemnly made earlier by no less than the former Algerian Head of State. The late President Houari Boumedienne, addressing his peers at the 7th Arab Summit Conference in Rabat, stated that ALGERIA WOULD HELP MOROCCO IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY IN ITS EFFORT TO FREE WESTERN SAHARA FROM SPANISH COLONIAL RULE.

But not only did Algeria invent the hitherto unheard-of idea of "Sahrawi people"; she now puts their number at over one million, whereas the official figure given by the Spanish authorities themselves, following a population census carried out in 1974, was no more than 74,000. This incredible gap suggests that the "Sahrawis" have accomplished a feat unprecedented in the annals of population growth!

Algerian-engineered propaganda claims that tens of thousands of such fictitious Sahrawis have fled to Algeria as refugees. Apart from the highly questionable figure quoted for the people involved, it is even more deceptive to speak of refugees. THE FACT IS THAT THOSE CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN DISPLACED FROM THEIR SAHARAN DWELLINGS AND BUSINESSES AGAINST THEIR WILL AND THROWN INTO CAMPS AROUND THE CITY OF TINDOUF INSIDE ALGERIAN TERRITORY. Some of them have been press-ganged into the ranks of Polisario. Others are being kept for indoctrination and blackmail purposes.

In this regard it is quite interesting to know that Algeria has always refused the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (HCR) permission to assess the exact number and origin of the people sequestered in the Tindouf camps and presented as "refugees". Because of this refusal, HCR has now decided to suspend all assistance to these pseudo-refugees.

Algeria also contends that the Sahara population should be allowed to express its will through self-determination. But Algeria wilfully ignores that this is precisely what happened when the people involved elected their representative body (the Jemaa) and participated directly in national and regional elections. IT WAS PRECISELY IN THE EXERCISE OF SELF-DETERMINATION THAT THOSE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED AND VOICED IN UNISON THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE MONARCH.

* * *

YES, there is a Sahara crisis; there is a real threat of armed conflict between Morocco and Algeria! To defuse the situation, every conceivable attempt has been made by Morocco to enter into negotiations with Algeria. A number of goodwilled Heads of State have offered to mediate. But Algeria has arrogantly brushed aside every conciliatory gesture on the grounds that it has no problem with Morocco and that it is only defending the sacrosanct principle of self-determination. But the truth is that behind such seemingly altruistic concern lies a web of more selfish and sordid motivations:

- Apart from the Sahara, Algeria still has an unsettled border problem with Morocco.
- Algeria is obsessively seeking an outlet on the Atlantic Ocean for shipment of its iron ore lying idle in the south-western part of the country. The distant Mediterranean outlet has proven to be far too costly and uncompetitive.
- Algeria has taken prominence within the Third World and is now making no secret of its hegemonistic designs on the North West African region.

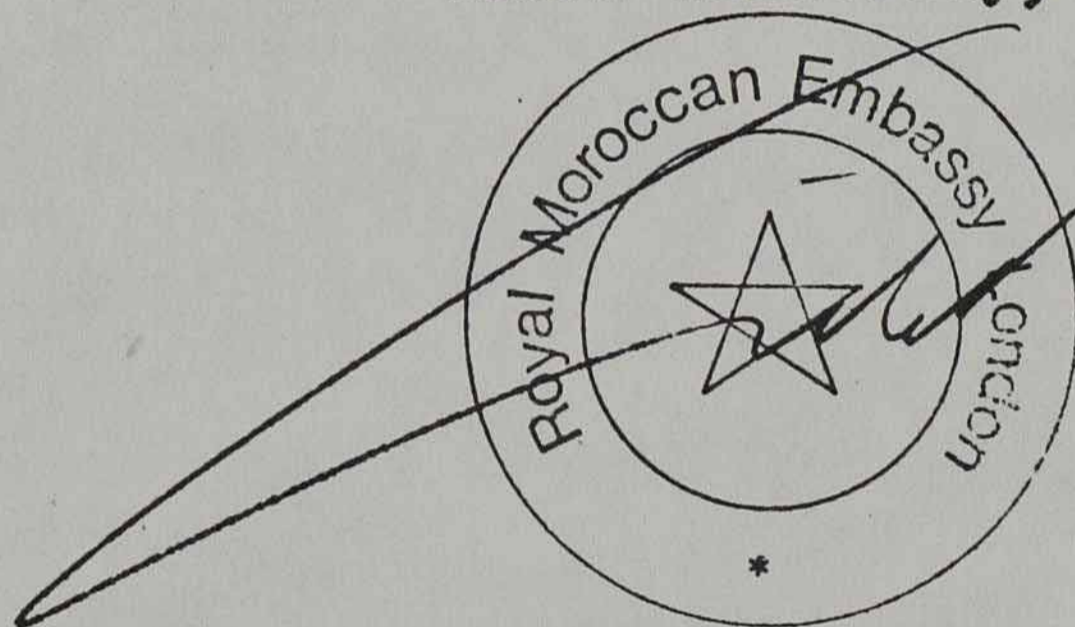
Morocco in the meantime has not given up hope of bringing about a negotiated settlement of this artificial problem. Apart from accepting wholeheartedly all goodwill missions offered up to now, my government has called on the leaders of African countries bordering on the Sahara from the Atlantic to the Red Sea to sit around a negotiating table in order to:

