



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.

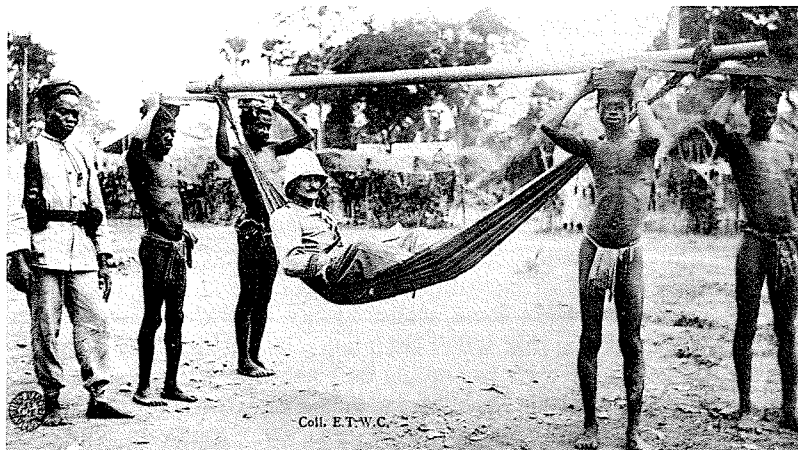
The Ivory Coast, just to the west on the Gulf of Guinea, had long been ignored. Binger had not gone there on a mission of discovery in the style of such early explorers as Mungo Park, René Caillié, and David Livingstone. He was a point man in what had been christened (by *The Times* of London in 1884)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

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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 Abron 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.

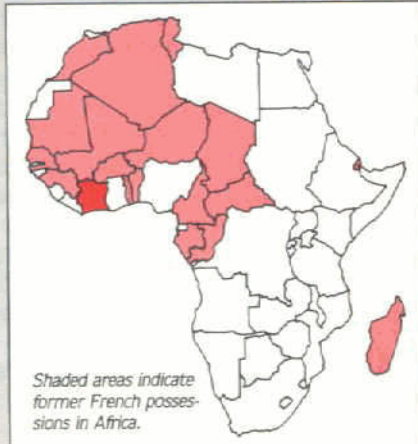


ATLANTIC OCEAN

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.