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coming alienated from government, and he urged his countrymen to remain active in the political process.

Some government spokesmen addressed themselves specifically to the Jan. 22 manifesto. In a nationwide TV and radio interview, PNDC Coordinating Secretary P.V. Obeng disputed the activists' complaints about the dissolution of the old "defense committees." Obeng said the reason for the change from "workers committees" and "people's committees" was to avoid the unfortunate impression that one section of the population would be pitted against the other. He described the new Committees for the Defense of the Revolution as a logical extension of the old organizing units.

Though mandated late last year, these committees, or "CDRs," as they are called, have suffered from a slow start. Only last month, Col. J.Y. Assassie, the political counselor for development of the CDRs, apologized to an Accra press conference for the long delay in publication of guidelines for the committees. He also disclosed that CDR elections in many workplaces were far behind schedule.

Given the charged political atmosphere, PNDC officials may well be expecting some adverse reaction to the new investment code it promulgated in late July. While placing some restrictions on foreign ownership, the code seeks to attract foreign investors through incentives such as tax breaks and exemptions from certain import duties. The new regulations also permit some firms to maintain foreign bank accounts in which they may retain a portion of their foreign exchange earnings. ■

WESTERN SAHARA

'GREAT WALL' NEARLY COMPLETE

[AN] Five years in the making and more than 1,500 miles long, King Hassan's "Great Wall" across the Western Sahara is nearing completion, and confident Moroccan army officers are all but claiming victory in their nine-year battle with guerrilla forces of the POLISARIO Front.

By late August the low-slung earthwork begun in 1980 will snake across the desert from a point less than four miles from the Algerian border to a terminus south of the Atlantic port of Dakhla (Villa Cisneros), according to Moroccan officials.

Conceived as a means of cutting the cost and length of the war against POLISARIO, the wall had been criticized by early observers as unworkable. But as the project nears completion, many are conceding it to be at least a tactical success. *If* the wall succeeds in sealing off Moroccan-occupied portions of the Western Sahara from POLISARIO insurgents, it will have proven to be the decisive military factor in the ongoing struggle for sovereignty over the sparsely-populated but mineral-rich territory. But the diplomatic price of the wall and the war against Saharan independence forces may show the mammoth barrier to have been a political Maginot Line.

The strategic wall, also referred to as a berm, consists of a nine-foot-tall sandbank dotted with observation posts every 1.8 to 2.4 miles along its length. Human sentinels keep watch on the frontier with the aid of sophisticated electronic sensors that can detect a person travelling by foot at a distance of more than 15 miles. Other devices can detect vehicular movement through seismological data and help direct Moroccan fire against approaching guerrillas long before they are within sight of the wall. On the opposite side, Moroccan commanders are able to continuously redeploy their troops while escaping detection by the POLISARIO, who are without air capability in the conflict.

"Therein lies the beauty of it all," said Brig. Gen. Abdelaziz Bennani, Morocco's southern regional commander and an architect of the berm. "Through a combination of limited means, we're trying to maintain ourselves at sufficient strength everywhere along the wall." Above all, the general told American journalists on a tour of the barrier system, the wall has enabled Morocco to pursue annexation of the Western Sahara cheaply and efficiently.

But economic and political realities suggest that the wall and the war in Western Sahara have been anything but a bargain for Morocco. Rather they have been paid for at a considerable human, monetary and diplomatic price.

Although Rabat rarely admits casualties in its engagements with guerrilla forces, a POLISARIO statement issued Aug. 10 claimed 655 Moroccans died in fighting along the wall during July. While such figures are often distorted on both sides, the actual number of losses may be presumed to fall somewhere in the middle. Beyond the number of dead and wounded in battle, the Saharan conflict has nearly doubled the manpower needs of the Moroccan army, nearly 75% of which is involved in construction and defense of the wall.

In cash terms the war is costing King Hassan more than $1 million a day, according to some estimates, absorbing nearly 40% of Moroccan revenues and most of the development funds received by the debt-ridden country. Morocco's foreign debt of $13 billion is nearly 100% of its Gross Domestic Product. Only extensive funding from the United States—Washington is sending $43 million in military aid to Rabat this year—and France have permitted Hassan to continue what would otherwise be a prohibitively expensive military adventure.

And the north African state's economy is expected to grow even weaker in January 1986 when Spain and Portugal join the European Economic Community. Because Morocco exports many of the same agricultural and industrial goods that the Iberian states produce, the north African nation's overseas sales are expected to drop sharply when its European competitors gain the advantage of membership in the Common Market. By continuing to pour scarce resources into the Saharan war, Hassan risks trouble at home where discontent with the economy has already eroded the regime's stability.

Moroccan engineers claim the sensors in their fortified wall can detect the movement of POLISARIO's battle-modified Land Rovers. */Africa News*

Diplomatically the war has cost the king influence in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Arab League. The OAU, whose organizing principles recognize the legitimacy of pre-independence colonial borders in Africa, accepted the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as its 51st member in February 1982. Thirty-two African states are among the 62 nations worldwide that now accord full recognition to the SADR, the POLISARIO movement's provisional government for the Western Sahara. When the SADR delegation was seated at the OAU's 1984 summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, King Hassan withdrew his country's membership in protest. But only Zaire, Morocco's staunchest sub-Saharan ally, made a show of support by walking out with the king.

The sparse turnout at this month's Arab League conference on the Palestinian issue, a special conclave called by Hassan and held in Casablanca, could be another indication of the monarch's diminished prestige in the region. Meanwhile, neighboring Algeria—a longtime provider of arms and refuge to POLISARIO—continues to be influential both in regional affairs and as a respected mediator between developed nations and the Third World. Although it claims none of the Western Sahara for itself, Algeria maintains that a popular referendum on self-determination should determine the future status of the territory, previously known as Spanish Sahara.

The POLISARIO Front was formed in 1973 to combat the Spanish presence. When Spain pulled out of the Sahara in 1975, Morocco and Mauritania moved rapidly to fill the power void. The POLISARIO guerrillas then turned their