- Discuss the possibility of pooling the human and material resources of the whole region with the aim of defeating hunger, ignorance and fear;

- Work out a formula whereby free access to the sea would be granted to landlocked countries such as Mali, Chad and Niger;
- Integrate the ensuing grouping into the wider scope of Euro-Afro-Arab cooperation.

Such, then, are the facts and prospects concerning the Sahara question. Unless they are fully taken into account, any decision taken on the matter would be inadequate, unfair and highly detrimental to the cause of peace and stability in North West Africa.

Yours sincerely,



Badreddine Senoussi
Ambassador



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 March 1980

Dear Caroline,

Call on the Prime Minister
by Mr Ahmed Osman

Mr Ahmed Osman, Moroccan Prime Minister from 1972 until March 1979 and since 1978 the leader of the country's leading political party the Rassemblement National des Independents, is calling on the Prime Minister at 10.00 on 12 March. I attach a brief.

Yours etc

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

Miss C Stephens
No 10 Downing Street
London

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR AHMED OSMAN, FORMER
MOROCCAN PRIME MINISTER, 12 MARCH

Points to Make

Anglo/Moroccan relations

1. We value good relations with Morocco and would like to see them develop, particularly in commercial fields. We look forward to further high level contacts.
2. Continuing Moroccan cooperation over the supply to Gibraltar of fresh food and water is appreciated.

Western Sahara

3. Our policy is one of neutrality. We abstained on the resolution sponsored by the Algerians at the last UN General Assembly. Nevertheless, we are concerned that the dispute threatens stability in North West Africa and would welcome efforts to reach a peaceful solution.

4. We do not see the dispute as part of a wider East/West struggle. *Why not?*

EC/Morocco (Defensive)

5. We are sympathetic to Morocco's worries over enlargement and in general favour fullest possible access for Moroccan food exports.

Essential FactsAnglo/Moroccan Relations

1. Our relations with Morocco are good but lack substance. Both we and the Moroccans would like to see them develop. Morocco is important to us as the supplier of over 50% of our phosphates. Trade between us, however, is very limited, UK exports to Morocco amounting to only £67 million in 1979. Moroccan goodwill over supplies and labour for Gibraltar is important to us while our difficulties with Spain continue. Her foreign policy is generally moderate and constructive, although she has followed Arab and OAU consensus views on the Egypt/Israel Peace Treaty and Rhodesia in an effort to secure support for her policies in the Western Sahara.
2. Recent visits by the Moroccan Foreign Minister and Minister of Commerce were successful, but, although Morocco has a democratically elected Parliament, the King takes all policy decisions and appoints his own Ministers who have little independent authority. Hassan is much given to the use of personal emissaries (such as Mr Osman) rather than normal diplomatic channels to pass messages to other governments. We know that both Hassan himself (on a state visit) and the present Prime Minister, Mr Bouabid (as an official visitor) are anxious to visit the UK. Invitations to both are under consideration but will not be possible in the short term.

11 Passage deleted and temporarily retained under Section 3(4) pending completion of review. O'Wayland 12 October 2010

3. The main problem in our bilateral relations is the continued non-payment of compensation by the Moroccans to British landowners whose assets in Morocco were nationalised in 1973. Despite repeated pressure from us, the Moroccans have not agreed to start negotiations.

