



Foreign leaders who visit the Ivory Coast may be greeted in Abidjan by an engaging sight: a troupe of dancers displaying pictures of the guests and their hosts on their dresses. These women bear likenesses of Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor (wearing glasses), Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, and their wives.

The Ivory Coast

Of all of Black Africa's 40-odd nations, none is more out of step than the Ivory Coast. All five of its West African neighbors, for example, are poor, and four are military-ruled; the Ivoirians can claim post-colonial Africa's chief economic "miracle" and a stable civilian regime. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, president since independence from France in 1960, is the longest surviving leader on the continent. His fertile country of 11,000,000 people has avoided most of the usual afflictions of the world's emerging nations, including xenophobia. The Ivoirians once delayed introducing their own flag (orange, white, and green vertical bands) for a year, lest the change make foreign investors uncomfortable. Even today, the majority of the country's secondary-school teachers are French, and their salaries are paid by the French government; about half of the judges are French too. Here, Timothy C. Weiskel sketches the colonial past. David Lamb examines how the country came to be what Houphouët foresaw: "an oasis of prosperity in the middle of a desert of misery."

MISSION CIVILISATRICE

by Timothy C. Weiskel

Louis-Gustave Binger, France's first governor in the Ivory Coast (1893-95), was no statesman. He was an army captain, an ethnographer, an explorer, and a shrewd promoter.

It was his expedition across the savannah and through the dense forests to secure the allegiance of the local chiefs that planted the French flag in the Ivory Coast. And, willy-nilly, it was he who implanted the French colonial style.

Binger knew what appealed to *fin de siècle* Europeans. "A white man traveling in this country," he wrote in his 1892 journal, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, "whomever he may be, should not prostrate himself before a black king, however powerful he may be." Europeans "should come as masters . . ."

As of the mid-1880s, Europeans controlled little of Africa.

Their largest holdings were in the south. Dutch Boers and British settlers, having suppressed the Xhosa and other chiefdoms, vied for land, diamonds, and African labor. And Kaiser Wilhelm I's new German Empire claimed what would be German South-West Africa (now Namibia).

Up north, on the Mediterranean, the French had moved into the old Ottoman provinces of Algeria and Tunisia; the British had elbowed the French aside in Egypt, which then extended to the Sudan.

Elsewhere, the white man's presence was limited to the coasts.

Playing Monopoly

In West Africa, whose shores Portuguese mariners first reached during the 15th century, Europeans had to battle not only tropical heat but also cholera, malaria, and sleeping sickness. Nonetheless, the French had a growing colony in Senegal—a first step, they thought, to riches that lay farther east. Farther down the Atlantic coast were two territories settled by former slaves: Sierra Leone, where British abolitionists had established a “Christian Community for Freed Blacks” in 1787, and Liberia, founded in 1824 by the American Colonization Society as a haven for U.S. freedmen.

Otherwise, the European presence consisted of a string of trading stations on the Atlantic shore, particularly on the Gold Coast.

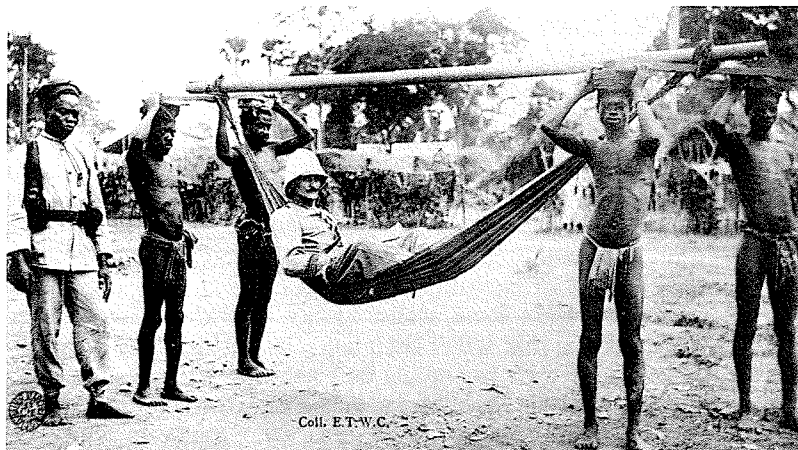
The Ivory Coast, just to the west on the Gulf of Guinea, had long been ignored. Binger had not gone there on a mission of discovery in the style of such early explorers as Mungo Park, René Caillié, and David Livingstone. He was a point man in what had been christened (by *The Times* of London in 1884) the Scramble for Africa.

This was a race that would, by the early 1900s, bring all but a few corners (Liberia, Ethiopia) of the world's second largest continent under the domination of Europeans. In roughly 60 years, less than a lifetime, European rule would come to an abrupt end almost everywhere.

In the Scramble's economic background was an early 19th-century shift in trade patterns. The traffic in slaves faded.* “Legitimate trade” expanded, not only in such “royal trade” items as ivory and precious stones but also, and more importantly, in agricultural products. For ex-

*After the Danes (1803) and the British (1807) banned slave trading, other Europeans were enjoined to follow (as France did in 1818). The aim was not all humanitarian. British abolitionists were backed by businessmen who feared slaving would slow development of Africa's resources. The British and French kept antislavery patrols at sea in part to prevent rivals from sending more Africans to *their* lands in the Americas. By the time Atlantic slaving finally ended during the 1860s, more than 15 million captives, sold into the trade by fellow Africans in West Africa and elsewhere, had reached the Americas.

Timothy C. Weiskel, 42, is a Henry Luce Fellow at Harvard. Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he received a B.A. (1969) from Yale, and a Dipl. Soc. Anth. (1970) and a D.Phil (1977) from Oxford University. He is the author of French Colonial Rule and Baule Peoples (1980).



Coll. E.T.V.C.

A French battalion commander circa 1910, during the "pacification" of the Ivory Coast. Like the shoeless soldier at left, those who fought for what H. G. Wells called "the development of 'Black France'" were mostly Africans.

ample, in that pre-petroleum age, West African peanut and palm oil were used as lubricants for Europe's machinery and to make candles and fuel for lamps. That most of West Africa's "coasters" (traders) were British was not surprising. Britons were big consumers; much earlier than the French, for instance, they learned to like the cheap yellow soap made from West African palm oil. And they wanted African markets for their textiles, liquor, and other exports.

But the Scramble's main attractions were political, as dramatized by an odd event: the Berlin Conference on West Africa of 1884-85.

The conference was called by modern Germany's creator, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. "My map of Africa," he said, "lies in Europe." For 16 weeks, delegates from 14 European countries (with U.S. observers in attendance) discussed the division of Africa with an eye to limiting European conflicts over the continent. It was without much fuss, for example, that the mineral-rich Congo Free State was awarded to Belgium's King Leopold II, and that Germany got Togo, Cameroon, and Tanganyika as well as South-West Africa. (The Kaiser had asked for "a place in the sun.")

Bismarck may have had other aims. The French had been smarting since the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which cost them Alsace-Lorraine as well as indemnities to the victorious Germans. Bismarck hoped the conference would distract his sullen neighbors and spur them to join the European competition for overseas colonies.

The Dark Continent seemed ideal: The French, though out of Egypt, were expanding elsewhere in the north, and in Senegal.

Indeed the French, notably their underemployed army officers, entered the Scramble with enthusiasm—even if it was, as Premier Jules Ferry conceded, “an immense steeplechase towards the unknown.”

French *amour-propre* (self-esteem) was involved. Militarily humiliated in Europe, the French sought to hoist the tricolor abroad and, in the process, create, as British writer Paul Johnson put it, “a gigantic system of outdoor relief for army officers.” In West Africa, historian Michael Crowder observed, the Scramble was especially intense—“rather like a game of Monopoly with France and Britain the only two serious contestants, Britain relying for her success on Park Lane and Mayfair, Whitechapel and the Old Kent Road, whilst France bought up anything she could lay her hands on that hadn’t been taken by Portugal or Germany.”

By 1913, the French flag would be planted in 16 African colonies and possessions. Those in West Africa, in number (then seven) and area (1,800,000 sq. mi.), far exceeded those of Britain (480,000 sq. mi.) and the other Europeans. But their population was less than British-ruled Nigeria’s. Few Frenchmen minded that, as Britain’s Lord Salisbury disdainfully noted, France had mainly gained a lot of sand.

Woe in Ouagadougou

Before the Scramble, the focus of French interest in West Africa had been the areas surrounding the Senegal and Gambia rivers. A stockade built at the mouth of the Senegal under Louis XIII in 1640 grew into St. Louis, the region’s first French settlement. French captains had sailed on down the coast, but chose to bypass much of what they saw, including the Ivory Coast. Heavy surf, sandbars, and lagoons lined its shore. Beyond, it was thickly forested and seemed thinly populated. In the immediate hinterland, there were not many Africans with whom they could trade.

French traders landed at Assinie, a town on a barrier island, and built a trading fort in 1701. A local chief’s son was brought back to France as an “ambassador” to the court of Louis XIV and given a Catholic baptism. The Sun King himself played godfather. Yet the Africans at Assinie were hostile, and in 1704 the fort was evacuated.

There would be no official French intrusions again until 1842. Edouard Bouët-Willaumez, a navy captain on an antislavery patrol, secured treaties with chiefs at Assinie, Grand Bassam, and other points. For a “custom” paid in goods (later cash), France got the right to build forts with full sovereignty. In contrast to the British pattern, trade *followed* the flag. A firm headed by Régis Ainé of Marseilles became the largest trading concern on the Ivory Coast.

African brokers whom English traders dubbed “Jack-Jacks” often attacked the forts. The Jack-Jacks feared losing their role as intermediaries between inland folk and the Europeans.

At the time, that threat appeared remote. The interior seemed

impenetrable. A Lieutenant Hecquard was charged with the task of exploring the caravan routes between the coast and the western Sudan. In 1849–50, he set off for Timbuktu, the Muslim desert city 800 miles north in what is now Mali, but hostile Africans he met on the way forced him to retreat.

Soon France's presence was reduced to one trader, an ex-navy officer named Arthur Verdier, whose *Compagnie de Kong* did business with the Africans in the interior. The governor in St. Louis during part of the 1850s and '60s, Louis Faidherbe, tried in vain to swap France's Ivory Coast concessions for Britain's corridor along the Gambia River, to consolidate French control of Senegal and the Sudan.

In the end, the Scramble rescued the Ivory Coast from obscurity.

