

August 17, 1962

Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Guinea, 'Report on the Work Situation of the Tea Specialists Group in Guinea'

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Summary:

The Chinese Embassy in Guinea reports on the efforts of Chinese experts to start up tea plantations in the country.

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Chinese

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Translation - English

[...]

Subject: Report on the Work Situation of the Tea Specialists Group in Guinea

To the General Bureau for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries and the Ministry of Agriculture:

The work of the tea specialists group has come to an end and they are due to fly home on the 18th. A survey by the group finds that the 4 hectares of existing tea plantations in Seredou are not doing too well as they have shallow soils unsuitable for growing tea. The area is also inconvenient for the transportation of tea, and there are few villages and a shortage of labor. Hence, it is inadvisable to further develop this place. The Guineans have suggested setting up a 60-hectare tea plantation in Macenta, and the tea specialists group figured that this site would have suitable conditions. Thus, the assistance originally pledged for the experimental tea station in Seredou should be revoked and used for Macenta instead.

The tea specialists group reported its findings to Sory Barry, Minister of Rural Economy for the Republic of Guinea, who indicated that they had no experience in growing tea and hoped that China could single-handedly take charge of the whole process of setting up the new tea plantation in Mercenta, from cultivating the seedlings to planting and processing them. We were also asked to send experts to Mercenta and supply the tractors needed to till the land, tools needed on the tea plantation and equipment for processing the tea leaves.

On this issue, after discussions between my embassy and the tea specialists group, I would like to raise the following suggestions for reference:

1) We cannot wholly undertake the said project and can only provide assistance and guidance in the areas of seedling cultivation, tea-planting techniques and designing the tea processing plant. The Guineans should take responsibility for the organization and leadership of the tea plantation and processing plant. As the equipment required for this project is simple and does not require great investment, and there is no further need for major investment in the short term, it is best listed in the second batch of projects in our assistance to Guinea.

2) Based on the existing tea seedlings that Guinea has, we can transplant 3 hectares of tea during the rainy season next year. It is best to get two tea-growing specialists and one interpreter to come to Guinea in March to guide the tea transplantation and cultivation process. This work is expected to take around four years. Depending on the situation, we can rotate or recall them in future.

3) On the issue of investing in the tea plantation and processing plant: The Guineans should take care of the costs of clearing the land for growing tea and constructing the tea plantation by themselves. The costs of hiring the specialists as well as setting up the tea processing plant and facilities can be paid using the loans. As for the tractors and tea plantation tools that the Guineans have requested for, if they make an official request for us to supply these in future, we can do so if it is technically feasible, and the costs can be paid with the loan.

4) In accordance with Guinea's development plans to plant 3 hectares of tea in 1963, 12 hectares in 1964, 17 hectares in 1965 and 28 hectares in 1966, the designing of the tea processing plant should begin in 1965 and construction should be completed in 1966. If we can provide some of the tea seedlings, the development process would probably be faster.

5) The tea variety that Guinea currently possesses is the large-leaved Assamese plant (*Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica*), which is suitable for producing black tea. But in Africa, it is the green tea that is widely consumed. My view is that we should voluntarily inform the Guineans about this so that they would not blame us in future should they be unable to sell the red tea that is produced. In case they request for seeds that are suitable for producing green tea, we should plan to supply some and it is best to prepare two hundred jin of seeds this year.

I hope to receive our domestic views on the above after the tea specialists have arrived in Beijing to give their report.

[Chinese] Embassy in Guinea
17 August [1962]

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