Western Sahara

4. The former Spanish colony of Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco who claim it as Moroccan territory. The Algerian backed Polisario Front claim independence for the territory, have formed

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a government in exile, the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), and have mounted an increasingly successful guerilla war against Moroccan occupying troops, and against Moroccan territory proper.

5. Britain, in line with the Nine, has not accepted Moroccan claims to the Western Sahara nor recognised the Polisario Front. British aims have been to avoid any direct involvement, to maintain good relations with both Algeria and Morocco, to encourage a peaceful solution; and to maintain support for the principle of self-determination. Recognition of either Polisario or Moroccan claims could prejudice any exercise of self-determination that might take place.

6. The Moroccans argue that the dispute is part of a wider East/West struggle in Africa. There are superficial attractions in this view since Morocco is armed mainly by the French and Americans, and the Polisario by the Algerians and Libyans, but in fact the situation is more complex. The Russians remain inhibited from outright support of the Polisario (no East European country has recognised the SADR) by their wish for good relations with Morocco. Indeed, ideological differences have not been allowed to obstruct the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries. In March 1978 a major contract was signed worth \$900 million involving Soviet cooperation in the exploitation of the Meskala phosphate deposits. The deal represents the largest Soviet contract in Africa. Also a major fishing contract was signed with the Russians in April 1978. Equally, while US influence in Morocco remains strong, relations have in the past been put under strain by earlier American reluctance to sell Morocco arms which could be used in the Western Sahara, and continue to be upset by US refusal to recognise Morocco's claim to that territory. Also growing American investment in Algeria has caused the Moroccans some concern.

7. Morocco does herself a disservice in seeking to set the dispute in a wider East/West context. Involvement in the dispute or an open commitment to either side by major Eastern or Western countries could make it harder for Hassan to obtain a settlement that would

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be acceptable to his people who support the claim to the territory. If he cannot obtain a settlement, the prospects for the Moroccan economy and possibly for the regime itself could be serious.

EC/Morocco

8. An EEC/Morocco Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1976. It came fully into effect in 1978 and provides for non-reciprocal trade concessions for all Morocco's industrial exports and most of her agricultural exports to the Community. But agricultural concessions are qualified for example by seasonality, minimum import prices and quantitative restrictions. The Moroccans are unlikely to be satisfied by the limited improvements that the Community, because of Italian and French reservations, has been able to offer. The Cooperation Agreement covers other fields including an offer of aid worth 130 mua over five years.

9. The Moroccans are worried that enlargement (especially Spanish accession) will lead to the displacement of their exports (mainly Mediterranean agricultural products and textiles) from the Community market. They want to be closely involved in Spanish negotiations and to receive guarantees of continued access. The Community is reluctant to grant either request and has argued that the extent of the problem can only be properly assessed when the outcome of Spanish accession negotiations is known, especially the length of the transition period for agriculture. A long transition period would in some measure cushion Morocco from the full impact of Spanish accession.

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OSMAN, AHMED

Former Prime Minister; leader of the Rassemblement National des Independents (RNI) since 1978.

Born Oujda, 1930. Educated there and at Rabat. Law degree, 1951; post-graduate studies at Bordeaux. After King Mohammed's return from exile joined the Royal Cabinet, with responsibility for legal matters. Head of the European and later of the American division, MFA from 1957-59; Secretary-General of the Ministry of National Defence, 1959; Ambassador to Bonn, 1961; Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Mines in the Ministry of Commerce, 1962; Head of Compagnie Marocaine de Navigation (COMANOV), 1963; Ambassador to the United States and Canada, 1967; Minister of Administrative Affairs, 1970; Director of the Royal Cabinet, 1972; Prime Minister, 1972-79.

As the King's former brother-in-law (see below) and the longest serving Prime Minister since independence he clearly enjoyed the King's confidence; he almost certainly still does and could well hold high office again. Although shy, he is an able man and accustomed to power. The longer he sat in the King's shadow as Prime Minister, however the more cut off he became from contacts with ordinary people and the rough and tumble of politics. It was for this reason and not through any lack of ability that it became increasingly clear that at a time of social unrest and protest he was not the right man to run the government and he resigned last March. For the same reason he is not particularly credible as a Party Leader and the RNI is unlikely to become an effective group under his leadership.

