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Approved For Release 2004/12/02 : CIA-RDP80T00634A000500010025-4

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

7 December 1978

MEMORANDUM

Guinea: Whither Toure? [Redacted]

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*Key Judgments*

*President Sekou Toure of Guinea has been liberalizing his political, economic, and foreign policies in varying degrees for the past year and a half.* [Redacted]

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° *His assessments appear to have convinced him that the rewards of tying himself closely to the Communist world no longer justified forgoing a larger opening to the West for trade, aid, and investment.* [Redacted]

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° *He is convinced he needs to diversify foreign aid connections to spur development, placate the long-suffering population, retain the confidence of the military, and improve Guinea's image in a greatly changed world.* [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

° Local expectations of further liberalization are rising, and Toure probably will have little choice but to let the process continue at a carefully controlled rate. [REDACTED]

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° He has made it clear, however, that liberalization will be delimited by the primacy of ideology, including his one-man style of ruling and the monolithic party-state structure. Guinea, he says, now is an "advanced revolutionary democracy." [REDACTED]

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25X1 Overview [redacted]

Since mid-1977, there has been a perceptible--if gradual and uneven--trend in Guinea toward liberalization of its political, economic, and foreign policies. This is a new approach for 56-year old President Sekou Toure, now in his 20th year in power and the dean of African chiefs of state. Toure has long been known as one of Africa's chief exponents of radical, revolutionary politics. Heretofore, Toure had aligned Guinea closely with Communist countries and the world socialist camp in the fight against Western "imperialism," and had saddled Guinea with one of the most backward, dictatorial, and harshly ideological regimes in Black Africa. The lot of most Guineans improved little, and economic growth barely kept pace with population growth.\* [redacted]

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Throughout the '60s and early '70s, Toure concentrated on political survival--to the detriment of social and economic development--against a long succession of real and imaginary plots by opponents in Guinea and abroad that usually were blamed on foreign-supported "imperialist" conspiracies. In the last year and a half, however, Toure has shifted to a somewhat more relaxed and flexible regime that is groping toward internal reconciliation and more rational policies.

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Toure has adopted a more pragmatic stance in order to preserve his power, while at the same time retaining as much as possible of Guinea's authoritarian political structure, its socialist development option, and its African revolutionary credentials. [redacted]

25X1 The trend toward liberalism appears to be the direct result of a reassessment by Toure--beginning in 1976--that Guinea's close connection with the Soviets so vital for the regime's defense in its early years, was no longer yielding sufficient economic and military benefits to justify its continuance. It was also becoming more apparent to Toure that there was considerable disillusionment among many lower

*\*Guinea potentially is one of the richest of West African states. In addition to considerable agricultural potential, its extensive natural wealth includes about one-third of estimated world bauxite reserves, up to two billion tons of iron ore, and possibly offshore oil reserves.* [redacted]

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ranking officers and enlisted men in the Guinean military over the quality and quantity of Soviet military aid and their continued subordination to Soviet military advisers.

[redacted]

The liberalization process was given powerful additional impetus by violent street protests in August 1977. These demonstrations, the first in many years, underscored both popular dissatisfaction with poor economic conditions and the need for reconciliation with dissidents. They followed two years of intense economic repression aimed at stamping out the vestiges of illegal private commerce, extensive smuggling, and black marketeering that had developed in response to chronic shortages of food and consumer goods. In 1976, differences within the regime over these measures between hardliners and pragmatists who argued for liberalization and the value of greater cooperation with the West led to extended political turmoil followed by purges of some high-level moderates.

The essence of Toure's one-man rule still has not changed all that much. Though he is now more inclined to heed advice from the regime's more pragmatic members, Toure's basic instincts remain socialist and "anti-imperialist," and his constant fear of subversion lies not far below the surface. Having taken some steps toward liberalization, Toure now must try to reconcile unleashed pressure for more liberalism with the demands of his own ideology, all without jeopardizing his grip on power.

Highlights of What Has Happened

Domestic Political Developments

--Toure has ceased resorting to inflammatory accusations, plot scares, and arbitrary arrests.

--Amnesty has been offered to the hundreds of thousands of Guinean exiles abroad and considerable numbers have returned.

--Many, but not all, political prisoners have been freed, and Guinea has ratified the main international human rights conventions.