France's hesitant Third Republic politicians were urged to seize the day by soldiers, railroad men, and assorted freebooters. Two railroad promoters named Philibert and Rolland published a typical call for action: It warned that European "zones of influence" in Africa were growing, and "as always Britain is getting the lion's share." There was no "place left for France except in West Africa."

Indeed, with the Union Jack in Egypt and South Africa, there was already talk of what Cecil Rhodes would promote as a "Cape-to-Cairo" British dominion.

Even on the Ivory Coast, Britons dominated trade. The French had to act. To support a claim to the hinterland, two French agents were dispatched, beginning in 1887, to sign treaties of "protection" with in-



A sketch from Louis-Gustave Binger's account of his 1887–89 exploration. Led by two "tam-tams," porters are carrying agents of Ardjoumani, the king of the Abnon people. He ruled in Bondoukou, a center of gold trading.

land chiefdoms and trade centers.

One operative, Marcel Treich-Laplène, got to the eastern town of Bondoukou just days before a British party from the Gold Coast. The other French agent, Captain Binger, also found himself in a race.

To escape British notice, Binger set out from present-day Mali. Following routes used by Muslim traders, he and his entourage—10 donkey drivers, a cook, a groom, a personal servant—trekked along a great loop that brought them south into the Ivory Coast and then back up north to Ouagadougou (now the capital of Burkina Faso). There, he found that its ruler had already signed a treaty with a German from Togoland named Von Krause.

After negotiating its western and eastern borders with Liberia and Britain in 1892–93, the Ivory Coast was declared a full-fledged colony by France. Binger was appointed governor. But making the Ivory Coast a colony in fact as well as in name was to prove difficult. The complete subjugation of its population did not come until after World War I.

Queen Poku's Heir

The French in West Africa pursued what historian S. H. Roberts called a “delightfully simple policy of ‘Peace or Powder.’” There were always Africans who were tempted to reject “peace,” partly because European traders, the French included, sold firearms to anyone who could pay. Yet the French forces—usually *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (Senegalese riflemen) under French officers—had superior breech-loading weapons* as well as the new semiautomatic Maxim gun, which could fire eight rounds a second. The Anglo-French satirist Hilaire Belloc's couplet pretty much described early French thinking:

Whatever happens we have got
The Maxim gun and they have not.

Even so, one of the longest wars fought between Europeans and Africans in West Africa was brought on by resistance to the French conquest of the Ivory Coast's many ethnic groups.






The “assimilation” policy that France had begun in Senegal, where residents of St. Louis, Dakar, and other early *communs* were considered French citizens, had faded. Beginning during Napoleon III's rule (1852–70), Africans were treated as subjects. Their purpose came to be to serve the goal of making the colonies self-supporting. In fairly short order, the French would end the *African* practice of slavery, but would

*Infantrymen with old muzzle-loaders like those sold to the Africans had to stand erect to prepare for each shot; those with breech-loaders could stay prone, presenting a small target. Africans did not always appreciate this: Even when they did get breech-loaders, mostly by capture, they loaded and fired in battle standing up—often to their subsequent cost. And as far as is known, an operable Maxim gun never fell into their hands.

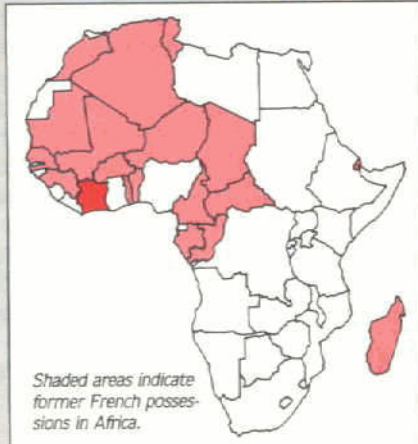


ATLANTIC OCEAN

THE IVORY COAST

 Major airport	 Offshore oil platform
 Port	 Railroad
 Primary road	

0 50 100
miles



impose their own system of forced labor and a "head tax" designed to make Africans seek paid work. Troublemakers were dealt with via the *indigénat*, a system of summary justice under which officials could repeatedly imprison anyone, even a chief, for short stretches (15 days at first, later five) without charge, trial, or right of appeal. The French colonies, noted one Briton, Sir John Harris, offered "little Liberty, less Equality, and no Fraternity."

In the Ivory Coast, the Gouro, the Bété, the Abbé, and other inland peoples were irritated by the French intrusion. So, too, were the Baule, a populous group in the center of the new colony. In 1900, French occupying troops did something that the civilian administrators had not yet dared: To support the military advance, they taxed the Baule. Annually, each Baule household was to provide, among other things, one porter for two days, three days of work to clear roads, and 10 yams.

When the Baule resisted, a Captain le Magnen led a "monitory" attack on several villages, seizing eight prisoners, seven rifles, and some booty—"chickens, salt, loincloths, soap, etc." But the show of force only aroused the spirit of rebellion. One Baule partisan traveled around urging resistance: "When the whites have no more to eat, they will leave."

In time, Baule warriors sealed off the French garrison at Bouaké, a large town. A request for reinforcements had to be forwarded all the way to Paris, and not until weeks later was the siege broken.

The Baule resistance seemed to end after June 1901, when a French force took Kokumbo, the area where slaves mined gold for the Baule chiefs. Eventually, the paramount chief Kouamé Dié—reputed descendant and heir of Queen Aura Poku, the Baule group's 18th-century founder—showed up in Bouaké with his principal wives, village and regional headmen, and 200 others. A French official recorded that Kouamé "accepts our authority" and would pay a tribute in gold. Other chiefs followed suit.

Suborning the Chiefs

The Baule thought that, once they paid tribute—as losers in local wars usually did—the French would depart. But the French mistakenly read the tributes as a sign of permanent submission. Then they made another error: Worried about the financial losses of traders and the colony's treasury, in March 1902 they ended a ban on arms sales in the Baule area. Within eight months, 776 rifles and 45 tons of powder were sold at Tiassalé, a southern Baule town. Nearly 10 years of skirmishing and open warfare ensued. In 1908, a new Governor, Gabriel Angoulvant, vowed to end the Africans' "independence and anarchy."

Angoulvant had hardly achieved what he called the colony's "pacification" when France began drafting Africans to fight Germany in World War I. More than 60,000 fled French West Africa to the Gold Coast and other British territories. (Angoulvant urged his superiors to



As late as 1946, Africans were forced to toil on European-owned plantations. The laborers here are gathering cocoa pods harvested from cacao trees.

end conscription, lest the “native masses” think “we are not strong enough in Europe to defend ourselves.”*)

The conquest and then conscription were not the only disruptive aspects of what the French called their *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission). In the Ivory Coast, cheap European imports hurt cloth weavers, jewelry makers, and iron workers. And the French substantially altered the traditional social hierarchy.

Unlike the British, who worked with existing local chiefs, the French installed collaborators as “official chiefs.” As one administrator, Albert Nebout, noted, “the ones that side with us will be compromised in the eyes of the others and will have to remain faithful.”

For example, as the new *chef* of the Akoué, a Baule subgroup, the French installed Kouassi Ngo, the headman of Yamoussoukro, who had been of service during the conquest of the Akoué. But after the last rebel Akoué leader was finally caught and executed in 1910, his vengeful partisans assassinated Kouassi Ngo.

Collaborating chiefs who survived kept part of the head tax they collected, and could be exempted (with their families) from forced labor. Their children might be the first to be admitted to local French

*French West Africa did ship 200,000 African troops—about two percent of its population—to France in 1914–18, compared with only 30,000 from more populous British West Africa. After the war, African troops were used in the French occupation of the German Rhineland.

schools—the route to a paid job in the colonial bureaucracy.

In British West Africa, as Crowder observed, chiefs simply “had to learn what sort of things upset the British District Officer—like slavery, cruel punishment—and then carry on very much as an independent ruler. [But] the hierarchized French African chief had clear instructions [from the French], issued in circulars, as to just what he was allowed to do and had to do.”

The “politics of collaboration” the French fostered would become an Ivory Coast tradition. Collaboration, by its nature, does not invite public scrutiny: Deals are usually made privately. Nor are its politics very ideological; what matters is the practical resolution of immediate problems, not purity of analysis or political belief.

Because the colonies had to be self-supporting, the French soon pushed villagers to grow new “cash crops,” particularly coffee and cocoa. The first who did were Fanti traders originally from the Gold Coast, and Senegalese brought in by the French. The local folk, content with raising yams, plantains, maize, and rice, found new crops bothersome.

Nonetheless, the French set production quotas for each village. Chiefs might have to recruit labor for the “Commandant’s fields”—acreage seized under a rule that “unused” land could be given to anyone who would raise cash crops. Agricultural experiment stations were created. The long-term goal was this: Plantations owned by French settlers and worked by Africans would supply food and fiber to France.

But policy was never consistent. In Paris, there had been 21 changes in colonial ministers during 1882–99 alone, and in the colonies the soldiers ignored the bureaucrats. In the Ivory Coast, the French planners’ control had become tenuous at best by the mid-1920s.

Ending the Dream

On the coast, a handful of import-export firms dominated commerce. Inland, things were changing. To suppress the Fanti traders (who spoke English), the French favored French-speaking Diula or Senegalese Muslims. But soon the timber trade, most imports, and much of the bulk purchasing of coffee and cocoa fell into the hands of new arrivals from Syria and Lebanon, which had become French mandates after World War I. The Levantines were already shrewd traders.

The European landowners—never more than a few hundred—had been drawn to the Ivory Coast by government publicity about the glories of plantation farming. They got top prices for their crops, often the first to be bought when shipping to Europe was scarce. They also often enjoyed priority, and low prices, when they needed imported supplies. And local chiefs still provided them low-wage “volunteers.”

The third force in the economy, the independent African farmers, paid two or three times as much as the Europeans for labor. They resented the whites’ considerable advantages. And in time, they would

end the dream of an Ivory Coast Arcadia for French planters.

Who were these African farmers? Many had fled forced labor and conscription to work on African-owned cocoa farms in the Gold Coast; they returned to plant coffee and cocoa themselves. Then, during the 1930s, the colonial regime (seated in Abidjan from 1934 on), encouraging more European immigration, further downgraded the local chiefs; they became little more than labor-recruiters. And as the Depression sank world cocoa prices, African farmers—hurt more than the Europeans—became acutely aware of their second-class status.

