

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

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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.

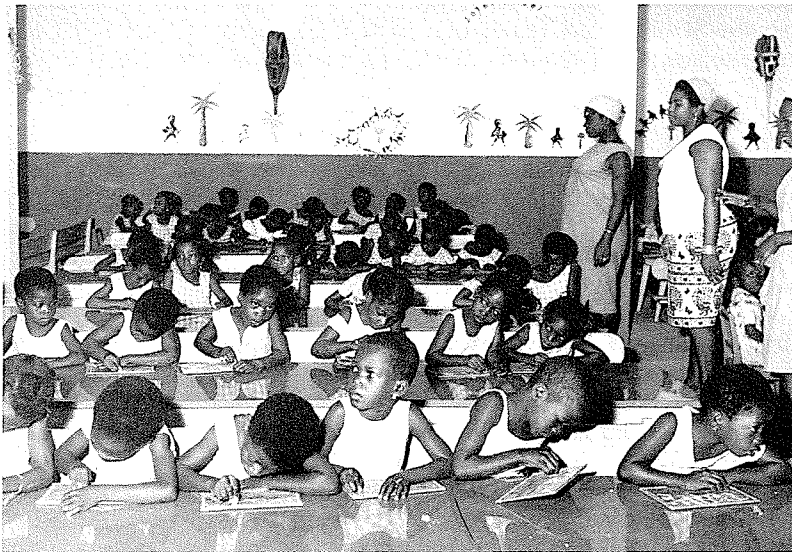
It is also on its way to becoming Africa's chief producer of latex

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 Ivorians 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 Ivorians 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.

Ivorians 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 Ivorian 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 Ivoirians 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—Ivoirians 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 Ivoirians scorn; above, in government offices and industry, are the French.

Here lies the potential for real trouble. "Ivorization," the progressive replacement of expatriates by Ivoirians, 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 Ivoirians 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 Ivoirians 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.