25X1 --Internal security and travel controls have been relaxed. [REDACTED]

Economic Developments [REDACTED] 25X1

--Guinea's frontiers have been opened to trade. [REDACTED] 25X1

25X1 --Market controls have been relaxed to permit private traders to sell a growing influx of consumer goods. [REDACTED]

25X1 --Harassment by Guinea's economic police has subsided. [REDACTED]

Foreign Developments--The West [REDACTED] 25X1

--Guinea has moved to improve relations with the West, particularly the US, and made clear its desire for expanded aid and investment. [REDACTED] 25X1

--Toure no longer lambasts Western "imperialism and neocolonialism" in Africa. [REDACTED] 25X1

25X1 --Guinea has refrained from attacking recent French activism in Africa and will play host this month to French President Giscard. This will cement improved ties with the former metropole and Guinea's chief enemy after independence. Guinea has also bought two patrol boats from France, the first time it has turned to the French for military equipment since 1958. [REDACTED]

--Guinea has opened relations with South Korea, to the displeasure of North Korea. [REDACTED] 25X1

Foreign Developments--The Soviet Union [REDACTED] 25X1

--Guinea has banned the use of Conakry for deployment of Soviet TU-95 naval reconnaissance aircraft. [REDACTED] 25X1

25X1 --Toure has rebuffed Soviet offers to build a naval base on an island in the outer harbor of Conakry. [REDACTED]

25X1 --Guinea has substantially reduced the number of Soviet military advisers assisting its armed forces. [REDACTED]

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25X1 --Toure refused to allow the Soviets to transit Conakry during their massive airlift of military supplies to Ethiopia. [redacted]

25X1 --Guinea chafes increasingly over operating arrangements of the major Soviet aid project in Guinea, a bauxite mining complex in Kindia, under which 75 percent of the proceeds go to pay debts to the USSR and the rest can be used only to purchase Soviet consumer goods. [redacted]

Foreign Developments--Africa [redacted]

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25X1 --Toure has normalized relations with moderate Senegal and Ivory Coast after 20 years of differences, substantially reducing political tensions in West Africa. [redacted]

25X1 --Guinea has taken more moderate positions on African issues aside from those involving southern Africa. [redacted]

25X1 --Toure has emerged from 10 years of self-imposed isolation and has traveled widely in search of a role as a responsible elder statesman and mediator. [redacted]

25X1 --Toure publicly called at the July 1978 OAU summit for African states to develop truly nonaligned positions so that Africans might solve their own internal problems without foreign intervention. [redacted]

The 11th Party Congress--No Dramatic Watershed [redacted]

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25X1 Contrary to expectations, few hints of the future direction of Toure's policies were given late last month at the 11th periodic congress of Guinea's ruling party. The congress, which follows the dictates of Toure, theoretically sets state policy, but charted no fundamentally new courses of action. Instead party resolutions placed heavy stress on many of the basic principles that have long guided Toure's rule. They seem intended to hedge all bets and suggest that Toure has gone about as far as he is prepared to for now. The congress has, nevertheless, cleared the way for Toure to do almost anything he wants, and that may be its real importance for the future. [redacted]

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The party congress, through its resolutions and Toure's speeches, took pains to reiterate forcefully Guinea's ideological convictions and constancy. This seems to be aimed at projecting the image of a united regime and at reassuring hardliners in the government and radical Africans and communist countries that Guinea is not really backpedalling. The resolutions and speeches: [redacted]

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--Emphasized the strength of political organization, formally fusing the state and party apparatus into a single "solid" political entity under Toure's leadership. [redacted]

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--Proclaimed Guinea an "advanced revolutionary democracy" and changed its name to the People's Revolutionary Republic of Guinea, to mark 20 years of consolidating the Guinean "revolution." [redacted]

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--Affirmed Guinea's commitment to economic development along socialist lines and state control of the economy. [redacted]

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--Reasserted the primacy of ideological commitment over economic interest by calling for reinforcement of the ban on private commerce and by setting up new state mechanisms to try to increase agricultural production.\* [redacted]

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--Denied that Guinea had initiated a political opening to the West and stated that it had not renounced cooperation with socialist countries. [redacted]

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Still, the party congress and Toure left room for further maneuver by: [redacted]