Five Acres for Freedom

One was Félix Houphouët, nephew of the assassinated collaborator, Kouassi Ngo of Yamoussoukro. After his uncle was killed, Houphouët was pointedly favored by the French. He won a privilege normally given to the heirs of high chiefs: an education in Dakar, Senegal's capital, at the École Normale William Ponty, a school for African civil servants. Houphouët (pronounced oo-foo-ETT) graduated in 1925 as an Auxiliary Doctor. Back home, he was appalled by the condition of men on work gangs ("skeletons covered with sores"). And, while serving in Abengourou, a cocoa area, he was struck by the European planters' advantages. For Dakar's *Le Progrès Colonial* he wrote an anonymous 1932 article titled "*On Nous A Trop Volé*"—"They Have Robbed Us Too Much."

The Africans' sense of grievance deepened during World War II, as racist ideas gained favor among supporters of Vichy France.* Africans were barred from some European restaurants and segregated in movie houses. Fights erupted between urban Africans and Europeans.

Amid general hardship, the Europeans' privileges continued. And money was scarce: A British blockade of French West African ports exacerbated wartime shipping shortages while products from British colonies were in demand in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere.

In mid-1943, after the Allies had landed in North Africa and the Germans had occupied the whole of France, General Charles de Gaulle's Free French took control of the French African colonies. Then, early in 1944, de Gaulle assembled the governors of the Black African colonies at Brazzaville, the Congo River town that was the capital of French Equatorial Africa and the site of the Free French headquarters.

It was a delicate moment. De Gaulle warmly observed that in Africa, France had found "her refuge and the starting point for her liberation." But empire was out of fashion, especially in the United States. The

*After the fall of France to the Germans in June 1940, French West Africa, like France's Arab and Indochinese territories, accepted Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain's collaborationist government at Vichy and its policy of official neutrality; only the governors of French Equatorial Africa (present-day Gabon, Chad, the Central African Republic, and the Congo) lined up with General Charles de Gaulle's Free French *Comité Français de la Libération Nationale*. But at one point, after all the African territories came under de Gaulle's sway, French West Africa provided half of the Free French forces.



Africans at a 1951 ceremony opening Abidjan's harbor. At left is an Ebrié village chief. At right, holding a staff of office, is an aide to a regional Abbron chief. By that time, the chief's authority was debased throughout French West Africa. The African political journal Réveil found him merely the "domestic" of the French: "Fiercely oppressed, he oppressed."

Atlantic Charter that Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill drew up in 1941 endorsed national self-determination. A 1942 *Life* editorial had said that "one thing we are sure we are *not* fighting for is to hold the British Empire together."

All this troubled the French. They had invested much pride, if not much capital, in their empire, parts of which they would soon designate as "overseas territories" of France. They did not want them engulfed by independence movements (one was simmering in Algeria) or placed in a postwar "trusteeship" under U.S. and British influence.

Thus, the Brazzaville conference was a marvel of political ambiguity. The opening declaration stated that "any idea of autonomy" for the colonies was "out of the question." Self-government was "to be avoided." Yet, on their return to their own capitals, the governors enacted sweeping reforms. Africans were allowed to set up labor unions and professional associations, and they began to organize politically.

The French approach in Black Africa thus did not differ greatly from that of the British, whose aim, a 1948 White Paper would say, "was to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth." Both countries were to find that their attempts to modernize only helped to encourage local nationalists.

In the Ivory Coast, African farmers were stirred by the prospects for reform. Reviewing the revenue projections, Governor André Latrille realized that Africans could do more to expand coffee and cocoa production than could the few quarrelsome European settlers. And during the war, most whites had backed the Vichy regime, an error that Latrille, a

Free French partisan, probably saw no reason to reward.

Latrille encouraged the African planters to organize. In 1944, they formed the *Syndicat Agricole Africain* (SAA). Triply qualified—he was a “chief,” a member of the educated elite, and a plantation owner—Félix Houphouët was elected the SAA’s first leader.

Governor Latrille and Houphouët worked hand in hand—the politics of collaboration. Houphouët limited the SAA to African farmers who had more than two contiguous hectares (about five acres) of coffee and three of cocoa. Latrille exempted such planters—in effect, anyone holding an SAA membership card—from forced labor. These steps, enormously popular in rural areas, spurred a coffee and cocoa boom.

Mitterrand’s Deal

From the SAA evolved the *Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire* (PDCI), which launched Houphouët into a series of electoral victories. When Paris’s postwar reforms permitted Africans to elect representatives to the 1945 and 1946 Constituent Assemblies that created the Fourth Republic, Houphouët led the list. In 1946, he had forced labor ended, making him an overnight hero even outside the Ivory Coast.

To his name he added “Boigny” (Bwahn-YEE), the word for ram.

European planters and alarmed merchants responded by forming a lobby, the *États Généraux de la Colonisation Française*. In true dialectical fashion, Houphouët and others then created the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), a union of French West Africa’s parties. The RDA made a tactical alliance with the Communists in the French legislature—the latter backed the Africans’ struggle against settler colonialism. But because so many French Communists were at the RDA’s 1946 debut in Bamako (capital of what is now Mali), conservative Malian and Senegalese delegates stayed on the sidelines. Houphouët’s Ivory Coast group was left to set the tone for a new level of local political militancy throughout French Africa.

Thus, what began during the last months of World War II as a limited drive by some West African farmers for a fairer deal had grown by the late 1940s into a full-blown anticolonial political campaign. Besides African planters, the PDCI attracted many “intellectuals”—government employees, school teachers, lawyers, and physicians. These groups resented their second-class status in the French-dominated bureaucracies.

The urban “bureaucratic bourgeoisie” was more openly anticolonial than the “planter bourgeoisie.” And gradually the PDCI-RDA became identified with the anticolonial Left. In 1947 André Latrille was removed. A new governor, Laurent Péchoux, vigorously pursued instructions to suppress the PDCI. Demonstrations, strikes, and violent incidents ensued. By mid-1950, scores of PDCI sympathizers had been killed or wounded, and many party militants were in prison.

Houphouët, who had parliamentary immunity, was never arrested.

He also deplored the African intellectuals' strident nationalism. And after the Communists' expulsion from the French government in 1947, the legislative alliance of the RDA and the far Left was of no use to him.

Ever the pragmatist, Houphouët opened talks with France's minister of colonies. He and the minister, François Mitterrand,* reached an agreement. In exchange for official recognition and tacit support by the French as the Ivory Coast's leading African politician, Houphouët would break publicly with the French Communists and the PDCI radicals.

Mitterrand released several imprisoned PDCI militants, but made it clear to them that no further anticolonial agitation would be tolerated. Those black politicians who saw Houphouët as too accommodating to the French found themselves defeated in elections and harassed by French administrators. As for the militants, many owed their freedom to the deal with Mitterrand. Were they to criticize it too loudly, their cases might be "reviewed." Mostly, they kept silent.

Leaving 'Almost Nothing'

Some militants felt betrayed by Houphouët. But his course had been predictable. He was, after all, the heir of a famous collaborating chief—the basis of his claim to status as a chief among the Baule. He was a product of the colonial education system. And, like the other black planters, he was a reformer, not a revolutionary.

The French saw in Houphouët a needed ally. Their global empire was threatened by insurgencies in Indochina and Madagascar—where in 1947 a rebellion was put down brutally, at a cost of as many as 80,000 native lives. "In order to keep Africa and stay there," Mitterrand wrote in his 1957 autobiography, "wasn't it [necessary] first to give [the Africans] political and economic rights?"

France did, and in return Houphouët continued to work closely with Fourth Republic regimes. He became the first African cabinet minister in the French government (1956–59). At home, his PDCI evolved from a voice of mass opinion to a vehicle for mobilizing mass support. A generally benevolent farm-based African autocracy emerged.

Africans outside the planter bourgeoisie—intellectuals, students, people not in cash crop areas—began to feel ignored.

The centralization of power was perhaps tolerable during the booming 1950s. African-owned coffee and cocoa farms grew in size and number. And Paris, having dropped its insistence that its colonies be self-financing in 1946, was subsidizing agricultural prices and spending on improvements. The Ivory Coast's first deep-water port was formally opened at Abidjan in 1951, with Mitterrand officiating; the road network was extended. When, during the late 1950s, world cocoa and coffee

*Mitterrand, a Socialist from Nièvre, and minister for overseas territories during 1950–51, eventually went on to win the French presidency (on his third try) in 1981, and was re-elected last May.

prices sagged, exports of still-abundant tropical hardwoods took up the slack. By decade's end, the Ivory Coast easily surpassed Senegal as France's richest West African territory.

But also by then, what Britain's Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was to call the "winds of change" were already blowing.

Houphouët ignored local radicals' calls for independence. The idea, he said, had become a "mystique," and he was not interested. Indeed, it was General Charles de Gaulle who forced the issue.

On his return to power in 1958, after a 12-year absence, the Fourth Republic was in a shambles, mostly because of its costly struggle to hang onto Muslim Algeria. De Gaulle used the referendum that created the Fifth Republic to head off trouble in the sub-Saharan African colonies; the referendum, held that September, offered the Black Africans a choice of 1) association with France in a Franco-African Community that would provide local autonomy but leave Paris in control of defense, foreign affairs, and overall economic policy, or 2) full independence. Only Guinea chose the latter (the French withdrew promptly). But still, the independence issue would not fade.

Soon, Senegal and the French Sudan joined in a short-lived Federation of Mali and sought independence *before* discussing links with France. A meeting of Community leaders in St. Louis, Senegal, in 1959 accepted the Mali federation's "accession to international sovereignty," as de Gaulle put it. And the general came to acknowledge the persistence of an "elementary psychological disposition" toward independence. By the end



When Charles de Gaulle, here in Abidjan, toured French Africa in August 1958, he would not soften his take-it-or-leave-it offer on the colonies' future ties with France: "I, de Gaulle, say 'Federation,' and there we stop."

of 1960, the Community's remaining Black African members sought and were quickly granted independence before negotiating future ties with France on generous terms. Among them was the Ivory Coast, whose leader remained a proponent of "the idea of fraternity" with France.

The results of the many decades of rule by Paris were mixed.

A number of individuals eventually gained fame or fortune in French Africa—Louis-Gustave Binger and Arthur Verdier among them. But the colonies never yielded windfall returns to France or its taxpayers. The conquest had been protracted, and then two traumatic world wars distracted French governments. The *mission civilisatrice*, too, long remained more talk than action. Colonial Minister Henri Cosnier's 1918 lament that "we have left almost nothing" in terms of economic development remained all too valid until French development funds began to flow in quantity after World War II. (The British had begun providing such funds to their colonies in 1929.)

