

LIBERIA

PRINCIPAL POLICIES AND PROBLEMS IN THE RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH LIBERIA

876.062/1-550 : Telegram

*The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Liberia*¹

SECRET

WASHINGTON, January 10, 1950—4 p. m.

5. Urtel 2, Jan. 5. Firestone informs Dept strikes continue occur Harbel and that there are several versions for strikers action.² Firestone also reports Wilson has not been able obtain audience Tubman in order discuss new approach strike situation and present Firestone proposals for concessions. Firestone points out in its opinion situation cannot be controlled by Presidential Comm, and continued walkouts by employees merely reduces usefulness and effectiveness of Comm, which in actuality reflects on LibGovt, particularly since Tubman reportedly gave assurance there wld be no further stoppage work.

As you are well aware it is not Depts intention interfere this matter. However, in view many factors involved, such as (1) threat production important raw product now being stockpiled by US (2) adverse

¹ This telegram was drafted by Harold Sims of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs, was concurred in by Leo G. Cyr, Officer in Charge of Southern African Affairs, and by William J. Handley, Acting Labor Adviser of the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs.

² In early December 1949 a strike occurred at the Firestone Plantations at Harbel, Liberia. The strikers' numerous grievances included wages, hours, and working conditions. Liberian President William V. S. Tubman appointed a Special Commission to determine the causes of the strike and make recommendations. A detailed report on the early stages of the Firestone Plantations strike was transmitted to the Department of State in despatch 203, December 20, 1949, not printed. The telegram under reference here, not printed, reported that the strike had resumed on January 4 due to the firing of a supervisory native employee. The Presidential Commission was continuing to hold meetings but was making no apparent progress. Following discussions with both President Tubman and Ross Wilson, General Manager of the Firestone Plantations, the Embassy believed that the President was ready to take a personal interest in seeking a settlement of the strike provided Wilson would permit reasonable concessions to the workers (876.062/1-550).

The information and comments exchanged between Department of State and Firestone officials set forth in this telegram summarize significant points made during a five-hour conversation on January 5 between Harold Sims of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs and Byron H. Larabee, Executive Vice President of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company (Memorandum of conversation by Sims, January 5, 1950 : 876.2395/1-550).

effect on Libs principal source revenue and (3) possible creation labor precedents which might deter private Amer business from investing in Lib, particularly at time when we striving interest other private Amer capital in the country, Dept believes LibGovt shld exert every effort effect expeditious settlement dispute.

We have endeavored impress upon Firestone reps need for reforms and believe considerable efforts will be made by Firestone this direction. Firestone has telegraphed instrs Wilson which wld appear dispel any misunderstanding on part Tubman that Firestone plans remain adamant and refuse deal properly and fairly with labor.

Firestone reports Comm has requested info which wld reveal its business secrets. In this connection Dept believes LibGovt shld be careful recognize right civil or mercantile companies, without distinction as to nationality, to safeguard their business secrets, and grant such companies fair and unbiased treatment in controversy between labor and management.

At your discretion you may discuss foregoing in most tactful manner with Tubman, and use your good influence impress upon him need settlement this matter before labor strife envelops entire Lib economy such as now prevails neighboring Brit territories. You shld exercise great caution not leave impression with Tubman that Dept supports Firestone; on contrary you shld make clear Depts concern applies immed and future impact on Lib economy by continued strikes at Firestone.

ACHESON

876.062/1-1350 : Telegram

The Ambassador in Liberia (Dudley) to the Secretary of State

SECRET

MONROVIA, January 13, 1950—9 a. m.

8. Deptel 5, January 10.¹ In discussion Firestone strike with Tubman his position as follows:

Settlement depends upon: (1) Whether present standard living worker is adequate; (2) ability to meet wage increases; (3) over all impact on economy of country. These are questions Commission was to look into. Its final report will be submitted shortly.

Tubman promised give Wilson hearing early next week indicating that if they arrive at any reasonable position he will personally go to Firestone in effort obtain full cooperation employees.

¹ *Supra.*

Tubman stated he agrees private companies should retain business secrets but does not consider profits or employee wage scales business secrets. States this is what Communism desires.

Embassy believes Tubman purposely permitting strike drag along without his intervention in order soften Firestone at negotiation table. Tubman believes Firestone has missed boat in labor relations over period of years. Feels strike may give him chance become stronger politically if he can obtain and announce any positive concessions from Firestone. Situation now depends upon degree to which Wilson willing meet demands. Tubman not at all unreasonable personally and can be won over with logic and fairness.

Embassy does not regard Tubman's letter to Wilson as serious but a summation of Liberian attitude over period years toward Firestone, hence tactical move in present difficulty.²

If Wilson remains adamant it may become serious.

Tubman further stated he appreciated Department's observation and agreed with all except question of business secrets (above). He assured he would do best get matter settled next week.³

DUDLEY

² On December 31, 1949, the secretary to President Tubman sent a letter to Firestone General Manager Wilson accusing him of bad faith, disrespect for Liberian authority, libeling Liberian Government officials, refusing to bargain, and disparaging Liberian ability. The letter concluded with a threat of expulsion from the country unless Wilson changed his methods and approach to problems in general. The text of this letter was included as enclosure 2 to despatch 85, March 17, from Monrovia, not printed (876.062/3-1750).

³ The Presidential Special Commission looking into the Firestone Plantations strike situation on about January 16 recommended to President Tubman a 60 percent wage increase for labor and a 50 percent increase for salaried employees. President Tubman and Firestone General Manager Wilson met on January 18 to discuss the strike situation. Wilson was prepared to offer a 15 percent wage increase for labor. Following further discussions on January 31 between President Tubman and Byron H. Larabee, Executive Vice President of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, who had meanwhile arrived in Liberia from the United States, a compromise wage increase was announced by the Firestone Plantations. On February 4 rioting led by a small native group armed with clubs and cutlasses broke out on the Firestone Plantations. There was some vandalism and property damage but no American personnel were attacked. President Tubman promptly despatched a force of troops to the area, order was restored, strike leaders were arrested, and by February 8 all operations at the plantations had been resumed. A detailed report on events attending the strike at the Firestone Plantations was transmitted as despatch 85, cited in footnote 2 above.

876.00A/1-550: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Liberia

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, February 1, 1950—7 p. m.

22. Embdes 5 Jan 5, 1950.¹ Dept gratified draft econ development plan presented to LibGovt and believes your discussion program with Pres Tubman and Lib Cabinet will provide valuable background info and experience useful to Dept in its consideration similar programs other regions.

You shld re-emphasize, in further discussions, program purely suggestive and does not commit US Govt to aid of any kind or amt. LibGovt requests for aid in connection with specific projects will be considered in light of whatever US fon assistance may exist at time when requests are made.

Dept considers Development Authority shld be a wholly Liberian Agency responsible to LibGovt. Ecomis wld not be represented on Authority but wld maintain close contact with it.

For your info, Dept hopes Ecomis will play important role in Liberia's econ development as available resources for assistance programs are increased under prospective legis and as banks and sources of private investment capital take increasing interest in development prospects. Since relationships under Pt 4² program are still in planning stage here, pls avoid any hint of commitments in talks with Liberians and keep Dept fully advised by cable on progress your conversations.

ACHESON

¹ Not printed; it reported that the Embassy formally presented to the Liberian Government in late December 1949 a "Proposed Five Year Program for the Economic Development of Liberia" prepared by the U.S. Economic Mission to Liberia (which was attached to the Embassy). A copy of the draft plan accompanied the despatch as an enclosure. (876.00A/1-1550) For an indication of the scope of the program, see the memorandum of February 16 from Berry to McGhee, p. 1712. Telegram 28, February 4, from Monrovia, not printed, reported that President Tubman had presented the draft plan to the Liberian Cabinet. The President indicated to Ambassador Dudley his enthusiasm for the plan in principle. (876.00A/2-450) Despatch 121, April 6, from Monrovia, transmitted to the Department of State as an enclosure a 35-page Liberian Government report commenting upon the American draft plan (876.00 Five Year/4-650).

