

Kid's KOrner

More Walls and Fences Going Up Between International Neighbors

WASHINGTON — The Great Wall snaking across Western Sahara from Algeria to the Atlantic Ocean? It has to be a mirage.

But a 1,550-mile wall of sand and stone, which took more than five years to build along the brutal desert frontier, was completed last year to defend Morocco's claim to Western Sahara (formerly Spanish Sahara).

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down," wrote Robert Frost.

Rather than coming down, more walls — and fences — are going up along once-open international borders. And existing walls and fences (the infamous Berlin Wall will be 25 years old in August) are being reinforced and equipped with the most sophisticated electronic sensors.

Headlines Tell Trend

At the State Department, George J. Demko, director of the Office of the Geographer, monitors the phenomenon in the headlines of the 1980s:

Morocco Tries to Foil Rebels with 1,550-Mile Wall of Sand

India is Planning to Fence Off Its Border with Bangladesh

South Africa Building a Wall Along the Zimbabwe Border

Malaysia-Thailand Border Fence Cuts Smuggling

"It's a sign of international paranoia, an indicator of stress," Demko says. "There's more movement of people — 8.8 million refugees crossed borders last year — more illegal activity, famine, political insurgency, hostility. Situations seem to get worse, not better, but I don't buy that 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

Indeed, along most of the hundreds of thousands of border miles, there are no barriers between countries. And where walls and

fences exist, experts believe they have been more effective when erected to keep people in, not out.

Morocco, however, contends that its great sand-wall strategy succeeded in securing its hold on the former Spanish colony by keeping out guerrillas who have fought for 10 years to make it an independent nation.

By making a movable wall nine feet high and pushing it farther and farther into the desert, Morocco has brought at least two-thirds of Nevada-sized Western Sahara inside its massive barrier. Ultimately the wall is to reach to the national borders.

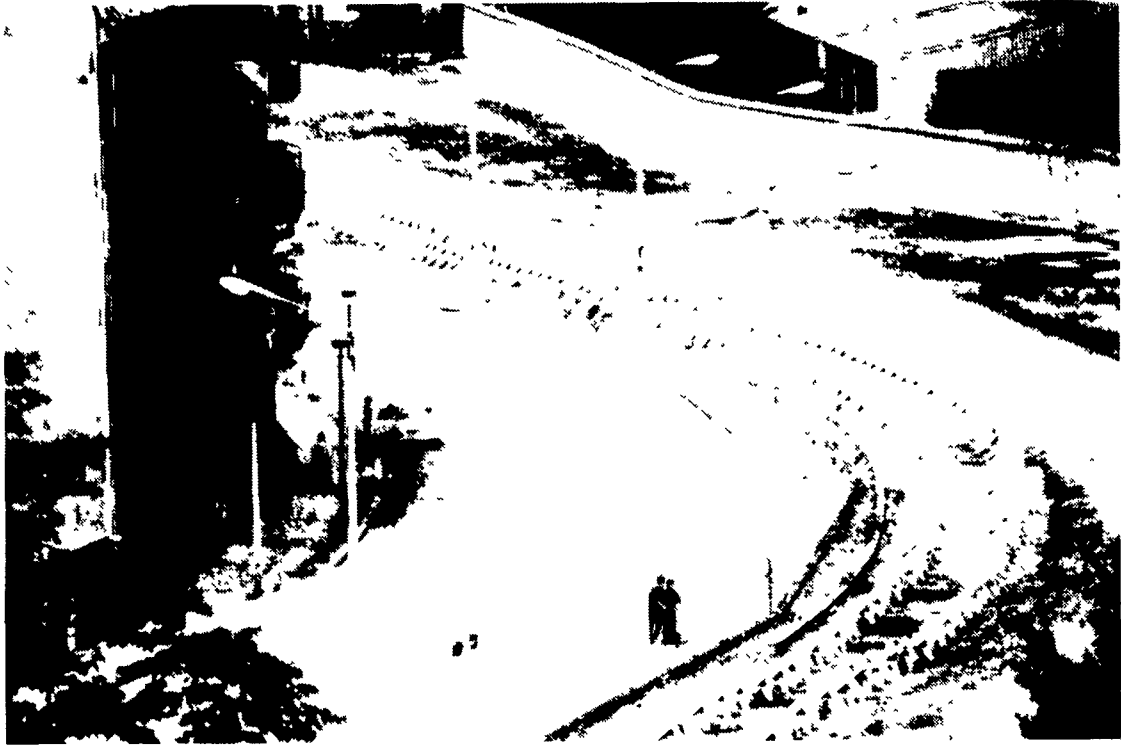
Guarded with command posts every few miles, it is equipped with electronic sensors and anti-personnel radar that can detect a person more than 12 miles away. Considered a colossal folly by some observers when it was begun, the wall is being studied by military strategists for its success in using high-tech tactics against a guerrilla force armed with sophisticated Soviet weapons.

Threat in Subcontinent

India has threatened to seal off Bangladesh with a barbed-wire fence. Whether it would stop the flow of impoverished Bangladeshis is doubtful.

The controversial 2,300-mile fence was first announced by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1983 and was to be erected in stages over five years, starting with the most troublesome sections of the border, where violent protests against illegal immigration had erupted. Except for its coastline on the Bay of Bengal and a short border with Burma, Bangladesh is surrounded by India.

To Bangladesh, the idea of the fence is a national insult. Only a few symbolic posts have been set



The most infamous modern-day barrier dividing the world's peoples was begun 25 years ago to halt a mass exodus from East Germany into West Berlin. The 100-mile long wall and heavily patrolled "death strip" turned West Berlin into an island inside East Germany. Today, amid increased international tensions, along other once-open borders, more walls and fences are going up, most erected to keep people out, not in.

up so far, and there is some hope that Rajiv Gandhi's India may seek to build better relations instead of a fence.

South Africa's electrified fence, capped with coils of razor-sharp wire, was put up last year along strategic sections of the border to keep illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe from crossing over in search of work.

On the Malay Peninsula, a chain-link fence with dozens of watch-towers stretches across at least 35 miles of Malaysia's narrow northern border. It is credited with cutting down on gun and drug

smuggling and communist infiltration from Thailand.

One of the most high-tech-secured borders in the world lies between Israel and Syria along the Golan Heights. "The barbed-wire fences are so sensitized that a single wandering sheep could trip the devices, and half the Israeli army would probably converge on that spot," says Julian V. Minghi, professor of geography at the University of South Carolina and an authority on international border regions.

'Security Landscape'

"Along the entire length of the

Syria-Israel border and for a few kilometers into the hinterland is a single strip...characterized by a large number of fences, minefields, roads, mounds of earth-fill, pillboxes, etc., placing the area completely under the domination of the military and creating an extreme security landscape," Minghi writes in the February 1986 issue of *The Professional Geographer*.

"By 1985, the security landscape of Israel had reached a peak; it now covers more than 50 percent of the country," he reports.

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COLOR THIS!

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|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. PEACH |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

WEAVER BIRDS ARE GIVEN THIS NAME BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY WEAVE THEIR NESTS TOGETHER. THESE BIRDS TEAR THE LEAVES OF REEDS INTO STRIPS AND USE THEM TO WEAVE A BOWL-SHAPED NEST. THEY PLACE A BAR ACROSS THE OPENING TO KEEP TWO OR THREE GREEN EGGS FROM ROLLING OUT.

