

August 18, 1961

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

In your book, Strategy for Peace, you refer to the revolution of colored people who are shaking off the badge of inferiority imposed on them by white people, saying: "It is we, the American people, who should be marching at the head of this revolution...yet we have allowed the Communists to evict us from our rightful estate...we have been made to appear the defenders of the status quo".

The Bizerte crisis has given the United States another opportunity, under admittedly difficult circumstances, to take the leadership and initiative. When the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations meets on August 21, we will again have a chance to stop equivocating (which wins us no friends at all) and to take a forthright position. We realize that it is not easy for the United States to speak sharply to an ally such as France; yet we believe that this must be done clearly and unmistakably if French intransigence is not, in the words of the London Observer, to cause the West to hold a base and lose a nation.

The issue is quite clear to us. Bizerte is Tunisian territory. On fifteen occasions since Tunisian independence in 1956, President Bourguiba has called upon France to leave Bizerte and to provide a timetable for this departure. How can a nation, over a period of years, maintain a military base in another sovereign nation against the expressed wishes of the latter? And has the United States not already shown the way by promising to evacuate its air bases in Morocco when the government of this sovereign nation so demanded? United States-Moroccan relations have thus remained stable and friendly.

We believe that the United States must take a strong position for the French to publicly commit themselves to leave Bizerte. American leadership will not only help solve the crisis, but will also make it possible to maintain the friendship of Tunisia.

We therefore call upon you to place the United States, as you have so eloquently urged, in the leadership of the worldwide revolution of colonial and former colonial peoples against continued domination from the outside.

Very truly yours,

George M. Houser
for the
AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

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