² For documentation on Point Four and its application to Liberia, see vol. 1, pp. 846 ff.

976.524/2-1450

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] February 14, 1950.

Subject: Proposal to reconstruct the road between Roberts Field and Monrovia, Liberia

Problem:

To support the proposal now before the Department of the Air Force for the reconstruction of the road between Roberts Field and Monrovia in Liberia.¹

Discussion:

The Air Force is currently financing the maintenance of Roberts Field, built by us during the war at a cost of \$5,000,000. This air base, one of the most modern in Africa, is located about 50 miles from Monrovia, where we recently completed a modern seaport which remains under our ownership until fully amortized. Pan American World Airways, the operator of Roberts Field under contract to the Air Force, has requested that the Roberts-Monrovia road be macadamized. In addition to assisting their day to day work at the field, it will facilitate the gradual concentration of the PAA African operations at Roberts, which will be a great economic help to Liberia. NEA feels that from a military and business point of view valuable benefits would accrue to the United States. The Department has long regarded the maintenance of Roberts Field as being in the national interest, and an important factor in our political relations with Liberia. It does not appear practicable to have a modern air base and a modern seaport, both under U.S. control, separated by a dirt road,

¹ During a call on Assistant Secretary of State McGhee on January 13, Juan Trippe, President of the Pan American Airways, Inc., mentioned that the 50-mile road from the port of Monrovia to Roberts Field was in very poor condition and would be particularly inadequate for use in a military emergency. Trippe, whose firm had contracted to operate Roberts Field, proposed that American military authorities undertake reconstruction of the road, and he asked for Department of State support for the proposal. Assistant Secretary McGhee informed Trippe that it was the policy of the U.S. Government to foster economic development in Liberia, and he indicated that the Department of State would urge the military authorities to undertake the road reconstruction. (Memorandum of conversation by Sims, January 13, 876.00/1-1350) On February 6 Trippe informed the Department of State that Pan American had addressed a letter on January 26 to Secretary of the Air Force W. Stuart Symington proposing reconstruction of the Monrovia-Roberts Field Road. Trippe observed that the time had come for the Department of State to approach the Air Force in the matter. (Memorandum from Berry to McGhee, February 7, 976.524/2-750) On February 7 Pan American Vice President John Leslie called at the Department of State to urge more positive action in the matter by the Department. (Memorandum of conversation by Cyr, February 7, 876.524/2-750)

pitted and rutted, and almost impassable during the heavy rainy season.

Recommendation:

I recommend that you sign the attached letter to Mr. Symington.²

² For the letter as sent on February 23, see p. 1716.

110.15 MC/4-2450

*President Truman to the President of Liberia (Tubman)*¹

[WASHINGTON,] February 15, 1950.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am sending you this letter by Mr. George C. McGhee, Assistant Secretary of State in charge of African Affairs, who is making a visit to your country as a representative of this Government.

I want to take this occasion to tell you how pleased I am at the continued close and cordial relations between our two countries, and to reaffirm our wholehearted desire further to strengthen these ties. The preservation of the ideals of peace so firmly embodied in the democratic way of life of our two peoples is today, more than ever, worthy of our strongest efforts. We are particularly pleased that Liberia is able to provide such an excellent example of the practical application of these ideals on the African continent.

Recently I had occasion to observe very favorable reports on Liberia's economic progress. I am particularly gratified with the strides that have been made in our joint endeavor to combine Liberia's material resources with our own technical resources for the restoration of a sound world economy. It is my fervent hope that we may be able to expand our mutual efforts in this direction.

I avail myself of this opportunity to wish you much continued success and good health.

Faithfully yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

¹ The text of this letter in draft was transmitted to President Truman by Secretary of State Acheson on February 14 under cover a brief memorandum whose operative paragraphs read as follows:

"There is attached a suggested draft of a letter from you to President William V. S. Tubman of Liberia. Our relations with Liberia are excellent, and the purpose of this letter is merely to express our recognition of the favored position which we enjoy with respect to Liberia.

"If the letter meets your approval, it will be handed to President Tubman by Assistant Secretary McGhee when the latter visits Liberia this month." (776.11/2-1450)

A marginal notation on the Secretary's memorandum of February 14 indicates that the proposed letter was signed by the President, dated February 15.

110.15 MCG/2-1650

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs (Berry) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee)

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] February 16, 1950.

Subject: Briefing for your forthcoming visit to Liberia.¹

The following constitute the most important problems under current review by the Liberians and ourselves:

1. *Proposed Export-Import Bank loan for Liberia.* In early December, Ambassador Dudley, Mr. Meier² and Mr. Sims presented to President Tubman a "five-year economic development program" for Liberia.³ The President indicated a keen interest in such a program, and expressed himself as being in accord with the principle of securing a loan from the U.S. government. He pointed out, however, that his government would wish to study carefully the proposed development program. This is now being done by the Liberian cabinet. The development program was first discussed with the Export-Import Bank, and the Bank has indicated that it would be receptive to applications from the Liberian government for loans to finance several development projects. Included among the projects acceptable for the Bank's consideration are the following:

(1) Road Development (new road construction; improvement of existing roads; hard surfacing; purchase of road maintenance equipment; and bridge replacement);

(2) Rice Production Projects (a program designed to shift Liberia's production of rice from dry to swamp land);

(3) Monrovia Water Distribution System;

(4) Monrovia Electric Power Distribution System;

(5) Agricultural Credit Corporation;

(6) Repair of River Landing Facilities;

(7) Agricultural Extension Program.

It is anticipated that these projects will entail loans of from one to two million dollars during the first year of the program. These would be twelve-year loans at 3½% interest. Amortization payments would begin three years after the date of the loan. The Bank has also indicated that additional projects in the same general field may be submitted for loan financing as they are developed and justified.

2. *Proposal to utilize balance of funds in the Liberian Lend-Lease Account for improving the road (approximately 200 miles) between Monrovia and Ganta.* We have now obtained clearance within the Department to proceed with talks with the General Accounting Office,

¹ Regarding Assistant Secretary McGhee's visit to Liberia, February 21-25, see the memorandum prepared by the Department of State, *infra*.

² Oscar W. Meier, Chief of the Economic Mission in Liberia (Mission for Economic Affairs).

³ Regarding the draft plan under reference here, see telegram 22, February 1, to Monrovia, p. 1709.

and, if necessary, with the appropriate Congressional committees to determine whether the balance of funds in the Liberia Lend-Lease account can be used for building small bridges, box culverts and providing road maintenance machinery for the Monrovia-Ganta road. It is estimated that \$700,000 will remain in the Liberia Lend-Lease account upon the completion of the port works project. The justification for using this money is based on the economic benefits which will accrue to the Monrovia port by making this trunk road usable throughout the year. By so doing, it will afford port facilities for those regions in French Guinea and the Ivory Coast which are now without proper port services. There is attached hereto a copy of a memorandum on this matter,⁴ which will furnish you additional background information. Mr. Sims expects to join officers from the Legal Advisor's Office and Mr. Thorp's⁵ office for discussion with the General Accounting Office on this matter within the next few days.

