

algeria



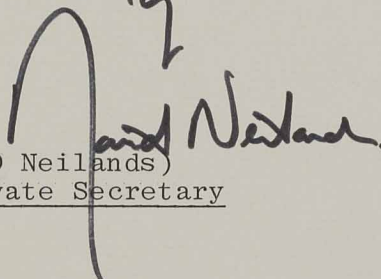
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

30 May 1980

Dear Mr Alexander

I enclose briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with M. Mohamed Benyahia, Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Monday 2 June at 3 pm.

Yours sincerely

(J D Neilands)
Private Secretary

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH M MOHAMED BENYAHIA, ALGERIAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 3pm 2 JUNE

Points to Make

Bilateral

1. Welcome first official visit. Pleased we have no problems between us. Look forward to developing relations. Visit of HM The Queen indicates our esteem for Algeria.

Afghanistan

2. We note the call by the Islamic conference for Soviet withdrawal. This is the key to a political settlement. Government in Afghanistan must be chosen without outside pressure. How do Algerians see problem?

Iran

3. Does continued detention of hostages pose threat to Middle East security? How can we reasonably influence Iranian leaders? What is Algeria's attitude to the judgement of the International Court of Justice? Attitude to sanctions?

Western Sahara [if raised]

4. Our policy is one of neutrality. We recognise neither Moroccan nor Polisario claims to the territory. Although concerned about stability in North West Africa, and anxious for a peaceful solution, we do not see a role for Europe in this conflict. Dispute should be settled by the OAU or Arab League.

Essential Facts

BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Our relations with Algeria have been thin and both we and the Algerians would like to develop them. Mr Parkinson, Minister of State for Trade, paid a very successful visit to Algeria in February, shortly after the Secretary of State's planned visit had to be cancelled because of his tour of Afghanistan's neighbours. HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh are to visit Algiers in October as part of a tour including Morocco and Tunisia. (M Benyahia is to bring President Chadli's formal invitation with him.)

2. The Algerian Ambassador has said that he thought the Algerian Government would welcome the establishment of a Joint Committee. We would not be averse to such a Committee, provided it offered specific returns, especially in trade.

AFGHANISTAN

3. This Islamic Conference renewed its condemnation of the Russian invasion and called for immediate withdrawal of Russian troops. The Steadfastness Front, of which Algeria is a member, created difficulties but went along with this. The Conference also established an Islamic Committee (Pakistan, Iran and the Conference Secretary-General) to seek a solution through consultations and perhaps a UN conference. The problem of lack of unity among the freedom fighters remains.

IRAN

4. No progress on the hostages. The International Court of Justice judgement (24 May) call for immediate release of hostages and (with three dissenting opinions) for Iran to make reparations to USA. The Algerians are said to be worried about the effect of sanctions on the crisis. We have heard an unofficial suggestion that they might take the lead in an initiative of the Non-Aligned.

WESTERN SAHARA

5. The former Spanish colony of Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco who claim it as Moroccan territory. The Polisario

Front, backed by Algeria and Libya, have formed a government in exile, the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and have mounted an increasingly successful war against Moroccan occupying troops. Efforts at mediation, notably by the OAU, have proved fruitless.

6. Britain, in line with the Nine, has not accepted Moroccan claims nor recognised the Polisario Front. We aim to avoid involvement, maintain good relations with both Algeria and Morocco, encourage a peaceful solution; and to maintain support for self-determination.

7. Morocco wishes to negotiate the issue with Algeria and will not talk to the Polisario. Algeria sees nothing to be gained by bilateral negotiations and publicly supports a settlement of the dispute by self-determination. The Algerians have been the Polisario's main international advocates and have provided them with arms, supplies and a safe base. They allow the Libyans to supply considerable quantities of arms and equipment to the Polisario across Algerian territory.

Personality Note

MOHAMED SEDDIK BENYAHIA

Born 1932. Took degree in law at Algiers University. Travelled widely in South East Asia and was for a time FLN diplomatic representative in Djakarta (1956). Visited London in 1957-8. Was a member of the FLN delegation at Evian (May 1961) and Lugrin (July 1961). Remained as Chef de Cabinet to Prime Minister and had a prime responsibility for overt and covert negotiations with the French which resulted in Evian agreement of March 1962. Appointed as Ambassador to Moscow in 1963. Agrément was given for his appointment as Ambassador in London in June 1965 but he never took up his post. Minister of Information and Culture 1966-70; Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research 1970-77; Minister of Finance from 1977-79. He became a member of the Bureau Politique in January 1979 and replaced Bouteflika as Foreign Minister in March 1979.

Skilled and experienced. Has a high reputation among young and intelligent Algerians. An intellectual and an authority on Marxism, but not doctrinaire. Has more political weight than his diffident manner would imply.

Not very communicative, but personally courteous and friendly. Frail, suffers from chronic amoebic dysentery. Has several English friends and likes England.