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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 July 1984

Dear Roger,

MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA ON 4 JULY AT 10 DOWNING STREET

The Prime Minister received Colonel Diarra Traore, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea, for a talk at No.10 Downing Street today. Colonel Traore was accompanied by the Foreign Minister, Information Minister and Ambassador of Guinea. Mr C W Squire was also present.

Welcoming Colonel Traore the Prime Minister said that we were anxious for closer relations with Guinea. We had been impressed with the new Government's strong stand on democracy and human rights. Colonel Traore conveyed the best wishes of the President and the Military Committee and handed over a letter from the President to the Prime Minister (copy enclosed).

In response to an invitation from the Prime Minister, Colonel Traore gave a brief account of events which had led the armed forces to take power. Over the 26 years of Guinea's independence the development of the country had been neglected despite the many sacrifices which its people had been called upon to make. The new Government had found a catastrophic financial situation. They were now engaged in drawing up an inventory of Guinea's economic needs. They also attached particular priority to safeguarding human rights, which for all practical purposes had not existed in Guinea previously.

Colonel Traore continued that it had been decided to make contact with a number of industrialised countries to explain Guinea's misfortunes and describe her needs. The new Government hoped for aid from Britain. The priority areas were agriculture, where there was an urgent need to feed the people while in the longer term restoring self-sufficiency; transport; infrastructure; and education especially the teaching of English. He also wished to raise the major problem of the £5 million debt to ECGD. Guinea would like the debt to be written off.

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The Prime Minister noted that the new Government of Guinea had a very full agenda. She hoped that they would be pleased with our decision to establish a resident charge d'affairs in Conakry. This would enable us to remain in closer contact. She was well aware of the problem of the debt dating from 1976. It would be very difficult to cancel this, not least because it would create a precedent. It would have to be left to officials to discuss the details. As regards aid, we were major contributors through the EDF and the World Bank. The size of the future EDF was currently under discussion. So much of British aid now went through the EDF and other multi-lateral channels that it was difficult to respond to requests for bilateral aid. The Prime Minister continued that she had noted that Guinea's priorities appeared to be additional food aid, particularly in milk products, assistance to agriculture and help with English language teaching.

The Prime Minister asked which other countries the delegation had visited and intended to visit. Colonel Traore said that they had already been to France, Belgium and the European Commission. They were going on to Yugoslavia and Roumania. They proposed to visit the United States at a later stage. They had obtained some infrastructure aid and help for transport and education from France and some additional food aid from the European Community. They had been grateful for the UK's support over the latter.

The Prime Minister concluded that she well understood the new Government's need for help. She would ensure that Mr Raison and Mr Channon were informed of the content of her discussion with Colonel Traore. Discussion on aid and the debt problem should be pursued with them.

Following the meeting, the Prime Minister commented that it was important that Colonel Traore should not return from his visit to Britain empty-handed. She hoped some way could be found to help the new Government over the problem of the debt, perhaps through re-scheduling. I should be grateful if this point could be considered urgently before Mr Channon meets the Guinean delegation on Friday.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to Mr Raison and Mr Channon.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Powell

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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