3. *Pan American Airways' request to the Department of the Air Force that the road between Monrovia and Roberts Field be reconstructed.* The Department has expressed approval of the proposal now before the Department of the Air Force to pave the road between Monrovia and Roberts Field. It is too early to tell what will be the final outcome of this matter.⁶

4. *Monrovia Free Port operations.* The Department was gratified to learn that the Port made a net profit of \$132,000 for 1949.

5. *Economic and Public Health Missions.* Mr. Burns' office is preparing for you a memorandum on the Economic Mission. We hope to strengthen both the Economic and the Public Health Missions if Point IV materializes. Additional personnel and equipment will be provided. Housing will be the Number One problem, and you might strengthen a request already made of President Tubman for the use of Camp Johnson as a site where our technicians can be housed, by emphasizing the importance of proper facilities for the program. Camp Johnson will become available about April, 1950. While Camp Johnson is a part of the Port facilities, we cannot use it without the concurrence of the Liberian government.

6. *Strike at Firestone Plantation.* For the first time in Firestone's 26 years in Liberia, a serious strike broke out on its plantations in early December. At first, the Liberian government adopted a rather indifferent attitude toward the strike, and certain responsible Liberian officials were inclined to regard the strike as a natural development which goes along with economic advancement. Through Ambassador Dudley, we cautioned President Tubman regarding the adverse effects which this strike might have upon the Liberian economy, if it were not brought under control. In order that you may have a complete understanding of our position in this matter, there is attached hereto a copy of our telegram to Ambassador Dudley on the subject. The strike has not been settled, and new rioting has broken out. We feel, therefore, that the position expressed in the attached telegram⁷ is still timely

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ Willard L. Thorp, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs.

⁶ Regarding the matter under reference here, see Assistant Secretary McGhee's memorandum of February 14, to the Secretary of State, p. 1710.

⁷ The reference here is presumably to telegram 5, January 10, to Monrovia, p. 1706.

and fits the picture today equally as well as it did several weeks ago.

Mr. Byron H. Larabee, Executive Vice President of Firestone, is now in Liberia, and you will have the opportunity to talk with him.

7. *The Liberia Mining Company.* This Company is moving ahead satisfactorily. Mr. Lansdell K. Christie, President of the Company, is now in Liberia, and he can furnish you detailed information on the Bomi Hills iron ore operation. As you know, the Liberia Mining Company is the recipient of a \$4,000,000 loan from the Export-Import Bank. The majority stock of the Company is owned by the Republic Steel Corporation.

8. *Subject for discussion with Ambassador Dudley.*

(a) FBO has written the Ambassador regarding its plans for moving ahead with the building program for Monrovia. They will send their top-flight man in Paris to confer with the Ambassador, after the latter returns from the Conference.

(b) You will wish to discuss with the Ambassador the subject of a possible transfer for him. There are attached hereto two memoranda on this question.⁸

(c) We are making every effort to find a military officer who can go to Liberia and make a survey of Liberia's military needs. We sent a telegram to the Ambassador on February 15 on this subject.⁹ You may reassure him that the Department is working very closely with Mr. Evans¹⁰ in Mr. Johnson's office (Secretary of Defense). You will recall that Mr. Evans came to the luncheon you gave for Ambassador King.¹¹

(d) We recently telegraphed the Ambassador concerning our latest efforts to find a competent lawyer to go to Liberia for the purpose of codifying the Liberian laws. We are now awaiting a reply to our telegram before proceeding any further on this matter.¹²

(e) In January, we were able to obtain a census expert to assist the Liberian government in making a population census. The only thing delaying this operation at present is the fact that the Liberian government has not deposited the amount required to defray the expenses of the technician.

⁸ Neither printed.

⁹ The reference here is presumably to telegram 39, February 15, to Monrovia, not printed (776.551/2-1550). Eventually, in March, the United States and the Liberian Government accepted the designation of Col. West A. Hamilton, Retired, as the officer to conduct a survey of Liberia's military needs.

¹⁰ The reference here is to James C. Evans, Civilian Assistant to Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson.

¹¹ Assistant Secretary McGhee gave a luncheon on January 24 in honor of Liberian Ambassador Charles D. B. King on the eve of the Ambassador's departure for Liberia for consultation. During remarks at the luncheon, Ambassador King indicated that he had been received that morning by President Truman.

¹² A project was initiated in November 1949 for the selection in the United States of a legal expert who would assist in the codifying of the laws of Liberia. Through February 1950 several applicants were interviewed by the Liberian Chargé in Washington. The project was subsequently delayed because of Liberian budgetary difficulties. Documentation on the project is included in file 776.34.

110.15 MC/4-2450

*Memorandum Prepared by the Department of State*¹

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON, undated.]

VISIT TO LIBERIA OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY GEORGE C. MCGHEE,
FEBRUARY 21-25, 1950

Mr. McGhee's visit to Liberia afforded him an excellent opportunity to meet President Tubman and his Cabinet, and to observe the activities in which our Government has been and is currently engaged in helping to improve Liberia's economy. Mr. McGhee was most favorably impressed by President Tubman's earnest efforts to improve the lot of his people. He seems to be a natural leader, able and extremely popular.

There are no doubts whatever regarding the friendship of President Tubman and the Liberian people for the United States. Mr. McGhee emphasized to the President our awareness of the favored position we enjoy in Liberia, and expressed the strong hope that this relationship will grow stronger. President Tubman assured him that he felt the same way.

We can take a great deal of pride in the modern port and port works which we recently constructed in Liberia with a \$20,000,000 Lend-Lease loan. Mr. McGhee observed that our Economic Mission (staffed by American White and Negro technicians) and our Public Health Mission (staffed by American Negroes) have done notable work in furnishing Liberia much needed technical assistance. The accomplishments of these two Missions are excellent indications of what might be achieved under the proposed Point Four Program.

Mr. McGhee discussed with President Tubman the proposed Five-Year Development Program for Liberia drawn up by our Economic Mission. It is believed that we will soon be faced with deciding whether we should grant Liberia some type of long-term loan for much needed public utility projects, as proposed in this program. Liberia cannot

¹ The first draft of this memorandum, prepared in the Office of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs in the form of a memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President, was submitted to the Secretary on April 24. In the form printed here, a revision prepared in cooperation with the Executive Secretariat, this memorandum was transmitted to President Truman by Secretary Acheson on May 9 for the information of the President.

Assistant Secretary of State McGhee arrived in Monrovia on February 21, was received by President Tubman and Liberian Secretary of State Gabriel L. Dennis on February 22, subsequently luncheoned at the Presidential residence and met with other officials of the Liberian Government, visited several Liberian agricultural projects on February 24, and departed on February 25. No other records have been found of Assistant Secretary McGhee's meetings with Liberian officials.

receive benefits under the European Recovery Program, although its neighbors, the French and British colonial territories, are recipients of such aid.

In response to President Tubman's request for military assistance in the form of a United States training mission, Mr. McGhee promised that steps would be taken to make available a reserve army officer who would, at Liberia's expense, conduct a survey of Liberia's military training needs. (Colonel West A. Hamilton, Negro Reserve Officer, has subsequently gone to Liberia for this purpose.)

Mr. McGhee was most favorably impressed with Ambassador Dudley and is convinced that he is doing an excellent job as our diplomatic representative in Liberia.

976.524/2-2350

The Secretary of State to the Secretary of the Air Force (Symington)

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] February 23, 1950.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: The Department of State has received from Pan American World Airways, Inc. a copy of their letter to you dated January 26, 1950 setting forth several proposals for improving the facilities at Roberts Field in Liberia, with particular reference to the need for improving the road which connects Roberts Field with the City of Monrovia.¹

The Department supports the proposal to reconstruct the road between Roberts Field and Monrovia. The Department has long regarded the maintenance of Roberts Field as being in the national interest, and an important factor in our political relations with Liberia. In support of its position the Department stretched its own appropriation to keep Roberts Field from falling into disrepair at a time when all financial support was withdrawn from other sources.