Grand plans went unrealized—e.g., a trans-Sahara rail line to link the Black African colonies with French colonies in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), which had a large French population, got the bulk of French foreign investment, and accounted for far more French trade than the sub-Saharan territories. Such a line was once deemed "indispensable" by French officials, but it was never built.

Left at the Church

The French, like the British, governed on the cheap. In 1922, Paris had just 526 administrators in Black African colonies whose population then totaled some 15 million. Although France's colonial medical services were superior, it lagged far behind Britain in all other social welfare efforts, notably education; 20 years after World War I, there were only 59,000 youngsters in school in all French West Africa.

Among the foreign admirers of the French colonial style were American Pan-Africanists; after a visit to Dakar, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in 1925 that he saw in French West Africa nothing "like the open race repulsion, the studied separation that one sees in British West Africa." Yet French treatment of the colonized was not always exemplary, as the brutality of the conquest period made clear. After World War I, when France and Britain were maneuvering to take over parts of the German Empire as mandates, stories of atrocities in Germany's African lands abounded. A French author, Camille Fidel, wrote luridly of "the barbaric destruction of tribes which [the Germans] exploited cruelly; the appropriation of land; forced labor; flogging erected into a method of government." But research has shown that the weight of German rule did not differ greatly from that of the British or the French.

The infusion of development capital after World War II, by Britain as well as France, helped to fill out what might have been a very thin investment legacy. Most important, the money was used to build endur-

ing facilities—ports, rail lines, road networks—that (notably in the Ivory Coast) committed the colonies to remain exporters of agricultural produce for world markets.

Beyond this, the colonists' most influential legacy was their language. The Ivory Coast, where more than 60 African dialects were spoken, was left with an irreversible commitment to French as the medium of official discourse and of its narrow political and social "elites." Local leaders could express their demands effectively only in a foreigner's tongue, forcing upon them a significant break with their past.

Such breaks with tradition were perhaps greater in the French colonies than in the British ones. The French were generally more disruptive. The British set up their own white enclaves on the outskirts of towns; the French moved into the center. The British favored "indirect rule" via traditional chiefs, who were not encouraged to imbibe European culture or even to learn English; the French installed their own "scatter of puppets," as Cosnier called their chiefs, and added their culture to the local ones.

The difference would prove profound. In the British colonies the African societies and their hierarchies remained relatively intact, for good or ill. New people were more apt to come to the fore—under colonial auspices—in the French territories. That may be part of the reason why, after independence, most of France's former West African territories—most notably the Ivory Coast—stayed closer to the *Metropole* and fared better economically than many other young African countries. In the Ivory Coast, both the Ivorians and the French would profit tangibly from neocolonialism.

In any case, even when independence fever was rising, hatred of France was seldom the prevailing sentiment among most West African leaders. When elections for the postwar Constituent Assembly in Paris were being held, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the French-educated poet and future president of Senegal, declared his aim: "a single category of Frenchmen, having exactly the same rights since all are subject to the same duties, including dying for the same country."

Years later, when in 1960 the West Africans themselves pulled away from Charles de Gaulle's offer of partnership with the *Metropole* in a Franco-African Community, one of their leaders openly vented his disappointment with his fellow blacks: "I waited on the steps of the church, my bouquet of flowers wilted in my hand."

The man on the steps was Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

A DIFFERENT PATH

by David Lamb

The Ivory Coast and its neighbor, Guinea, share many things, among them a common border, a tropical climate, and a colonial history that left a French veneer over an African peasant culture. The two nations won independence, without bloodshed, at roughly the same time: Guinea in 1958, the Ivory Coast two years later. Each was then run by a one-man, one-party regime. Each sought economic growth, modernization, and self-esteem.

Yet Guinea failed. The Ivory Coast was the "African miracle."

"It is not the shell of independence which counts," Félix Houphouët-Boigny once said, "it is the contents: the economic contents, the social contents, and the human contents." To a remarkable degree, the Ivory Coast seems to have all of them.

The country boasts political stability rare for Africa and a history of extraordinary economic expansion. During the first two decades of independence, its annual growth exceeded seven percent, a record acknowledged by the World Bank as "unique on the African continent." And although the number of Ivorians has more than tripled since 1960, the Ivory Coast's economic growth has also been robust on a per capita basis: The only sizeable African countries that did better were those able to export substantial amounts of oil (Libya, Nigeria, Gabon) or valuable minerals (Togo, Mauritania, Tunisia). Its gross national product per capita (\$660 in 1985) is double the average of Guinea (\$320) and its other neighbors. Washington considers the Ivorians too well off to qualify for further bilateral aid.

At one time, the Ivory Coast and Guinea had been about on a par.

World War II's end found the Ivory Coast largely dependent on two crops, coffee and cocoa. Its sleepy capital, Abidjan, was home to 20,000 Africans and a scattering of French officials and planters.

Guinea also had a narrowly based economy—dependent on bananas, of which it was Africa's top exporter, and coffee. It also had gold, diamonds, and a third of the world's known reserves of bauxite, the ore of aluminum. A rise in metal prices during the Korean War had spawned some industry, and thus the urban labor movement that became the political base for the country's leader, Ahmed Sékou Touré. The tidy, white-washed capital, Conakry, with palm-fringed beaches and fine hotels, attracted French tourists.

But the two countries set off along divergent paths.

Guinea's President Touré was young—age 36 at independence—and determined not to be beholden to the old colonial masters. He was a



Houphouët-Boigny in 1960, the year of independence. Democracy had to wait; new countries, he has said, "need a chief who is all-powerful for a specified period of time. If he makes mistakes, we shall replace him later on."

compelling orator, as he showed when he went to Paris as an African member of France's National Assembly during the 1950s. There he fell in with the French Communist Party. To him, the future seemed to be the "African socialism" that came into vogue among European and African intellectuals during the early 1960s, and was pioneered in Ghana by Touré's friend Kwame Nkrumah. Touré called his philosophy "Marxism in African clothes."

His retort to France's offer of association drew cheers on the Left: "We prefer poverty in freedom to opulence in servitude."

Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a generation older,* once a sort of political godfather to Touré, and at one time also an ally of the French Communists, described his approach as simple "State capitalism." He would keep ties to France, welcome foreign investment, and attract European businessmen and technicians with laws that put few restrictions on the repatriation of capital, profits, or salaries.

The Ivory Coast, along with six other former French West African colonies, kept the existing currency, still known as the CFA franc, whose value was (and remains) tied to the French franc. Guinea dropped the CFA franc and eventually introduced the *syl*i, which, translated, meant elephant but was redefined by Touré as "the will of the people of Guinea

*Based on his official birth date of October 18, 1905, Houphouët was 54 at independence. But his real age is unknown, perhaps even to him. Now officially 82, he is almost certainly closer to 90.

to destroy colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism.”

Houphouët had hoped that de Gaulle’s short-lived Franco-African Community would preserve the Ivory Coast’s links with France, and thus to the new European Common Market. Touré’s refusal to join the Community made him a hero in Black Africa, but as he himself said, it was “no time for dancing.” Guinea was soon alone and adrift.

De Gaulle had been warned by Houphouët that Touré would turn East if doors were closed to him in the West. Sure enough, the Soviets and their allies became the dominant foreigners in Guinea.

Empty Stores, Tasty Fruit

Under Touré, the government takeover of the economy was complete. State-run firms even shunted aside the market women—in all of West Africa, the principal purveyors of food, clothing, and household necessities. To extend its reach into the smallest villages, Touré’s *Parti Democratique de Guinée* organized the country into 2,500 cells. Officials learned to snap out “*Prêt à la révolution!*” (Ready for the revolution!) when answering phones.

To challenge the “Clairvoyant Guide” or his plans for the “mental development” of his people could be fatal. By one count, 17 of Touré’s cabinet ministers were hanged or shot, and 18 were given life sentences. Once, the bodies of five erring officials were left to hang from a bridge in Conakry for two days. Perhaps two in five Guineans fled their homeland, many to the Ivory Coast. Food grew scarce (it had to be exported to pay Soviet debts); inflation soared.

By the early 1980s, a visitor arriving at the Conakry airport would ride into town on a potholed road that wound past decaying old French plantation houses (where trees grew in the living rooms) and empty shops. The local state-owned Nafyaya (“Plentiful”) department store, as big as a basketball court, had only Chinese shaving brushes, pineapple juice, and a few boxes of macaroni. On one wall was Fidel Castro’s picture, on another a slogan: “To Suffer is to Succeed.”

Meanwhile, Abidjan, 700 miles away, had become Black Africa’s most modern city, a blend of Miami and Paris. [See box, p. 120.]

Indeed, a striking feature of the Ivory Coast is its French contingent. Barely 10,000 at independence, it has grown as large as 50,000. Today, it numbers about 27,000; an economic slump has driven many of *les Européens* back home during the past few years. But the French remain an important presence. As of the early 1980s, by the World Bank’s estimate, expatriates held 80 percent of the Ivorian jobs requiring

David Lamb, 48, is a correspondent for the Los Angeles Times. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, he received a B.A. from the University of Maine (1962). He is the author of The Africans (1984) and The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage (1987).

a university degree. (One attraction is pay that may be two or three times as high as that which similar work would command in Europe.) French businessmen controlled up to 40 percent of the investment in industry and 50 percent of the country's trade. Behind the scenes, French civil servants still have decision-making roles in every government department. A visitor to the Ministry of Planning and Development, for instance, finds that the minister and his two or three well-dressed top deputies are African, as are the janitors and some of the secretaries, but almost everyone in between is French.

The French contingent also includes "colonists" from the old days who have made careers as planters, lawyers, and physicians, and *petits français* working as maitre d's, bartenders, and store clerks.

"The Ivorian tree offers its shade and tasty fruits to all who settle beneath it," Houphouët has said. But "it is the ordinary French" who put "their confidence in us." Yet while crediting them, and "genuine cooperation," he has maintained that the key to his country's economic success has been "the work of our farmers."