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--Sharpening Guinea's focus on more genuine nonalignment and African unity. [redacted]

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*\*Agriculture remains the weakest part of the economy. A potential food exporter, Guinea is highly dependent on imported agricultural commodities--particularly US PL 480 food shipments--to meet its needs. [redacted]*

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--Admitting openly for the first time that economic assistance from Communist countries has not been as helpful as expected. [REDACTED]

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--Stating Guinea's interest in cooperation with all countries that will provide greater economic aid and investment regardless of their orientation. [REDACTED]

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25X1 Outlook [REDACTED]

Though popular expectations of further liberalization are gradually rising, President Toure's ideological tenets and rigidity are likely to stifle any rapid changes. But Toure cannot backtrack significantly now without risking strong internal opposition, nor can he go too far without undermining his personal rule, his unique brand of socialism, and the still important support he receives from Communist states. Behind-the-scenes debate and differences between moderates and ideological militants over how much liberalism to allow are likely to intensify and could result in serious fissures, if not plotting. Toure could already have set in motion the forces of long-term, unpredictable change that could lead to the end of the regime in its present form.

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Politically, there is little hope for the evolution of a more collegially open and decentralized regime because of Toure's unyielding one-man style of rule and his demand for the absolute loyalty of his colleagues. Guinea's disciplined party-state structure will also continue with little change. The easing of political repression and promotion of internal reconciliation will last only so long as Toure remains convinced that his many enemies are not using the opportunity to secretly plot against him. [REDACTED]

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The divisive and long-standing issues of what role private commerce should have and what material incentives should be used to improve agriculture will continue to be hotly debated within the regime's inner circles. Despite Toure's emphasis on the primacy of ideology, a modus vivendi may be worked out that will continue to permit unofficial commerce to develop within limits. There seems to be little hope, however, for significant process in the

agricultural sector. Political pragmatism demands that Toure tread very carefully in attempting to suppress private commerce and other measures that might improve Guinea's economic well being. If the regime is not able at least to maintain present availability of food and consumer goods, it will continue to face chronic popular unrest that could erupt at any time. [REDACTED]

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Toure is not about to renounce socialism but apparently has elected to change the means of developing Guinea within a fundamentally socialist context by looking to the West for the necessary aid and investment that Guinea cannot get elsewhere. Perceived shortfalls in concrete Western response are not likely to deter Toure in the short run, but in the long run the failure of the West to provide assistance would leave Guinea with little choice but to try to resume its close relations with Communist countries. [REDACTED]

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While Guinea is trying gradually to reduce its dependence on the Soviets, Toure apparently does not want to provoke a complete rupture. Such a development could force to the surface opposition among pro-Soviet regime members and senior officers as well as greatly embarrass Toure in African progressive circles. Toure's last major initiative to demonstrate displeasure with the Soviets may be to decide to dispense with the services of the small Soviet naval patrol that has operated in Guinean waters since 1970, originally in response to his request for protection after an unsuccessful invasion by Guinean exiles. [REDACTED]

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Toure will continue to regard the Soviets with skepticism and bargain harder, but he is likely to continue to accept Soviet military and economic aid he cannot get elsewhere. Moreover, if the Soviets decide to bid more aggressively for Guinea's favor and can restore personal rapport with Toure, or if polarizing events in Africa recast the US and West as incorrigible "imperialists" and apologists for white minority rule, the Soviets could regain some lost ground in Guinea. A serious internal threat to Toure, particularly one involving disgruntled elements who favor even more liberalism and Western ties, could also cause him to turn to the Soviets.

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[REDACTED]

On the African scene, Guinea--in keeping with Toure's new Africa-first ecumenical mood--will probably play a less openly divisive role. This does not mean that Guinea intends to disassociate itself from Africa's loose caucus of socialist and progressive states, though its voice may be more muted. Toure's ideology dictates that Guinea retain and periodically demonstrate its "revolutionary" credentials. He will continue privately to champion Africa's progressive regimes and causes, and Guinea's radical voting behavior in international organizations will probably not change much. [REDACTED]

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For now, the recent trend of events in Guinea make for a more even-handed and nonaligned foreign policy, greater involvement with Western economies, loosening of bonds with the Soviets, a more stable West African political scene, and some improvement in human rights. [REDACTED]

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