Today, with the completion of the modern seaport at Monrovia, which is under United States ownership, and the financial support which the Department of the Air Force is providing for the maintenance of Roberts Field, there appears to be good justification for reconstructing the road connecting these two facilities. Apart from the military advantages of linking the air base with the seaport, which can best be judged by the Department of the Air Force, the paving of this road would greatly advance Liberia's economic development, thereby adding considerable impetus to our official policy of assisting Liberia economically. Further, our role as the operator

¹ Regarding the letter under reference here, see footnote 1, p. 1710.

of Roberts Field, where we enjoy military and civil air rights, would be immeasurably strengthened.²

Sincerely yours,

DEAN ACHESON

² On March 11 Secretary Symington replied to the Secretary of State that the Air Force recognized the desirability of the reconstruction of the Roberts Field-Monrovia road but could not embark upon the project because of the current limitation in construction funds. Symington said that the project would be considered by the Air Force in future programs (976.524/3-1150).

110.15 MC/4-1450

Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Harold Sims of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] April 14, 1950.

Subject: Mr. Byron H. Larabee's Visit to Mr. McGhee on April 14, 1950

Participants: Mr. Byron H. Larabee, Executive Vice President of
the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company
Mr. McGhee—NEA
Mr. Sims—ANE

Mr. Larabee came in today at his own request and expressed his interest in receiving Mr. McGhee's impressions of the latter's recent visit to Liberia.¹

Mr. McGhee first inquired regarding the status of the labor strikes which recently developed on the Firestone Rubber Plantations in Liberia. Mr. Larabee said the situation was quiet, and that when he left Liberia in March, all plantation and factory operations had returned to normal. He did not expect any further difficulty, now that the principal agitators (mostly British nationals from Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone) had been dismissed from the Plantation. Mr. McGhee said that he obtained the impression from his many talks with important Liberian officials, as well as with Ambassador Dudley, that considerable improvement could be made by Firestone in its treatment of its native employees. By this, Mr. McGhee explained that he was referring to better educational facilities, improved housing, and especially a more tolerant attitude toward the Liberian officials by the management personnel of the Plantation. Mr. McGhee inquired as to whether Mr. Larabee thought Mr. Ross Wilson, Manager of the Plantation, adopted the proper attitude toward the Liberians for the purpose of building and maintaining good public relations. Mr. Larabee remarked that Mr. Wilson was a businessman first, and

¹ Regarding Assistant Secretary McGhee's visit to Liberia, see the undated memorandum prepared by the Department of State, p. 1715.

a diplomat next, and that their enterprise in Liberia was strictly a business operation. He realized, however, that good relations with the local people are important, but that his company had not been able to find a man who possessed the proper amount of business ability as well as the attributes of a trained diplomat. As a result of recent labor difficulties, and in an attempt to improve the company's public relations, Mr. Vipond and Mr. Smith, of the Plantation's Management Staff, have been assigned new duties designed to bring about improvement in the public relations field. Mr. McGhee said he was aware of some of the factors responsible for the absence of closer relations with the Liberians. However, he felt that an organization like Firestone could not afford to lag behind the European nationals in bettering the living and working conditions of their native employees. He referred particularly to the strides which the Belgians have and are making in the Belgian Congo, especially in the great Katanga mineral belt. Mr. Larabee dwelt at some length on the labor system used at the Plantations and the benefits such as hospitalization, schools, subsidized food, household wares and clothing which his company makes available to its employees. He pointed out that the average daily wage paid the unskilled laborer amounts to about 28 cents, but that is not a true picture of what the laborer actually receives, since additional compensation is to be found in the many benefits made available to him. Mr. Larabee said that the wages on the Plantations are, in practically all categories, higher than those paid by other private business operators in Liberia. He further explained that experiments conducted by the Plantations revealed that the native laborers prefer the present system of working for part cash and subsidized food, housing, medical care, etc., than receiving full compensation.

Mr. McGhee said he heard considerable criticism from the Liberian officials regarding the absence of Liberian nationals in positions of responsibility on the Plantation. He said that he obtained the impression that a sizable segment of Liberians feels that Firestone has not made a real effort to train Liberians for the more important skilled and supervisory positions. Mr. Larabee remarked that they had made some progress along this line, and that it was definitely the policy of his company to expand this phase of their operations. He explained that in the past when the Plantations trained mechanics, laboratory assistants, etc., they were invariably drafted into the service of the Liberian government, and his company had experienced a great deal of difficulty in retaining such people after they finished their training courses.

Mr. McGhee referred once again to the great responsibility which rests upon Americans to pursue a progressive approach in their busi-

ness relations with the African peoples, and expressed a strong hope that Firestone would evolve a new approach to its problem of management and native employee relationship. He offered the opinion that the recent labor disturbances at the Plantations should leave no doubt in anyone's mind as to the need and urgency for a more progressive approach.

Mr. Larabee referred briefly to his company's concern over the Far Eastern rubber supply situation, and stated confidentially that he has received the approval of his Board to investigate the possibilities of obtaining additional natural rubber in French Guinea, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. He explained that his company did not wish to establish plantations but desired to purchase from small rubber farmers, and from existing plantations. He said that he might, at a later date, need the advice of the Department on ways and means by which he could negotiate with the French and British in their respective territories. Mr. Sims suggested that Mr. Larabee present his plans to the Department and if the Department could assist him in any way it would, of course, be pleased to do so. Mr. Larabee said he would keep in touch with the Department on this matter.

In conclusion, Mr. McGhee told Mr. Larabee that he had been thinking of him as a person who might serve on one of the Department's missions, particularly one engaged in Point Four activity dealing with underdeveloped areas, and that the Department might call upon him sometime. Mr. Larabee expressed his appreciation for Mr. McGhee's thoughtfulness in this regard, and said that he would be pleased to serve in such capacity at any time.

876.10/4-2150: Telegram

*The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Liberia*¹

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, April 21, 1950—7 p. m.

87. Urtel 94, Apr 18 and memo Apr 8 to Sims.² Present fin position LibGovt continues cause Dept concern. While situation may not be termed crisis, Dept nevertheless surprised LibGovt permitted its fin reach level necessitating \$600,000 loan. It appears LibGovt has not abided by advice Fin Adviser, and this difficult understand view serious fin difficulties LibGovt encountered 1926 and 1933 resulting estab Financial Adviser position.

¹ This telegram was drafted in the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs.

² Neither printed. They concerned reports that the Liberian Government was in a financial crisis and had requested a loan of \$600,000 from the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company to meet current obligations (876.14/4-1850 and 876.14/4-850).

US has consistently supported LibGovt efforts achieve greater econ stability. However laxity on part Lib officials maintain sound fin position weakens Dept efforts promote public and private econ assistance.

In your discretion you may bring foregoing attention Tubman. Emphasize it is not Depts intention interfere internal affairs LibGovt, but view extraordinary close ties between two countries Dept feels strongly LibGovt shld exert every effort keep within its fin budget thereby eliminating need rely on private sources for fin aid.

ACHESON

876.10/4-2550 : Telegram

The Ambassador in Liberia (Dudley) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL

MONROVIA, April 25, 1950—8 a. m.

102. In conversation with Liberian Secretary State Dennis, Ambassador conveyed sense Deptel 87 April 21,¹ pointing out our observation should not be construed interference internal affairs Liberian Government but rather friendly advice from one friendly government to another based upon long years mutual interest.