The Ivory Coast flourished in large part because Houphouët focused on the land. The farmers who formed the core of the *Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI), of which he remained president, prospered on coffee and cocoa. Not content with that, however, Houphouët set out to make the Ivory Coast one of the few African countries to succeed in diversifying into new crops. To accomplish that, a number of quasi-government agencies called "parastatals" were established—SODEPALM (palm oil), SOCATCI (rubber), SODESUCRE (cane sugar), CIDT (cotton), SODEFEL (fruits and vegetables).

"Diff'rent Strokes"

One result is that, although the share of the population dependent on agriculture has been declining (it is below 70 percent today), the acreage under cultivation has risen sharply since independence. And the new acreage is in Ivorian hands: A post-independence law barred further purchases of farms or cultivation of cash crops by outsiders.

The Ivory Coast remains the world's third largest coffee supplier, after Brazil and Colombia. Output of its *robusta*—typically grown by family farmers and used for instant coffee—has tripled since independence. However, it no longer accounts for nearly half of Ivorian export revenues as it did in 1960. Starting far behind Ghana, the Ivory Coast now leads the world in cocoa, much of it sold to chocolatiers in the Netherlands. The country is also Africa's top palm-oil producer.

In production of cotton, one of its "new" crops, the Ivory Coast is now third in Africa. In the dry northern reaches are broad tracts of sugar cane; the lowlands of the hot, swampy south have been turned into plantations that produce bananas and pineapples for export.

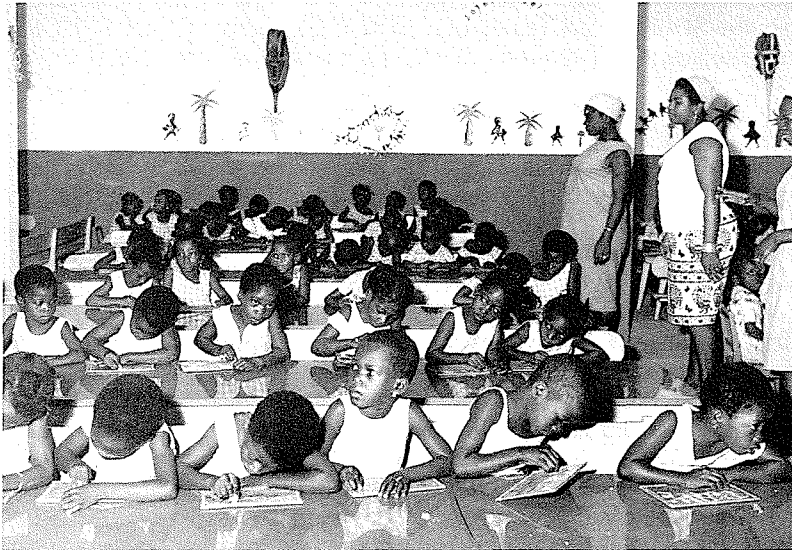
It is also on its way to becoming Africa's chief producer of latex

rubber. Meanwhile, timber from the Ivory Coast's once-great hardwood stands remains a major export—at a cost, however. Trees 200 and 300 years old have been cut down to make bedroom furniture for Lyons and Marseilles; forests that once blanketed half the country now cover just three percent (just as the elephants are disappearing; the tusks that gave the land its European name are still sought by poachers).

Light industry, too, has grown; notably in textiles, shoes, and cement, local production is supplanting imports (albeit at high prices). In short, the Ivorians have done what all the other newly independent Black Africans talked about but none, except maybe the Kenyans, ever did.

"The nation's Number One peasant," as Houphouët calls himself, started out with land inherited from an uncle and got rich as a coffee planter long before independence. Subsequently, he became the country's leading producer of pineapples, avocados, and poultry. One engine of the economy over which he presides is a kind of farmer-government partnership. Under the state marketing system, the government purchases the farmers' output at a fixed price and sells it abroad for more. The growers get a guaranteed cash income, which has risen over the years and has never been allowed to fall even when world prices have sagged. And in turn, the system provides revenue for the government.

The money helps pay for the improvements by which progress is measured in Africa. In the rural villages, where more than half of Ivorians live, there are telecommunications lines, paved roads, and run-



Ivorians are taught French, the official language, from the first grade. Theirs is a young nation: Life expectancy, while above the 30-38 years of 1956-58, is still only 52. (The average for all of sub-Saharan Africa: 48).

ning water for the one-room huts. In 1966, Abidjan alone had a water system; now over 235 localities do. There are more than 2,500 miles of paved roads, six times the 1966 number. Television reaches a third of the nation, bringing not only French films and French news broadcasts relayed by satellite but also American sitcoms. (What Ivoirians make of such fare as "Diff'rent Strokes," which deals with some Harlem children adopted by a white Park Avenue widower, is unclear.)

Meanwhile, the government is able to spend four times as much on education as it does on its military forces, in part because France shoulders much of the Ivory Coast's defense burden.*

Debt, Drought, Blackouts, Bailout

The "Ivorian tree" draws many outsiders. Today, the largest non-African presence is not the French but the Lebanese Christians: Numbering about 190,000, up tenfold just since 1975, they dominate domestic commerce. People from other African nations make up as much as a fourth of the population. (The closest African parallel is South Africa, where, apartheid notwithstanding, the wages paid by the gold and diamond mines attract thousands of black workers from other countries.)

To other Africans, Ivorian wages—the minimum for urban workers is \$5 a day—are compelling. There are so many Ghanaians in Abidjan that one district is called Koumassi, the French spelling for Ghana's second city. In the month it takes a cook to earn \$65 in Benin, he can pocket \$165 in the Ivory Coast. Immigrants may earn \$800 in a season on an Ivorian plantation or factory. When they drift back to the millet fields of Mali or the idleness of Guinea, they carry radios, shirts, and cans of cooking oil, goods often unavailable at any price at home.

It is not only labor that brings a cash reward. Herders may be seen leading livestock from inland Burkina Faso and Mali along the shoulders of the roads to Abidjan, or resting in the plains near the airport, amid dust stirred by bulldozers readying sites for new factories, offices, and roads. Because demand is steady and prices are high at the Abidjan slaughterhouses, a journey of many days to them is worthwhile.

Outsiders arrive in such numbers that in 1983 the government began requiring foreign residents to obtain identity cards. Yet the Ivory Coast has no plans to become yet another African country attempting to impose severe restrictions on entry.

But prosperity is never permanent. After the 1976–77 commodities boom pushed the world price of coffee and cocoa to record levels, a plunge ensued. Still, the Ivory Coast's spending on development re-

*The Ivory Coast's armed forces include 7,720 men in an army that boasts five light tanks and 52 other armored vehicles; a coastal navy; an air force with six German-made Alpha ground-attack jets; and a 3,600-man national *gendarmerie* (police force) under military command. External security is provided primarily by an agreement, dating to 1961, that French forces will deal with any aggressors. A unit of some 300 French troops based near Abidjan's airport can be reinforced by jet transport from France or from other African countries, where French forces totaling some 21,000 men are still stationed.

ABIDJAN: 'SO CLOSE TO AFRICA'

"Abidjan is very nice," goes an Ivorian wisecrack, "and so close to Africa."

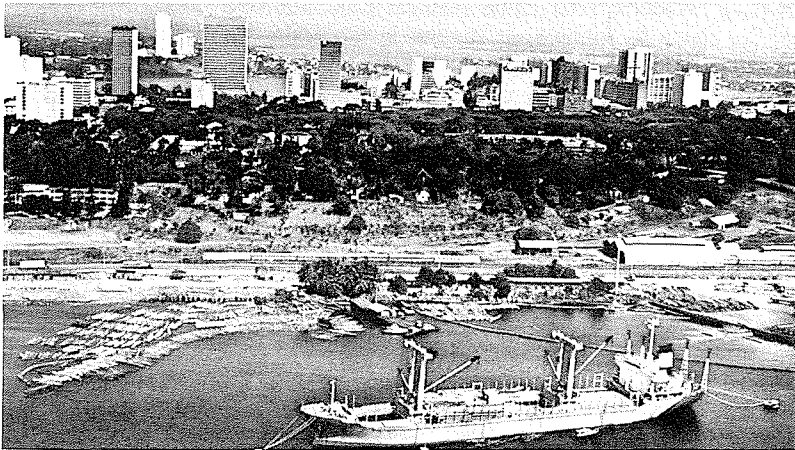
Indeed, the city on the Ébrié Lagoon does have a First World look. Office towers bear such names as Datsun and Shell. There are fine restaurants, and boulevards named for Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand. Newsstands carry *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, flown in from Paris. Supermarkets stock French food and wines (one store has such American fare as El Paso taco sauce and Aunt Jemima pancake mix). Water-skiers skim the bay between the affluent Plateau area and the "Beverly Hills of Abidjan," Cocody. There, wealthy Europeans and Ivorians (including the president) have homes, and the Hôtel Ivoire maintains tropical Africa's only ice-skating rink.

The Frenchmen who in 1898 recommended the lagoon as a "salubrious site" for settlement would be surprised that some 2,000,000 people reside there 90 years later. When engineers arrived in 1903 to build a rail line to the interior, the only residents were a few hundred fishermen living in reed huts.

Abidjan's boom began after 1950, when a canal opening the lagoon to the sea was completed. The city became a shipping hub for West and Central Africa, and a manufacturing center; for a time, it boasted a Renault plant.

Most Abidjanis live in teeming districts like Treichville, where the first railway workers settled. They now vie for jobs with some 500,000 African immigrants. Still, central Abidjan is without the shantytowns that mar such capitals as Niger's Niamey and Gambia's Banjul. Days begin much as Ivorian novelist Bernard Dadié wrote: "The air brightened . . . stores opened, people went to their work. Cyclists argued the right-of-way with taxi drivers and with the pedestrians . . ." Evenings bring soccer fans to matches at the Félix Houphouët Stadium. Well-to-do Europeans and Ivorians play the Riviera golf course or repair to the Club Méditerranée or a private resort down the coast.

Visiting Abidjan in 1980, Pope John Paul II decided that the problem Ivorians faced was not poverty, but being "consumed with materialism."



mained high. Foreign debt soared near \$6 billion and in 1980, for the first time, Houphouët had to go to the International Monetary Fund for help. French civil servants were brought in to oversee spending by government ministries, with virtual line-item veto powers; 27 parastatals that had become mired in graft and inefficiency were pared down, sold off, or just eliminated. ("The state is never the best industrial manager," Houphouët conceded.)

