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George M. Houser
Executive Director

October 30, 1958

The President
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Like millions of our fellow countrymen who have, at the same time, an ingrained distaste of colonialism and a deep affection for America's oldest ally, France, we have been heartened in recent months by the resolute and imaginative leadership exercised by General de Gaulle in attempting to bring about a solution of the tragic Algerian problem and in creating a new relationship between France and her erstwhile colonies.

Because of our special interest in African affairs we were particularly moved by General de Gaulle's speech in Brazzaville on August 24, in which, on the one hand, he outlined his vision of a new Franco-African Community for those territories which chose to vote "yes" in the referendum on the Constitution to be held on September 28, and, on the other hand, became the first head of state in the history of modern France to recognize unequivocally the right of the overseas territories to complete independence at the moment of their choice.

The next day, at Conakry, capital of Guinea, General de Gaulle repeated his offer in the following words:

> "We have heard talk of independence. I say here, more loudly than elsewhere, that independence is at the disposal of Guinea. She may take it on September 28 by saying 'no' to the proposition offered to her and, in that case, I guarantee that the mother country will place no obstacles in her way."

This noble and solemn offer was accepted by the people of Guinea when, on September 28, they cast an overwhelmingly negative vote in the referendum on the proposed Constitution.

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Prior to the vote, the Prime Minister of Guinea, Sekou Toure, had made it clear that, while he was urging his people to vote "no," such a vote was to be interpreted only as a vote for independence and not as a vote against France, with which he hoped Guinea would continue to be associated, but henceforth on an equal rather than a subordinate footing.

A full month has now passed since the referendum, which surely constitutes one of the most remarkable colloquies ever held between two peoples and their leaders. Regrettably, General de Gaulle has not, so far, seen fit to honor the promise to respect Guinea's wish for independence which he made in his speeches at Brazzaville and Conakry prior to the referendum. In his press conference last week, he intimated that France was waiting to see how Guinea would act internationally and what her capacity was for acting as a sovereign state before deciding on the nature of the new relationship between France and Guinea.

Thus, while Guinea awaits official French recognition as a sovereign state, the impression continues to grow that she is being punished by France for having taken seriously the pre-referendum guarantee of independence and, by implication, having rejected France's helping hand.

Unfortunately, the reluctance of our own Government to recognize the new state of Guinea until France has done so identifies us, whether rightly or wrongly, in the eyes of world opinion, with France's somewhat petulant and spiteful posture as a rejected parent. We believe that this is not a becoming posture for either France or the United States. As American citizens, we have no say in the decision of the French Government. We do, however, most respectfully urge upon you that our own country should, without any further delay, extend formal diplomatic recognition to the newest member of the family of nations. There is no question of the ability of the present government of Guinea to exercise effective control over the country or to enter into and honor international obligations, nor has anyone suggested that it is not animated by peaceful intentions.

We understand that the Government of Guinea, almost a month ago, asked for the establishment of dipl matic relations with our own Government. Whatever the motivation for our failure to respond to that request, it can only be interpreted by the people of Guinea as an affront to their dignity and an expression of lack of faith in their leaders.

Among the thirty-six countries which have recognized Guinea so far are the Soviet Union and Communist China. Is there any reason why we should lead the people of Guinea to feel that they have friends in Moscow and Peiping, but not in Washington?

Very truly yours,

Donald Harrington
Chairman