Ambassador's decision discuss matter Secretary State first predicated upon inability see President today and desire feel out Secretary State on his attitude problem and what possibly might be Tubman's attitude toward US concern purely internal matter.

Secretary Dennis expressed surprise and frankly stated he had no knowledge Secretary Treasury had approached Firestone Bank for loan. In off-the-record discussion, he pointed out his advice not sought in matters this kind since politicians know he approves only sound fiscal practices and would speak out against many matters involving finance currently being practiced. He stated a small group of men surrounding President are giving him unsound advice including Attorney General Cassel, Richard Henries, Chairman House Foreign Affairs Committee and Secretary Treasury William Dennis, . . .

Dennis compared Tubman with late President Harding, stating both honest but could not say no to friends, in this case politicians. He then arranged appointment for Ambassador to see Tubman.

Secretary Dennis thinks and Ambassador agrees that new agreement whereby Firestone will pay income tax in lieu fixed percentage on gross exports. It may have some bearing on a possible loan request at this time, especially since it is generally believed this new method of payment will increase Firestone payments to government to approximately \$500,000 to \$750,000 per year. If this reasoning correct, govern-

¹ *Supra*.

ment may rely on these increased payments take care short-term credit loans from bank.²

DUDLEY

² In his telegram 104, April 26, from Monrovia, not printed, Ambassador Dudley reported that he discussed the Liberian financial position with President Tubman. The President accepted the Department of State's strong feeling in the matter in a friendly spirit, but Ambassador Dudley concluded that the President did not anticipate a deficit nor any radical change in fiscal policy (876.10/4-2650). In May the Liberian Government did borrow \$400,000 from the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. Telegram 134, May 26, from Monrovia, not printed, reported that President Tubman had finally apparently realized the fiscal dangers confronting his government, and he had ordered a curtailment of all but necessary government expenditures (876.10/5-2650). Telegram 27, August 9, from Monrovia, not printed, reported that overall Liberian financial situation had greatly improved and that President Tubman was confident that the government was emerging from the financial crisis (876.00/8-950).

876.00A/6-2950

*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador to Liberia
(Dudley¹)*

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] June 29, 1950.

Subject: Conversation with President Truman

During a courtesy call on the President today, I discussed the present role of the United States Economic Mission and Public Health Mission vis-à-vis the Point Four Program as it is being proposed for Liberia. After I had expressed appreciation to the President for his remarks on the work of our Economic Mission in Liberia, delivered in a speech before a convention of the American Newspaper Guild yesterday,² the President replied that he was sincerely interested in the development of Liberia, not only from a standpoint of our historical ties, but because of the evidenced desire of the Liberian people to help themselves to a position of democratic affluence in the world today.

I mentioned the oft-repeated request of the Liberian Government for assistance in transforming their local frontier force into a modern military unit capable of maintaining internal security, which, in addition to maintaining order throughout the country would also serve to protect the vast American investments in Liberia. The President assured me that it was also his desire that Liberia have some military guidance on the scene, and further stated that he would discuss the matter with the Secretary of Defense.

¹ Ambassador Dudley was in Washington for consultation until late July.

² For the text of the President's address under reference here, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1950* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 498-502.

In closing, he mentioned that a small military mission in Liberia would be desirable not only for the reasons stated, but to forestall the possibility of any future development in that area similar to the Korean situation today.

776.5/8-1050

*The Liberian Chargé (Bright) to the Secretary of State*¹

WASHINGTON, August 10, 1950.

MR. SECRETARY: Since the discussion which took place between the King-Tolbert Mission² and the United States Government in February of 1949, when the question of the defense of Liberia was taken up and the Government of Liberia sought the assistance of the United States of America in reorganizing and improving the status of its National Defense, World developments have taken such a trend as to convince the Government of Liberia beyond a doubt that wisdom dictates timely action be taken now as a safe-guard and a deterrent against what are happening elsewhere.

It is the obligation of every Government to provide adequate protection for its citizens, and of the interests of other nationals within its borders; and when this protection is beyond its powers to provide, to seek it from some other and friendly source.

The obligations which the Government of the United States of America through the United Nations has undertaken in the interest of World Order have caught the admiration of the entire Free World.

In this period of World Crisis, Liberia is happy to find herself, as she has always been throughout the entire period of her history, at the side of the United States of America with which she has a common cultural and traditional tie. This is no matter of accident since both are peace loving peoples, abhor wars and long for a protracted period of World tranquility in order to achieve their destiny.

The Government of Liberia therefore looks forward to a careful consideration of the proposals contained in the Memorandum appended³ and is ready and willing at any time for action looking towards their consummation.

Please accept [etc.]

RICHARD S. S. BRIGHT

¹ Chargé Bright handed this note to Burton Y. Berry, Director of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs, on August 10.

² William R. Tolbert, member of the Liberian House of Representatives, visited the United States in February 1949 as a special representative of Liberian President Tubman. Together with then Liberian Minister Charles D. B. King, Tolbert held discussions with American officials on a Liberian request for military assistance.

³ Chargé Bright's note of August 10, to the Secretary of State, *infra*.

776.5/8-1050

*The Liberian Chargé (Bright) to the Secretary of State*¹

The Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of Liberia presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of State of the United States of America and has the honor to bring to the attention of the Honorable the Secretary of State the requests of the Liberian Government which have previously been the subject of discussions between the United States Department of State and the King-Tolbert Mission of February, 1949.²

The Government of Liberia in view of its strategic location which has been made more vulnerable by the construction and operation of a deep-water port at Monrovia, the development of rubber plantations, the operations of the Liberia Mining Company for the exploitation of iron ore and the establishment of the Roberts Field Airport, together with the request made of the Liberian Government by the Security Council for combat troops as well as the large communist influence across the borders of neighbouring territories, again re-submits for the consideration of the United States Government its request for assistance in its desire to improve its military and defense services.

The Memorandum of February 14, 1949³ of the King-Tolbert Mission is therefore modified and hereby submitted as a basis for this request:

1. (a) Procuring arms and ammunition and other military equipment from the Government of the United States of America for the use of the Liberian Army in training, and for use in combat since she has now become more vulnerable to attack; and

(b) On what conditions would the United States Government be willing to assist the Liberian Government in this respect.

2. (a) Obtaining loan to the Government of Liberia of regular army officers to assist and advise in the training of the Liberian Army; and

(b) On what conditions would the United States Government be willing to grant this request.

¹ This note was handed to Director Berry on August 10 as an attachment to Chargé Bright's note printed *supra*. The identical note, *mutatis mutandis*, was addressed to Ambassador Dudley in Liberia by Liberian Secretary of State Dennis on August 7. In his despatch 45, August 7, from Monrovia, not printed, which transmitted the text of the Liberian note of August 7 as an enclosure, Ambassador Dudley urged that the Liberian requests for military assistance be carefully examined and speedily implemented by the Department of State. The Ambassador observed:

"The Department is aware of the many facts which serve as justification for bolstering up the morale of this small Republic which for a hundred and three years has stood ready and willing (although not too able) to serve American interests in this area of the world."

² Regarding the mission under reference here, see footnote 2, *supra*.

³ Not printed.

3. (a) Securing the assistance of the Government of the United States of America in the construction of coastal, frontier and general internal modern military defenses and in making a survey of the Republic for the purpose of formulating an overall national defense program; and

(b) On what conditions would the United States Government be willing to render this assistance.

In their consideration of the request of the Liberian Government, the United States Department of State indicated in their Note of March 28, 1949,⁴ that there was no Congressional authorization for sending military missions to countries other than those for which they had such authorization, but that nevertheless, if, and when, such legislation as they were endeavouring to obtain was enacted the Liberian Government could be assured that every consideration would be given to its request for military aid and assistance of the type described in the Liberian Legation's Memorandum.