Then, during the early 1980s, a drought cut hydroelectric power, which remains vital even though offshore oil deposits were discovered during the 1970s, and now supply about a third of the country's petroleum needs. Abidjan factories suffered blackouts, and Ivoirians began lamenting *la conjoncture*, the combination of woeful circumstances.

Out of His Mind

The Ivorian "miracle" has had critics, inside Africa and out.

A complaint voiced by some Western academics and Ivoirians is that Houphouët's reliance on export markets has yielded "growth without development," which benefits only the old African planter bourgeoisie and a "new class" of black politicians and bureaucrats. Indeed, as political scientist Crawford Young has noted, the Ivory Coast has not fostered private local capitalism to the extent that Kenya and Nigeria have. And wide income gaps do exist—between the prospering south and the poorer north, between urban wage-earners and farm laborers, between industrial Abidjan and everywhere else. Nonetheless, as Young observes, the gaps do not appear to be as yawning as they are in other African countries, and even immigrant plantation hands in the Ivory Coast are able to send money home.

That *Houphouëtisme* is just neocolonialism—black façade, white control—was always the view from Guinea, where Touré's press sneered at the Ivoirians as "de Gaulle's niggers." To Africa's new breed of younger, more radical leaders, Houphouët came to seem an anachronism: too paternal, too French, too bourgeois; not a revolutionary.

Certainly, on some issues, Houphouët stood well apart from his peers. The 1960–63 tumult in Zaire, the former Belgian Congo, and the 1967–70 civil war in Nigeria stirred the fears of many African leaders that their own tribally fragmented nations could unravel, that the boundaries left by the Europeans—the "scars of history," Houphouët called them—could tear open.* Yet the Ivorian supported Moïse Tshombe's breakaway attempt in the Congo's Katanga province, and backed the Biafran rebellion in Nigeria, giving refuge to Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Ibo commander, when the revolt failed. And, like many young Afri-

*The charter of the 51-nation Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963, affirms the independence and sovereignty of the African states. To a remarkable extent, the boundaries established during the colonial era have held firm. Yet OAU attempts to mediate the Biafran secession in Nigeria and civil war in Chad during the 1980s failed.

can nations, the Ivory Coast accepted Israeli technical aid, but, unlike his peers, Houphouët did not rush to break relations with Israel when pressure from the Arabs rose. He did not relish "betraying friends." Although he did take the step in 1973, relations were restored in 1985.

Nowhere has Houphouët stood more alone than on South Africa.

Only one black nation, Malawi, a former British colony and neighbor of South Africa, has diplomatic relations with Pretoria; virtually none admit to doing business with the white minority government there, although much back-door trade goes on.* Houphouët's sin was to propose dealing openly with the white regime, engaging in a "dialogue" to avoid racial conflict that would surely invite Soviet interference. In 1971, Houphouët created a sensation by announcing that he would go to Pretoria himself to meet with then-prime minister John Vorster. From Dar es Salaam came a typical reaction: The Tanzanian government press wondered aloud if he was out of his mind.

Renoirs on the Walls

That year, an official Ivorian delegation, without Houphouët, was received with great pomp in the South African capital. And twice subsequently, outside South Africa, Houphouët did confer privately with Vorster. However, diplomatic relations were never established.

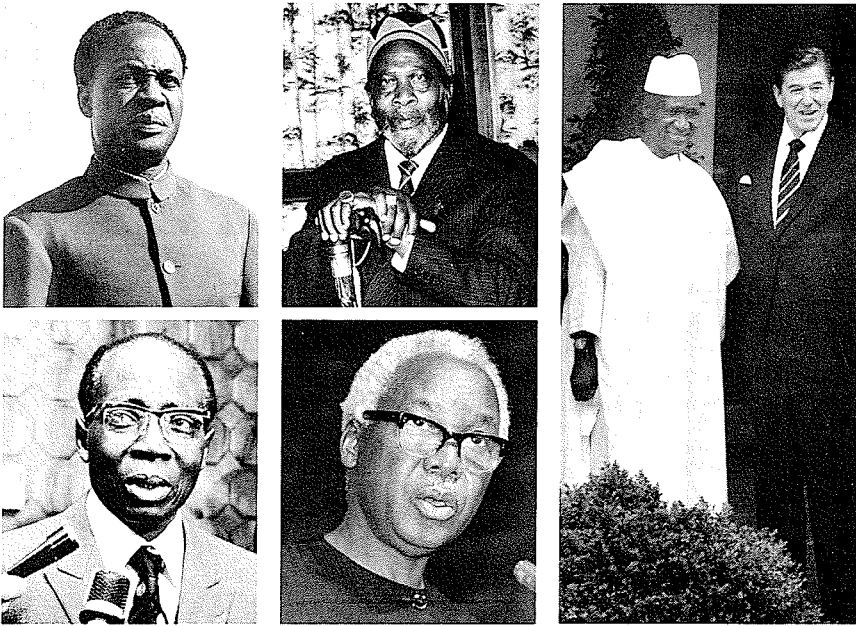
In personal style as well, Houphouët did not seem the typical Black African leader. A small, stocky, soft-spoken man, a Catholic who never drinks or smokes, he was not one to flaunt his Africanism with symbolic trappings, such as the fly-whisk of Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta or the leopard-skin cap of Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko. He eschewed the military garb of Uganda's Idi Amin or Liberia's Samuel K. Doe.

Preferring black Homburg hats and, usually, even in the hottest weather, three-piece European-tailored suits, Houphouët explained that for him to wear the loose, comfortable toga-like dress of his own Baule people would be to slight the Ivory Coast's many other ethnic groups; he was the president of all.

Nor did he affect the grand titles and sobriquets used by leaders such as Ghana's Nkrumah (the *Osagyefo*, or Redeemer) and Zaire's Mobutu ("all-powerful warrior, who because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest leaving fire in his wake"). The names that Ivorians have had for Houphouët—*le Vieux* (the Old Man) or, in the Baule language, *Nana* (Grandfather)—suggest a more human regard for him, and for his role.

On a current reggae album by the Ivorian star Alpha Blondy, there is a song, *Jah Houphouët*, wishing long life to Nana Boigny:

*Kenya buys South African maize, which it says comes from Mozambique; Zambia buys South African beef, which it says comes from Botswana; Gabon buys South African construction equipment, which it says comes from Europe. Zaire gets half its imported food from South Africa; the bulk of landlocked Zimbabwe's trade goes through South African ports.



Some of Black Africa's founding fathers (clockwise from top left, with years of rule): Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah (1957-66); Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta (1964-78); Guinea's Sékou Touré (1958-84), here visiting Ronald Reagan in Washington in 1982; Tanzania's Julius Nyerere (1964-85); and Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor (1960-80), one of the few African leaders to retire of his own volition.

He's bled himself white for us,
 his grandchildren;
 He's devoted his life to us,
 his little ones . . .

Not quite. In 1983, *le Vieux* admitted publicly that he had salted away "billions" of CFA francs in a Swiss bank ("What sensible man wouldn't?")—but he had also, he took care to note, kept billions in the Ivory Coast. His summers continued to be divided between an estate in Switzerland and an apartment in Paris. He fathered four children during a rare mixed marriage to a Muslim woman in his youth; he met his second wife, Marie-Thérèse, when his son was courting her. And early in his regime, he began transforming his native village, Yamoussoukro, into what has been described as an "African Versailles."

While the government still operates out of Abidjan, in 1983 the national capital was officially moved to Yamoussoukro, which now has a population of 150,000. Its centerpiece, approached by an eight-lane highway, is Houphouët's walled palace. Gold-painted statues of rams flank

the gates; a moat within contains crocodiles that are fed live chickens every afternoon. The marble palace has carpets given by the Shah of Iran; Renoirs and Chagalls are on the walls. Nearby is a 36-hole golf course. Construction continues on a basilica that will accommodate 18,000 people inside and another 300,000 in an adjacent square.

For all his expansive living, Houphouët has stayed close to his roots in the Ivorian interior. For the first 20 years of his presidency, he took the country's independence day celebrations on a circuit, staging them in a different region each year, passing out favors, hearing complaints, complimenting the village elders. His performance was that of the tribal chief that, in fact, he had become as a young man. Although a Christian, in speeches he liked to call up the world of the spirits—the occult beings with whom some African animists deal via mystics called *marabouts*—who are so much a part of his countrymen's everyday lives.*

A Tropical Tammany Hall

Houphouët once likened himself to the denizen of his palace moat: "I am like the crocodile. I sleep with my eyes open."

Ivorians could believe that.

His political machine, the PDCI, remained as much under his personal control as ever. In one brusque demonstration of where the power still lay, Houphouët, then in his late seventies, chose the party congress as an occasion to sack the secretary-general, Philippe Yacé, and announced his dismissal from the dais; it was the first that Yacé, seated just below Houphouët, had heard of it. Ivorians say he was stunned (in Guinea, Yacé might have ended up with a rope around his neck).

With the party running the press, Houphouët was spared any trouble from that quarter too. Foreign newsmen have always been free to enter the country—no small privilege in present-day Africa—and write what they pleased. Houphouët enjoyed talking with them, and once held court for an international group of journalists for five hours.

What appears on Ivorian newsstands is another matter. The PDCI paper, *Fraternité Matin*, slickly produced in Abidjan on modern equipment, is the Ivory Coast's main daily. It offers lurid crime reporting, but its approach to sensitive political areas might best be described as aggressively noninvestigative journalism. The minister of information has described government information policy thusly: "Censorship is nonexistent. There's only one rule: 'Don't stick your nose in other folks' business.'" (Last year, the popular weeklies of the *Jeune Afrique* group, published in Paris, were summarily banned in the Ivory Coast.)

*Most Ivorians are animists. Close to 25 percent, concentrated in the north, are Muslim. Among urban, literate, middle-class southerners, including the bulk of those who hold important positions in government and elsewhere, Christianity predominates; most Christians (roughly 15 percent of the population) are Roman Catholics, like Houphouët, but there are also many Methodists. During World War I, a barefoot Liberian Methodist preacher named William Wadé Harris won thousands of converts by inveighing against idolatry, fetishism, adultery, theft, and lying. "Harrist" churches remain today.

Since before independence, Houphouët's justification for a one-party regime had been that it was the only unifying mechanism possible in a tribally divided country. In France, he once explained, the Socialist Party could encompass Bretons and Corsicans alike, but in the Ivory Coast "if we enter into multi-party politics, we are going to have a Baule Party, a Bété Party We do not want that."

