

~~Arab League Visit~~
cc. MASTERS



re 15

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 February 1983

Call by the Moroccan Foreign Minister

The Foreign Minister of Morocco, accompanied by the Moroccan Ambassador, called on the Prime Minister at 1515 today.

The Prime Minister asked M. Boucetta to convey her warmest wishes to His Majesty, King Hassan. She much looked forward to the pleasure of meeting him when arrangements for his visit to this country could be made. M. Boucetta said that he brought the warm regards and greetings of King Hassan who particularly wished to thank the Prime Minister for the message which she had sent to him.

After further courtesies, M. Boucetta said that King Hassan wished to convey his regrets for not being able to bring the Arab League delegation to London on the agreed dates. Morocco had just suffered a great loss in the unfortunate death in a sudden accident of General Dlimi who had occupied a number of posts in the country. King Hassan was obliged to remain in Morocco in order to decide upon a successor to General Dlimi and to give him instructions as to his functions. He thus had requested a postponement of the visit for two or three weeks. But he was most anxious that it should be reinstated. He believed this was of capital importance for relations between the United Kingdom and the Arab world and between the United Kingdom and Morocco. He was sure that the Prime Minister would understand the imperative reasons for postponement. In the hope that the postponement need not be of long duration, he (M. Boucetta) hoped to discuss with Mr. Pym later in the day a possible new programme.

The Prime Minister asked that her condolences on the death of General Dlimi be conveyed to King Hassan. She fully understood the difficulties which prevented the visit going ahead at the agreed time and she well understood that King Hassan would not have requested postponement except for very good reasons. Unfortunately, Her Majesty The Queen would be abroad in three weeks' time. She would greatly miss seeing the King. For our part, we very much hoped that it would be possible to reinstate the visit. M. Boucetta commented that it was a pity that King Hassan would not be able to meet Her Majesty The Queen. But the visit had a largely political purpose and arrangements could be made for it to go ahead on that basis. The King would hope to meet The Queen on a longer visit later. As regards the dates for the postponed visit, the Moroccan side had two or three proposals which they would discuss with Mr. Pym.

/ The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that we would make strenuous efforts to meet the Moroccan wishes as to the date and form of the delegation. She would be seeing later in the day President Mubarak of Egypt and, next week, Vice President Bush. Would the Moroccan Government like to convey any message to them through her?

M. Boucetta replied that Morocco wished to see Egypt re-integrated in the Arab world and felt that Egypt's active presence in discussion of Arab affairs was extremely important. He hoped that King Hassan would make contact with President Mubarak soon. He would be grateful if Morocco's interest in relations with Egypt could be conveyed to President Mubarak.

As regards Vice President Bush, he could tell the Prime Minister in confidence that King Hassan had sent messages to President Reagan and King Fahd about the postponement of the visit.

The Prime Minister said that it would be important to handle the announcement of a postponement very carefully. M. Boucetta said that the Moroccans would state publicly what they had already told the rest of the Arab League delegation privately, namely that King Hassan had requested postponement of the visit for domestic reasons. The Prime Minister said that if she was asked about the matter, eg in Parliamentary Questions tomorrow, she would say that she had received a personal message from His Majesty The King to the effect that he wished to postpone the visit for several weeks for domestic reasons; we well understood the reasons for the postponement; and efforts were being made to agree on fresh dates in a few weeks' time. M. Boucetta confirmed that this was entirely acceptable to him.

Concluding the conversation, the Prime Minister said that she much appreciated King Hassan's gesture of sending the Foreign Minister to see her personally. This emphasised the close friendship between our two countries.

The discussion ended at 1545.

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J.E. Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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