In the light of the hopeful gesture of Your Excellency's Government, the Government of Liberia in view of the wanton invasion on South Korea by the armies of North Korea which has created a serious threat to world peace would be pleased and do hereby beseech the United States Government to give favourable consideration to the above mentioned requests of the Liberian Government which requests the Liberian Government considers vital to its safety and national security.

The Secretary of State of Liberia also desires to state that in pursuance of provisions of Article V of the Defense Agreement concluded March 31, 1942 between the Governments of the United States and Liberia,⁵ the Government of the United States was good enough to allocate the sum of \$1,000,000.00, \$750,000.00 of which was applied to training Liberian officers by officers of the United States Army then stationed at Roberts Field. In this connection the Liberian Government would appreciate the inclusion of any balance to such defense program as the two Governments may by agreement mutually agree to inaugurate.

WASHINGTON, August 10, 1950.

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ For text, see Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 275, or 56 Stat. (pt 2) 1621. For documentation regarding the negotiation of the agreement, see *Foreign Relations*, 1942, vol. iv, pp. 355 ff.

876.00-TA/8-1550

The Liberian Chargé (Bright) to the Secretary of State

WASHINGTON, August 15, 1950.

MR. SECRETARY: On August 11, 1950 this Embassy had the pleasure of submitting to Your Excellency a Memorandum concerning the defense of Liberia.¹ A similar Memorandum was handed concurrently to the United States Ambassador at Monrovia. On August 17th a Memorandum on the subject of financial and technical aid for implementing my Government's Five Year Plan was handed at Monrovia to the United States Ambassador, a copy of which I have the honor to append.²

Favorable consideration of and action on these Memorandums are regarded by the President of Liberia as necessary for the progress of the Nation and the questions are of such importance to the Government that I have been instructed to obtain consent of the Government of the United States of America for a visit of His Excellency the Secretary of State of Liberia and the Honorable the Attorney General of Liberia to this Capital to confer with The President of the United States of America, and with Your Excellency on the points raised in the two Memorandums mentioned herein. I shall be pleased if you will inform me if this request of my Government is granted and when the two Liberian officials may come to Washington.³

I have [etc.]

RICHARD S. S. BRIGHT

¹ The reference here is presumably to Chargé Bright's note of August 10, *supra*.

² The Liberian Embassy memorandum under reference here was not found attached to the source text, nor is there any evidence that such a memorandum was handed to Embassy in Monrovia on August 17. Under cover of despatch 66, August 28, the Embassy in Monrovia did transmit to the Department of State copies of a Liberian Department of State note of that date requesting U.S. Government financial aid and technical assistance in the further implementation of a proposed Liberian Five Year Plan. Despatch 66 also transmitted copies of the proposed Five Year Plan and appendices comprising 29 pages in the source text. (876.00-TA/8-2850)

³ In a note of September 28, not printed, Liberian Ambassador King advised Secretary of State Acheson that President Tubman had appointed a special Commission composed of Secretary of State Gabriel L. Dennis, Attorney General C. Abayomi Cassell, and Liberian Government economist Charles B. Sherman, to go to the United States and conduct discussions on Liberian defense needs and financial and technical assistance for the proposed Liberian Five Year Plan (876.00 Five Year Plan/9-2850). The Liberian Commission arrived in the United States on October 7.

776.5/9-2750

Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to the President

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] September 27, 1950.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Military, Financial and Technical Aid for Liberia

The Liberian Government has officially requested that you receive the Secretary of State of Liberia, the Honorable Gabriel L. Dennis, and the Attorney General of Liberia, the Honorable Christian Abayomi Cassell, who wish to discuss Liberia's need for a military training mission, and financial and technical aid to implement Liberia's Five-Year Economic Development Plan.¹

I suggest, as a matter of courtesy, you receive the Liberians. There follows brief background information on the subjects which they will discuss with the Department.

1. We recognize Liberia's need for assistance in training and equipping a small military force for internal security. Negotiations with Mr. Dennis and Mr. Cassell on this matter will be handled by the Department in conjunction with the Department of Defense. (We are now in consultation with Defense on this matter, and prior to the visit of the Liberians, I will inform you of the results of these consultations.)

2. We have for some time recognized Liberia's need for greater advancement in developing its resources and strengthening its over-all economy. Evidence of our interest in this regard is to be found in the achievements of our Economic and Public Health Missions in Liberia in furnishing the Liberian Government and people much needed technical advice.

3. The Export-Import Bank will review applications from the Liberian Government for certain developmental-type projects; however, until the Bank reviews the data to be presented by Liberia, it cannot judge the merits of Liberia's request.

4. We have worked out a Technical Assistance Program with the Liberians, and we plan to make available from Point IV funds, an amount substantially in excess of what we have been spending on our Economic and Public Health Missions in Liberia.

The Department will, of course, furnish all appropriate guidance to Mr. Dennis and Mr. Cassell during their visit.²

JAMES E. WEBB

¹ Regarding the Liberian request under reference, see Liberian Chargé Bright's note of August 15, *supra*.

² On September 29, President Truman agreed to meet the Liberian Commission on October 18. The appointment was subsequently rescheduled for October 19. Regarding the meeting, see President Truman's letter of November 3, to President Truman, p. 1733.

776.5/9-2750

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Marshall)

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, September 27, 1950.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: On June 29, 1950, the Honorable Edward R. Dudley, American Ambassador to Liberia, discussed with President Truman the official request of the Liberian Government that the United States provide Liberia with a small military training mission for the purpose of organizing the present ill-equipped and poorly-trained Liberian military force into an efficient military police force for internal security. The President expressed interest in this proposal, and a copy of the Memorandum of Conversation between the President and Ambassador Dudley is enclosed herewith.¹

The Department is now in receipt of a note from the Liberian Embassy which sets forth an official request for military assistance. A copy of this note is enclosed herewith.² An official request has also been received from the Liberian Government that the Liberian Secretary of State and the Liberian Attorney General be received in Washington to discuss the question of military assistance.

Within the past few weeks the Department has received information from the French Embassy, our Consulate General at Dakar, and Ambassador Dudley at Monrovia concerning increased activity among the Communist elements in the areas of French Guinea and the Ivory Coast bordering Liberia. Copies of these reports are enclosed herewith.³

The Department refers to a letter from the Department of Defense dated November 3, 1949⁴ on the subject of military assistance for Liberia, and as a result of Liberia's official request for military assistance, and recent developments in West Africa, it is suggested that this matter be re-explored in a meeting between appropriate officers of Defense and the Department. A preliminary study of the legal au-

¹ For the text of Ambassador Dudley's memorandum of his conversation with President Truman on June 29, see p. 1721.

² The reference here is to Liberian Chargé Bright's note of August 15, p. 1725.

³ None of the reports under reference here (note of June 25, 1950, from the French Embassy to the Department of State, despatch 14, July 26, 1950, from Dakar, and telegram 22, August 2, 1950, from Monrovia) is printed.