Here, Houphouët has not been alone. Zimbabwe, another country with sharp tribal divisions, had been one of the last African states with a recognized opposition party. But that party, ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo, last year merged into the government party, ZANU, of Nkomo's old rival for power, President Robert Mugabe.

With the PDCI, Houphouët did fairly well at enveloping and muffling tribal claims. He did so partly by judicious distribution of patronage, in a fashion that has been likened to Tammany Hall's division of Democratic Party patronage among New York's turn-of-the-century ethnic groups. Also, he kept enlarging the pie to be sliced.

The number of seats in the National Assembly, 85 in 1960, was stepped up regularly. In 1980, the practice of submitting a single slate for voter ratification, common under Communist or revolutionary regimes, was dropped: The PDCI lists were thrown open to intraparty competition. That year, some 650 candidates campaigned for 147 seats; of 80 members of the old assembly running for re-election, 53 were retired by the voters.

Breaking Jaws

In 1985, grass-roots participation in the PDCI's workings was encouraged with the formation of 10,000 village committees to select 235 regional party satraps, and with the directive that 97 more municipalities (for a total of 176) would have mayoral elections. The National Assembly was expanded again, to 175 members; this time half were newcomers. Houphouët, as usual the sole presidential candidate, was re-elected to a sixth five-year term—as usual, with almost 100 percent of the vote.

Houphouët did not entirely squelch ethnic conflict. In 1959, the country's Agni group, related to the Ashanti of Ghana, invoked a treaty signed with France 116 years earlier and tried to secede; the French obligingly arrested the Agni envoys to Paris and shipped them back to Abidjan. In 1970, there was a clash between dissident Bété villagers and Ivorian police at Gagnoa, where families were being resettled after construction of a hydroelectric project. One policeman was killed. The army intervened savagely, shooting and bulldozing into mass graves victims numbering in the hundreds, and perhaps thousands. Houphouët's personal role in the episode is unclear. It is also unclear whether French paratroops aided the Ivorian army.

As elsewhere in Africa, political turbulence among Ivorian teachers and university students, particularly those who have studied abroad, has

GETTING AND SPENDING

In 1962, Houphouët-Boigny's regime enacted a law: Citizens were no longer permitted to mark themselves with tattoos, ritual scars, and filed teeth.

The aim was to suppress differences among ethnic groups and foster a sense of being "Ivorians." Ethnically, the nation is, as one scholar says, "a total accident." Probably none of the 25 or so major groups—the largest are the Agni, the Baule, the Dan, the Malinké, and the Sénufo—account for more than 15 percent of the population. All arrived from other areas. Indeed, the Sénufo and Mandingo extend into Mali and Burkina Faso; the Agni are related to the Ashanti in formerly British Ghana. Some Agni so admire their Ashanti kin, "*les Anglais*," that they buy English bicycles, clothes, and beauty products.

Historically, the groups have had predominance in certain areas—the Malinké, Sénufo, and Diula in the north, the Baule in the center, and the Agni in the southeast. But these patterns are blurring. One reason is urbanization; the Ébrié, indigenous to the Abidjan area, make up less than 10 percent of the city's population. A greater agent of change has been the cash economy.

Once, any "stranger" was a rarity. If he entered another group's territory, he might be held as a slave. But with the introduction of cash-crops by the French, many "strangers" moved to the new coffee and cocoa plantations in the southeast, aiming to make some money and find a future. Today, a farm laborer (the preferred term is "contractual worker") might move up to be an *abou-san* farmer, or sharecropper. Beyond that, ambitions vary.

Of the three major groups whose youths venture south to find plantation work, the Mossi are most likely to return; they come from what they regard as a higher civilization in Burkina Faso. A Mossi will work as a laborer—and even affect Islam if his employer is a Muslim Diula—to earn enough "to return home without shame." The Baule takes farm work in hopes of becoming a planter himself, or a merchant or artisan. The Diula, coming from a long line of traders, is West Africa's model of mobility; he aims to climb from *abou-san* worker to landowner or merchant. He will send money to his home village, but will not return except to visit, every few years, with his growing family.

What are the *employers'* ambitions? If he is an Agni, he is at heart an aristocrat. An Agni planter may, as he prospers, become a trader, a storekeeper, a moneylender, or a kind of "bush lawyer." His son will become a civil

been a constant. The 25-year-old University of Abidjan has often had student strikes; higher education seems to stir higher resentments.

But against his regime, Houphouët said in 1980, "there never has been a plot in the Ivory Coast, or threat of a coup d'état." A frequent claim of the president's, it brought a sarcastic rejoinder from a vocal Ivorian critic, Laurent Gbagbo, the twice-jailed former director of Abidjan's Institute of African History, Art and Archaeology. From exile in Paris, Gbagbo wrote: "It's only that every time Houphouët felt he didn't have the situation in hand in this sector or that, he himself invented a 'conspiracy,' designated the 'authors,' and had them arrested."

servant, and own a farm on the side. If he is lucky, the son may rise further and become a cabinet member or win a seat in the National Assembly or on the judiciary. These are the Ivoirians at the top; their salaries and expense accounts permit a modern house in Abidjan (and a second place in the home district), autos, imported food, and foreign travel.

In the countryside, most households produce what they consume. Yet the cash economy reaches here too. Even in remote areas, where families build their huts and cook outdoors, markets offer soap, canned food, and imported cloth and liquor. And there are status items—refrigerators, bicycles, cars—that subsistence farmers want, even if it means working for wages for a time.

One curb on individual prosperity is the tradition of sharing with the extended family. A salary meant to support four people may have to cover a dozen. And when relatives crowd in, blocks of new housing become slums.

Ivoirians are not big savers. And while a social-security system exists, families are expected to provide the prime safety net. Only job-holders qualify for retirement benefits, workmen's compensation, and the nation's French-style family allowances, intended to help workers with children.

In part because of the pull of cash, polygamy and the "bride price" have been hard to eradicate. Both were ostensibly abolished by a Civil Code adopted in 1964. But because it provides a "birth grant" for the first three children, the family allowance system has been known to spur Ivoirian men to take additional wives just to obtain more grants. And in a money economy, bride prices may be more likely to rise than fade away. Among the forest folk of the southwest, dowries were once so high that men had to wait years to marry. This was a problem because, by local custom, subsistence farms were tilled only by wives. Unable to have a farm without a spouse, many youths had to leave their villages and work on plantations to earn enough to take a wife.

In such ways, the cash economy has operated to reinforce the virtues listed in the Ivory Coast's motto: "Union, Discipline, Work."



Perhaps so. But in sharp contrast to neighboring Guinea, Liberia, and Ghana, the Ivory Coast has not witnessed an execution since independence. As a boy, Houphouët has said, he swore on the sacrificial tree of his Baule ancestors that he would never shed human blood; and of all the death sentences issued over the years as a result of various alleged plots, not one was carried out. Indeed, in most cases, the resolution has been relatively benign—commutation of the most severe sentences, followed by eventual amnesty.

One who was condemned was Jean-Baptiste Mockey, a former PDCI secretary-general and National Assembly president. Houphouët

released him, befriended him, attended his daughter's wedding, and restored him to the cabinet as minister of health. To a U.S. visitor, Houphouët explained, "To pardon an enemy is to break his jaws. He can no longer hurt you."

An illustration of this tactic is the so-called Boka affair, which, though long past, remains fresh in Ivorians' memories.

The 'Black Diet'

Shortly after New Year's 1963, a new state security court was established. Within days, in the aftermath of the murder of Sylvanus Olympio, president of nearby Togo, by a band of ex-servicemen—it was Black Africa's first coup d'état—Houphouët staged a party purge. The court jailed 129 persons, and 13 were condemned to death. The chief justice, Ernest Boka, resigned in protest. The next year Boka too was inculpated and died in prison—a suicide, it was claimed.

In a long public address explaining that Boka had confessed in writing, then hanged himself by his pajama pants in the shower of his cell, Houphouët charged the jurist with having been tempted by advice from the spirit world (via *marabouts*) into plotting the murder of the chief of state who blocked his way to power. Displayed in proof were miniature coffins, allegedly seized from Boka, containing Houphouët's effigy. (It was not the first time Houphouët charged that fetishes were being used against him; in 1959 he claimed to have found in his Yamoussoukro quarters the severed head of a black cat, with a cow's horn clutched in its jaws, placed there by his enemies.)

Following Boka's death, the state security court was reorganized and an additional 96 plotters were tried. This time poisoned arrows were allegedly the proposed murder weapons. Just as 1964 ended, six more death sentences were handed down (Mockey's among them), but as with the previous trials, the executions were stayed.

In 1967, on the occasion of his aunt's funeral, Houphouët declared an amnesty (in the funeral oration, he also explained that he was violating family tradition by not offering human sacrifices). And in 1971, he invited all the former Boka affair prisoners to Yamoussoukro and professed his friendship; their ordeal was all the fault of his overzealous security chief, he declared.

From the outside, Houphouët never faced serious trouble. Accusing the Russians of subverting Ivorian students, he closed down the Soviet Embassy in 1969 for more than a decade. From Guinea, of course, came constant blasts: Radio Conakry reported that Houphouët had "bought a woman in Guinea," he had had Boka killed, he was a stooge of the imperialists—an African "Ngo Dinh Diem." Abidjan replied in kind, yet without the same personal invective against Touré.

In later years there was something of a rapprochement between the two leaders. In 1972, Houphouët paid a state visit to Guinea; in

1978, he and Touré attended an African summit in Liberia together.

By then, Sékou Touré was turning to the West. He grumbled that the Soviets were "more capitalistic than the capitalists," pointing to the \$25 million a year Guinea was paying Moscow for its early loans and "assistance." Three-quarters of what foreign exchange Guinea could count on was coming from Western consortiums' bauxite operations.

In 1978 Touré welcomed the French president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to Conakry, affirming renewed relations with Paris. He traveled to the United States, where he marveled at the productivity of the Midwest's family-owned farms. In 1982 he called on President Ronald Reagan at the White House and courted Wall Street financiers. He started easing out of his alliance with Moscow and toned down his Marxist rhetoric; his philosophy became a more typically African mélange of socialism, nationalism, and Islam. Guinea's "economic police" were disbanded and contraband goods appeared in markets; some private firms were allowed to operate, prisoners were freed.