A wealthy man and well-groomed. He married Princess Lalla Nezha (the King's sister) in October 1964. She died in a car accident in September 1977!

RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL DES INDEPENDENTS (RNI)

The RNI was set up in the autumn of 1978 under the leadership of (the then Prime Minister) Ahmed Osman in an attempt to give some cohesion to the independent deputies in the Moroccan Parliament. On his resignation from the Premiership in March 1979 Osman said he wished to devote himself entirely to the organisation of the RNI.

The Independents are the King's friends in Parliament and by far the largest political grouping. They won 8607 (out of 13,500) seats in the communal elections in 1976 and gained 140 (out of 264) of the seats in the Parliament formed in June 1977. Ten members of the government are RNI (and others are non-party technocrats who follow the King's line). Its newspapers are Al Maghrib, and Al Mithaq Al Watani.

VISIT OF MR AHMED OSMAN, FORMER MOROCCAN PRIME MINISTER

Provisional Programme

Tuesday 11 March : 1500: Arrives Heathrow Airport from Vienna

Wednesday 12 March : 1000: Call on Prime Minister at No 10 Downing Street

1100: Call on Mr Callaghan, Leader of the Opposition, at the House of Commons

1200: Call on Lord Privy Seal at Foreign Office

1230 for 1245: Luncheon at Lancaster House hosted by Mr Luce

pm: Call on Lord Gladwyn at House of Lords

Thursday 13 March : Conservative Central Office

Luncheon at House of Commons

Prime Minister's Question Time

Dinner at Moroccan Ambassador's Residence

Friday 14 March : Departure



7-11 1980

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Memo
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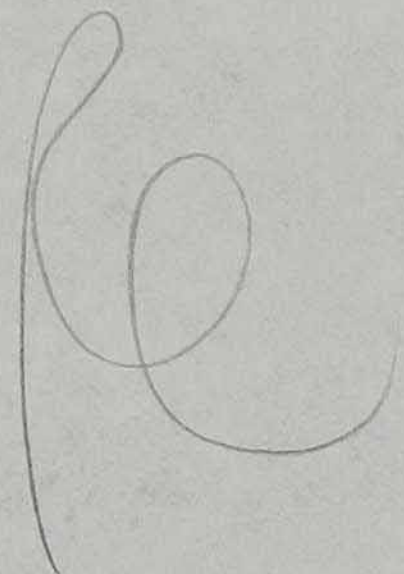
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14 February 1980

Morocco: Visit of Former Prime Minister

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 13 February on this subject. She has agreed to see Mr. Ahmed Osman for a brief call at 1000 on Wednesday 12 March. I should be grateful for a short brief for this meeting to reach this office not later than Tuesday 11 March.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER



Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Ahmed A.?

Yes

13 February 1980

*Paul
- 13/2*

Dear Michael,

Morocco: Visit of Former Prime Minister

M. Ahmed Osman, Moroccan Prime Minister from 1972 until March 1979 and since 1978 leader of Morocco's largest political party, will be in London on an official visit (probably as the guest of the Conservative Party) from 12 to 14 March. M. Osman will certainly hope to be able to call on the Prime Minister and may take offence if this is not possible.

Lord Carrington is reluctant to take up the Prime Minister's time but considers that there are grounds for her seeing M. Osman. He is King Hassan's brother-in-law as well as the longest serving Moroccan Prime Minister since independence. He clearly enjoys the confidence of his King, who is responsible for all major decisions in the country and who relies on personal emissaries rather than diplomatic channels for conducting business. It is quite likely that M. Osman will bring a personal message to the Prime Minister from the King.

There are also particular reasons at this time to pay attention to Morocco. King Hassan's foreign policy is generally helpful to us, in Africa, in the Arab world and recently at the Islamabad Conference at which Morocco took a forthright stand against Soviet aggression. Morocco is limited in its freedom of action by membership of the Organisation of African Unity and the Arab League, in which organisations she has to solicit support for her position in the Western Sahara. Nevertheless, Lord Carrington considers that if we hope to build a greater sense of common purpose between the Islamic countries and the West, Morocco may have to play an important role.

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If the Prime Minister agrees, Lord Carrington suggests that 15-20 minutes would be adequate for the call.

Yours WEL

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON

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