⁴ In a letter of September 20, 1949, to then Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, not printed, Acting Secretary of State Webb recommended the establishment of a small United States military mission to Liberia in view of the unusual political relationship between the United States and Liberia. In his reply of November 3, 1949, under reference here (not printed), Secretary Johnson stated that the Department of Defense could not, under current circumstances, recommend that the President make a finding that the establishment of a military mission to Liberia was necessary in the interests of national defense in view of the fact that such a mission was to be established for purely political circumstances. (882.20 Mission/7-849)

thority under which military assistance could be rendered to Liberia reveals the following:

1. Public Law 152, 81st Congress, June 30, 1949, covering the sale of surplus equipment.

2. 10 USC 540.⁵ It is the opinion of the Department that authority contained in this statute for the sending of a military mission to such a foreign country as the President deems it in the interest of national defense to assist in military matters might be applied to Liberia. Bases for this opinion are:

a) Information which we have received concerning recent activity among Communists' elements in French Guinea and the Ivory Coast bordering Liberia, indicates attempts might be made to disrupt Liberia's political and economic stability, which would create a serious diversionary operation for us, provided we decided to assist Liberia.

b) The Department of the Air Force is financing the maintenance of Roberts Air Field in Liberia, which is regarded as a vital link in our lines of communication to the Belgian Congo, as well as to the territories east of West Africa. The newly constructed \$20,000,000 Port and Port Works at Monrovia are also under our control.

c) United States Government and private investments in Liberia approximate \$75,000,000. In Africa, only the Union of South Africa ranks ahead of Liberia in this regard.

d) Liberia is an important source of raw rubber. Outside of the Far East it is the only source of latex. High-grade iron ore (69.2% pure iron content) from Liberia will start moving to our market next year

It is the opinion of the Department that Sec. 408(e) of Public Law 329,⁶ as amended, could not be utilized for military assistance to Liberia for the following reasons:

1. That Liberia does not have the financial capacity to engage in reimbursable assistance transactions.

2. That training and advising missions under 408(e) must generally be, of necessity, an adjunct to equipment transferred under that Section.

In preparation for a meeting between officers of Defense and the Department, reference is made to "A Survey of the Military Forces in

⁵ The reference here is to the Act of May 19, 1926 (44 Stat. 565) which authorized the President to detail officers and enlisted men of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to assist the governments of the Latin American republics in military and naval matters. By amendment of October 1, 1942 (56 Stat. 763) the President was authorized during war or national emergency to assist such other countries as the President deemed it in the interest of national defense to assist.

⁶ Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949; Public Law 329, 81st Cong., 1st sess. (63 Stat. 714); for significant portions of the text, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-49* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 1356-1364.

Liberia", prepared by Colonel West A. Hamilton, USA (Ret.), dated April 1-30, 1950, a copy of which is enclosed herewith. Reference is also made to a Summary of Colonel Hamilton's Recommendation dated June 25, 1950, a copy of which is enclosed herewith.⁷

Sincerely yours,

JAMES E. WEBB

⁷ Neither printed.

876.00-TA/10-2050

*The President of Liberia (Tubman) to President Truman*¹

MONROVIA, 5 October 1950.

DEAR PRESIDENT TRUMAN: It was very gracious of you to have set the 18th of the present month as the date on which you will receive the Liberian Delegation being sent by this Government to your great Country, to discuss a Five Year Economic Expansion Program, Financial Assistance for it and a Defense Program.

The results obtained from the activities of your Health and Economic Missions in this Country for the past four years have already evidenced the vast benefits and possibilities of development that can be obtained by your liberal, farsighted and unselfish Point Four Program for which the Government and people of Liberia are profoundly grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the contributions which are also being made to the Economic Development of this Country by United States private investment which for the past twenty-five years have reflected itself not only in the economic life of the nation but also in some respects in its political stability.

With further aid under the Memorandum submitted to your Department of State by this Government requesting assistance for the Expansion of her Five Year Program, undoubtedly, development in this Country will move forward by leaps and bounds.

Together with development, there must necessarily be the ability to ensure safety and security of the new conditions created thereby, especially so in these days of anxiety and uncertainties. Because of these possibilities, we are seeking assistance in the line of Defense on business principles being willing to pay for the costs involved over a period of years, but as rapidly as the resources of our Country will

¹ This letter was probably delivered to President Truman by the Liberian Commission during its call at the White House on October 19; see President Truman's reply of November 3 to President Tubman, p. 1733. The source text was a copy of the letter referred to the Department of State by the White House on October 20 for the preparation of an appropriate reply.

permit and on conditions that may be agreed between the two Governments.²

I respectfully implore your reasonably sympathetic consideration of these matters.

Assuring Your Excellency again of the gratefulness and sincerity of the Liberian Government and people,

I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

WILLIAM V. S. TUBMAN

² In a letter of October 5 to Assistant Secretary of State McGhee, not printed, President Tubman requested that the Liberian Commission be given a sympathetic hearing, and he set forth the arguments made in this paragraph (McGhee Files, Lot 53 D 468, File—Letters "T"). Lot 53 D 468 contains copies of memoranda and correspondence of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs George C. McGhee for the years 1949–1951.

776.58/10–1850

The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, 18 October 1950.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: In his letter of 27 September 1950¹ [Acting] Secretary Webb raises the subject of military assistance for Liberia. I requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study this question and their views, in which I concur, are set forth in the following paragraphs.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that Liberia has some strategic value to the United States, since:

a. Liberia itself now exports to the United States a substantial quantity of natural rubber and soon may also provide the United States with high grade iron ore;

b. The use of Roberts Field would, in all probability, be necessary if during hostilities the United States should require a South Atlantic air route; and

c. Monrovia provides the only port not controlled by a European nation in West Africa.

From the United States military point of view it would be desirable for Liberia to remain free of the control of any European power and to continue to recognize American interests as of preponderant importance in that state.

At this time there is no apparent external threat to the sovereignty of Liberia, and the military intelligence agencies have no information indicating any likelihood of subversion within that country even though the present military forces of Liberia are incapable of effective resistance against organized external or internal threats to that government.

¹ *Ante*, p. 1727.

In the event of global war it would, in all probability, be necessary for the United States to provide some armed forces to insure the supply of strategic materials from Liberia and to protect the air base and other United States interests in Liberia. Conceivably, the strength of such United States units could be reduced by the extent that Liberia itself is able to contribute to its own security and its loyalty to the United States remains firm. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, on this basis, feel that assistance to Liberia in the form of a very modest program of military aid, primarily through the provision of a limited number of instructor personnel, could be in the national defense interest of the United States, particularly if political considerations so warrant.

In connection with the foregoing I would like to point out that Liberia apparently can only be made eligible to receive military equipment now on a reimbursable basis and that, even on this basis, only small amounts of light military equipment can be made available unless it were at the expense of other much higher priority military assistance programs.

Faithfully yours,

G. C. MARSHALL

776.58/10-1850

Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President

CONFIDENTIAL

[WASHINGTON,] October 18, 1950.

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Liberian Commission

In connection with the call on you tomorrow at 12:00 p. m. by members of the Liberian Commission, there follows a summary of the negotiations which we have thus far conducted with them:¹

1. The Export-Import Bank is presently studying Liberia's applications for: a) \$4,000,000 for a hydroelectric plant; b) \$5,000,000 for road improvements; and c) \$1,500,000 for a water and sewage system for the City of Monrovia.

It is not possible to state, at this time, exactly what action the Bank will take on these applications, since it had previously indicated to the Department its willingness to consider improvement projects

¹ The Liberian Commission (Liberian Secretary of State Dennis, Liberian Attorney General Cassell, and Liberian government economist Sherman) arrived in Washington on October 11. On October 12 the Liberian Commission paid a courtesy call on Secretary of State Acheson and held informal discussions with officers of the Department of State regarding Liberia's loan applications to the Export-Import Bank (Memoranda of conversations by Sims, October 12: 876.10/10-1250). On October 13 the Commission called on Capus M. Waynick, Ambassador to Nicaragua and Special Assistant for Technical Cooperation and Development to the Under Secretary of State, visited officers and staff members of the Export-Import Bank, and met with officers of the Department of State and the Public Health Service. Assistant Secretary of State McGhee gave a luncheon in honor of the Commission on October 17.

up to a total of approximately \$2,000,000. The Bank will, of course, apply not only the usual tests of the usefulness of the proposed projects, but will carefully study Liberia's capacity to repay any loans granted.