Where all this would have led is unknown. Touré was ill with heart trouble, and ever more distant from the few qualified aides left around him. In March 1984, he was flown aboard a Saudi plane to Cleveland, Ohio, for coronary surgery; he died on the operating table. Vice Presi-



All the amenities: Abidjan boasts an ice-skating rink; Yamoussoukro, the official capital, has a golf course, kept green by a costly watering system.

dent George Bush flew to Conakry for the funeral. The week after Touré's death, Guinean soldiers overthrew the caretaker government in a bloodless coup, abolished the Constitution, declared a Second Republic, and began the massive task of cleaning up. As the prisons were opened, the horror stories emerged of beatings and torture, of prisoners locked away without food or water—Guinea's infamous "black diet."

Sékou Touré had rejected de Gaulle's offer of continued ties to France; he had said his people preferred poverty over servitude. Guineans got poverty *and* servitude.

Heeding the Wise Men

Just as Guinea faced a reckoning after Sékou Touré, so will the Ivory Coast after Houphouët-Boigny. Such were the predictions in Paris and Abidjan as *le Vieux* neared his official 83rd birthday this October. For one thing, the economy's future is not assured, nor can it be in an agricultural country so dependent on volatile world demand for a few major commodities. Exchange rates present further complications; the rise of the dollar during the early 1980s increased the nation's debt-service load. Rescheduled again, beginning in 1984, the external debt is now over \$7 billion.

For all its agricultural wealth, the country does not feed itself. Many basic foods, notably rice and wheat, are imported. And young Ivorians are not staying on the farm. A *retour à la terre* (return to the land) propaganda effort, coupled with a Peace Corps-type program employing university students to help improve village life, has not yet stemmed the exodus. Of those who come to the capital in droves, young educated folk—Ivorians and immigrants from Guinea and elsewhere who have gone to the University of Abidjan—face a squeeze top and bottom. Below them are African immigrants from Mali, Burkina Faso, or Ghana who perform the menial jobs at cut-rate wages that Ivorians scorn; above, in government offices and industry, are the French.

Here lies the potential for real trouble. "Ivorization," the progressive replacement of expatriates by Ivorians, is the government's stated aim. The problem is its pace. Inevitably, Africans feel it is too slow. But Houphouët has declared that he did not want Ivorization "on the cheap," that is, before Ivorians were qualified to take over.

Indeed, in Houphouët's own presidential entourage, most of those doing the real work of government are white. Those who play a protocolary role—appearing with Houphouët when he hosts foreign dignitaries, for instance—are black, or at least non-European.

What might happen after Houphouët, whether a xenophobic wave might sweep the French out, is the question. There has been little overt tension between Ivorians and the French—a few incidents, but nothing like the antiforeign feeling that has boiled up in Abidjan, sometimes violently, against immigrants from African countries. If the French were

to withdraw, or be driven out, the resultant turmoil would not match that of Angola or Mozambique in 1975, when the Portuguese left overnight; the Ivory Coast now does have a substantial educated class of capable people. But there could be, among them, a rush for positions and for power, in which the tribal rivalries that Houphouët managed to contain would surely surface. The Ivorian army, although very much part of the system now, could get into the scramble too.

To a degree, the post-Houphouët era has already begun. During the 1980s, *le Vieux* was, as Ivorians noticed, slowing down with age. His speeches were getting shorter, his vacations abroad longer. (The fact that he could leave the country so often was always regarded as an indication of how secure his hold was.) This summer, the succession, more than ever, was Abidjan's topic A.

Various names were being advanced. One was Philippe Yacé, who returned to office in 1986 as president of the policy-making Economic and Social Council. Another was a long-time Houphouët protégé: National Assembly president Henri Konan Bédié, a former minister of finance and ambassador to the United States.

For once, Houphouët was not making the country's decision.

In 1980, when he was elected to his fifth term, he gave in to pressures from the French, and others who wanted political insurance for their investment in the country, and established a vice-presidency. In 1985, for his sixth term, the Constitution was re-amended and the office abolished; instead, the National Assembly president would act as interim head of state and PDCI leader, pending elections in 45 to 60 days.

So, Houphouët explained, African custom would be preserved: A new chief would not be chosen while the old chief was alive. "I listen to my people . . . wise old men from the heart of the country paraded before me, or sent me letters. They all reminded me that here, I am by custom the Chief; that we have principles that must be respected . . . They do not want a successor's name known while I am still in power."

But that successor, he thought, would have an easier time of it: "God will help us find the man who, tomorrow, will carry on my work—and with far greater facility, as it is much more difficult to lay out a path than to widen a road."

Perhaps.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE IVORY COAST

"Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at the present there is none; there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness . . . and darkness is not the subject of history."

That 1962 remark by Oxford's Hugh Trevor-Roper is often cited to show what little even scholars in the West knew of the "Dark Continent" until recently. As Michael Crowder notes in **West Africa Under Colonial Rule** (Northwestern, 1968), European colonists truly believed they were civilizing "a benighted people."

In the most complete survey of the subject in English, the two-volume **History of West Africa** (Columbia, 1972-73) edited by J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, Thurstan Shaw traces "the misfortune of Africa" to 3,000 B.C., when final drying out of the Sahara began.

The desert blocked the spread of the Bronze Age Egyptians' innovations—writing, mathematics, the wheel. Not until camel transport became common 3,000 years later did the Sahara barrier fall. Sub-Saharan Africa did have an Iron Age. It probably began in West Africa: Slag deposits—some in the Ivory Coast—testify to the making of metal farm tools and weapons. These allowed the rise of expansive societies—e.g., the Mali Empire, which peaked during the 14th century, and the Songhai Empire, which flourished in what is now Mali, Niger, and Nigeria until a 16th-century invasion from Morocco destroyed it.

As John Ralph Willis writes in **The Horizon History of Africa** (American Heritage, 1971), Islam, which Arabs brought to North Africa, was carried south of the Sahara by Mande-Diula traders. In the Ivory Coast, Bondoukou and Kong were founded as Muslim towns around the start of the 15th century. But Muslims did not bring civiliza-

tion. When they came, "a well-arranged system of commerce" was in place.

The Europeans, when *they* arrived, faced not only organized societies—such as the Ashanti and Dahomey kingdoms, founded during the 17th century—but also another foreign influence, Islam.

Yet, as Crowder notes in **Colonial West Africa** (Cass, 1978), the only West Africans to defeat the Europeans soundly in more than one major battle were the Ashanti in the Gold Coast, who won two of eight clashes with the British beginning in 1823. Tribal rivalries, poor weapons, and superstition (mostly, the Africans dared attack only by day) were fatal military flaws.

In **France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule** (Yale, 1972), edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, Gifford and Timothy Weiskel deal with colonial education.

Africans could not be Frenchmen: A 19th-century authority, Gustave Le Bon, said that "a Negro" will get "all the diplomas possible without ever arriving at the level of an ordinary European." So Africans were just taught to respect the French. Thanks to them, read one text, "the exertions of the little tyrannic powers have given way to the good works of regular and stable administration."

Other colonial histories are John D. Hargreaves' two-volume **West Africa Partitioned** (Univ. of Wisc., 1974); Edward Mortimer's **France and the Africans, 1944-1960: A Political History** (Walker, 1969); and Dorothy White's **Black Africa & De Gaulle: From the French Empire to Independence** (Pa. State Univ., 1979).

In **False Start in Africa** (Praeger, 1969), René Dumont forecast enduring poverty for the new nations. One cause: Africa's "balkanization" into many states, each with a "bourgeoisie of the civil service." West Africa alone had

“several hundred cabinet ministers, and several thousand members of parliament”—paid in six months what a peasant earns in a “lifetime of hard labor.”

Dumont’s forebodings proved all too accurate, suggests Martin Meredith’s **First Dance of Freedom: Black Africa in the Postwar Era** (Harper, 1985). A generation after independence, Africa’s future is discussed “only in pessimistic terms.” Its ills include “a form of personal rule exercised in an arbitrary and authoritarian manner.”

Most all the former French, British, Belgian, and Italian colonies had democratic constitutions. Yet, Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg note in **Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant** (Univ. of Calif., 1982), the nations’ economic woes and scant political experience made governance “more a matter of seamanship and less one of navigation—that is, staying afloat rather than going somewhere.” What arose was not Western democracy but leaders who had to devise “personal systems of governance in the absence of effective institutions.”

The authors define the prevalent leader type as the *Prince*—men such as Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta and Senegal’s Léopold Senghor, who ruled via other oligarchs. A Prince presides; an *Autocrat*—the Ivory Coast’s Houphouët-Boigny, Zaire’s Mobutu Sese Seko—commands. “The country is his estate.”

Other leader types are the *Prophet* (visionaries, such as Guinea’s Sékou Touré, who seek to remake society) and the *Tyrant*. The latter has been rare, despite such despots as Equatorial Guinea’s Francisco Macías Nguema and Uganda’s Idi Amin, whose “state of blood” (1971–79) may have claimed 300,000 lives.

Crawford Young’s **Ideology and Development in Africa** (Yale, 1982)

examines the links between political style and economic success. As the 1960s began, many nations—Nigeria, Zaire, Cameroon, Malawi, the Ivory Coast—chose Western-style market economies, but the “African socialism” espoused by Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah and Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere got the attention. As that failed to bring progress, in 1969 Congo-Brazzaville’s military rulers set up a “Marxist-Leninist” regime. Somalia, Benin, and Madagascar followed, as did Angola, Mozambique, and other ex-Portuguese colonies.

Soon, nearly one in five African states were professing Marxist-Leninist ideals. Moscow became Africa’s major arms supplier. Still, notes Young, rapid growth remained elusive. The only black “Afro-Marxist” state to show “respectable” progress was Tanzania. The only countries to “stand out,” besides oil-rich Nigeria, were two “African capitalist” nations, Kenya and the Ivory Coast.

The ex-colonists’ ties to Black Africa are frayed. In **Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfer of Power, 1960–1980** (Yale, 1988), edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch finds that true even of France. It still sends aid, but “no longer has an obvious commercial interest” in Francophone Africa. The ex-colonies account for only two percent of France’s imports and four percent of its exports; only a third of their exports go to France. With the Ivory Coast now struggling with debts, the former French colonies seem no better off than their neighbors.

Even so, the Ivorian achievement stands. Twenty years ago, Zaire’s Mobutu toured the land and its plantations. “Now that I’ve visited Houphouët and his country,” said the man who had won power in a military coup, “I wonder which of us is the real revolutionary.”