2. We are proposing a Point Four Technical Assistance program for Liberia which is expected to attain the operating level of \$850,000 by the end of the current fiscal year. This will enable us to increase the personnel strength of our Economic and Public Health Missions which are already functioning in Liberia. Liberia will be the largest recipient of Point Four Technical Assistance in Africa.

3. The question of furnishing military assistance to Liberia to reorganize and train the present Liberian military force for proper internal security will be treated in a separate memorandum.²

The Commission will be accompanied by the Liberian Ambassador, C. D. B. King, and Mr. McGhee, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs.

There are attached biographic sketches of the members of the Liberian Commission.³

DEAN ACHESON

² See *infra*.

³ Not printed.

776.58/10-1950

*Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President*¹

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, October 19, 1950.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Liberian Commission

With reference to my memorandum of October 18² there follows a summary of our position on the question of furnishing Liberia some military assistance in the form of a very modest program of military aid, primarily through the provision of a limited number of instructor personnel to reorganize and train the Liberian military force for much-needed internal security.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have rendered a decision, in which the Secretary of Defense concurs, that it could be in the national defense

¹ The source text bears President Truman's handwritten endorsement "Approved 10/19/50 Harry Truman".

Under cover of a brief letter to Secretary of Defense Marshall on October 27, not printed, Deputy Under Secretary of State H. Freeman Matthews transmitted a copy of this memorandum as approved by the President with the request that the Department of State be advised when the Department of Defense was ready to proceed with the establishment of a military mission to Liberia (776.58/10-1850). Discussions regarding the agreement for the establishment of a military training mission to advise the Liberian Government got under way in December. Regarding the formal signing of the agreement on January 11, 1951, see the editorial note, p. 1735.

² *Supra*.

interest of the United States, particularly if political considerations so warrant, to provide Liberia with such military assistance.³ The Department is satisfied that ample political justification does exist to assist Liberia to reorganize and train its present military force for internal security.

In order that we may furnish, without cost to Liberia, a small training mission for a period not to exceed three years, it will be necessary for you to grant approval for such a mission under the provisions of 10 USC 540, which authorizes you upon application, during war or national emergency, to detail military personnel to a foreign government which you deem it in the interest of national defense to assist in military matters. It is estimated that the annual cost of this mission will be about \$50,000. Mr. Pace⁴ has informed the Department that subject to fiscal arrangements the Department of the Army is agreeable to move ahead on this matter.

If you are in accord with the foregoing and so approve a small military training mission for Liberia, it is suggested that you make the announcement to the Liberian Commission during its visit with you that subject to fiscal arrangements to be worked out we will provide Liberia with a small military training mission.

In connection with the foregoing it should be noted that Liberia can now be made eligible to receive military equipment on a reimbursable basis under the provisions of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 but that, even on this basis only small amounts of light military equipment can be made available unless it were at the expense of other much higher priority military assistance programs.

DEAN ACHESON

³ See the letter of October 18 from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of State, p. 1730.

⁴ Frank Pace, Jr., Secretary of the Army.

811.05176/11-350

*President Truman to the President of Liberia (Tubman)*¹

[WASHINGTON,] November 3, 1950.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Thank you for your letter of October 5, 1950,² which was delivered to me by Mr. Dennis, concerning the Five-Year Economic Expansion Program and Defense program which your Government has proposed.

¹ The draft of this letter, as prepared in the Office of African Affairs of the Department of State, was transmitted to the White House by Acting Secretary of State Webb on November 1 (876.00 TA/10-2050). Assistant Secretary of State McGhee addressed a letter of similar content to President Tubman on October 19 (McGhee Files, Lot 53 D 468, File—Letters "T").

² *Ante*, p. 1729.

I had a very pleasant visit with your Commission on October nineteenth, and during this meeting I announced the action of the United States Government in tentatively allotting \$850,000 on an annual basis for technical assistance to Liberia under the Point IV program. I also informed your Commission that the United States is now prepared to furnish Liberia a military training mission which would assist your Government in reorganizing and training your present forces for the purposes described in your letter. Proposals concerning the size of such a mission, and the time it should devote to such a task are under active consideration.

The Export-Import Bank is now in the process of studying your Government's applications for loans for certain types of developmental projects. It is not known exactly when the Bank will reach decisions on these applications. You can be assured, however, that your proposals are receiving careful and sympathetic consideration.

I deeply appreciate your kind remarks concerning the assistance which the United States Economic and Public Health Missions have rendered to the people of Liberia. The accomplishments of these two Missions are notable examples of what can be achieved elsewhere by Point IV Technical Assistance. The interest of the United States Government in continuing these Missions is evidenced by the large tentative allotment to your Country for expanding and strengthening technical assistance programs in Liberia.

It is my firm hope that the type of work contemplated under the Point IV program will help to increase the flow of private American capital to those countries which are willing to receive such capital. In this respect Liberia stands as an excellent example of what can be accomplished by friendly cooperation between a government and private investors. I sincerely hope greater expansion can be realized in this particular field between your Government and my fellow countrymen.

With full recognition of the deep friendship which exists between the people of Liberia and the people of the United States and assurances of my desire to work for the preservation of this happy relationship, I remain, with kindest personal regards,

Very sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Editorial Note

On December 21, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson and Liberian Secretary of State Dennis signed in Washington on behalf of their respective governments a technical assistance agreement providing

for a cooperative undertaking aimed at a comprehensive program for the economic development of Liberia. The agreement, which was intended to carry out provisions of the Act for International Development (Title IV of the Foreign Economic Assistance Act of 1950) establishing the machinery for the Point Four Program, defined the general conditions for economic cooperation between the United States and Liberia and prepared for future specific project agreements. Secretary Acheson and Secretary Dennis also signed on December 21 a memorandum of understanding providing for a Joint United States-Liberian Commission for Economic Development to survey the economic resources of Liberia as well as to plan and advise on the technical assistance program in Liberia. For the texts of the agreement and the memorandum of understanding (which were issued by the Department of State on December 22 as Press Release No. 1254) see *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements* (UST), volume 2, pages 476 and 478. For a lengthy statement issued to the press by the Department of State on December 21 describing the signing ceremony at the Department of State and reviewing in some detail aspects of the program to be undertaken, see the Department of State *Bulletin*, January 1, 1951, pages 27-28. Documentation on the negotiation of these agreements, which were carried out during October, November, and December between American officials and the Liberian Commission, is included in Department of State file 876.00 TA.

Editorial Note

On January 11, 1951, Secretary of State Acheson and Liberian Secretary of State Dennis signed in Washington on behalf of their respective governments an agreement providing for the sending of a United States military mission to Liberia. In a brief announcement issued to the press on January 11 (Department of State *Bulletin*, January 22, 1951, page 151) the Department of State announced that the purpose of the mission was to cooperate with Liberian military authorities and personnel in the training and organization of the Liberian armed forces and to assist in any matter with a view to enhancing the efficiency of those forces in maintaining Liberian internal security. For the text of the agreement, see 2 UST 1, TIAS 2171, or 122 UNTS 125. Documentation on the negotiation of this agreement between officers of the United States Government and members of the Liberian Commission during December 1950 and early January 1951 is included in Department of State file 776.5.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A JOINT LIBERIAN-UNITED STATES COMMISSION FOR ECO-
NOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND GENERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND LIBERIA CONCERNING TECHNICAL
COOPERATION**

[For text of Memorandum and Agreement, signed at Washington
December 21, entered into force on that date, see 2 UST (1) 476 and
478.]