

# An Iowan Visits Africa

## Coffee Is Vital Economic Factor

By ROBERT D. LEE



ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast — Some 250,000 Ivoirian farmers who raise coffee and cocoa have seen their incomes double in the last six years.

Earning on the average \$500 a year, these people represent the base of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny's support.

The President himself owns a plantation of several thousand acres at Yamoussoukro in the central part of the country and works hard at promoting an image of himself as a farmer-President. He has been known to send out formal invitations reading: "Felix Houphouet-Boigny, planter and president of the Republic," and Madame request. . . ."

This sentimental rapport notwithstanding, some observers wonder if these farmers' support for Houphouet would be so solid if their pocketbooks stopped growing fatter. It seems certain the coffee and cocoa windfall of recent years will not be repeated.

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Until last year demand for the Ivory Coast's robusta coffee had kept pace with increasing production. Since robustas are preferred for instant coffees, American companies in particular were buying more and more, both for use in instants and for mixing with South American strains in regular blends.

In 1965, however, the Ivory Coast produced 280,000 tons of coffee, or more than twice the quantity it is allowed to sell under the International Coffee agreements. Farmers' incomes rose anyway, because the government purchased the entire crop at prices reduced by only 20 per cent. But such generosity cannot be expected again this year, according to Siaka Coulibaly, director of foreign trade.

Coulibaly says prices will be reduced to the point where farmers are receiving for their whole crop only as much money as the country's quota of coffee can be sold for.

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Such price reductions might be unnecessary if this year's crop turned out to be smaller than the last, as a result of adverse weather conditions. But even in this case,

made by the Common Market to any of its associate members, of which the Ivory Coast is one. The Common Market has also promised loans totaling \$12 million for the establishment of palm oil mills.

With this average entering production in the early 1970s, the Ivory Coast will join the ranks of the world's great palm oil producers. It is already Africa's greatest exporter of tropical woods and the world's third largest producer of cocoa and coffee—which account for 65 per cent of its export revenues.

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Rubber and sugar cane production would also shoot up in the early '70s if the Ivoirian government accepted proposals that have been laid before it by American companies, who would create new plantations.

Agriculture, especially in the central and northern regions, would be still further spurred if financing could be found for a \$162-million hydroelectric and irrigation project on the Bandama River near the President's model plantation at Yamoussoukro. The World Bank turned down a loan request last September, but the American Export-Import Bank is now considering the project.

The southwest region is also believed to offer as yet untapped agricultural possibilities. The U. S. Agency for International Development (AID) is paying for a study of the area to determine its potential.

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The combination of all these prospects for increased agricultural production in five to 10 years leads businessmen to predict a new wave of industrial and commercial expansion for the Ivory Coast after 1970. They say the country's growth rate, which tailed off to a mere seven per cent last year — still very rapid for Africa — should climb back to around 10 per cent at that time.

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Such price reductions might be unnecessary if this year's crop turned out to be smaller than the last, as a result of adverse weather conditions. But even in this case, coffee farmers' incomes are sure to suffer. For this reason, the government is urging that land be diverted from the production of coffee to other crops.

It is also trying to make the country less dependent on cocoa, which has the disadvantage of being perishable and thus subject to speculation and wild price fluctuation. Unlike coffee, though, the long-range international market for cocoa appears bright.

Among the crops the government would like to have farmers raise more of are rice, palm oil, cotton, pineapple and sugar cane.

President Houphouet has said the Ivory Coast should be self-sufficient in rice by importing 70,000 tons a year, although it currently imports 70,000 tons a year, some of it from the United States. This eats up foreign goods, the president reasons.

Some 160 Nationalist Chinese rice experts have been called in to assist Ivorian farmers in starting rice cultures.

The government hopes palm oil will become a great new export crop. Some

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New markets will open up, they say, when farmers have more money to spend. And contented farmers should assure the requisite political stability.

The only major cloud that no one quite knows how to erase from this idyllic picture is the problem of Africanization of industry and commerce.

## An Iowan Visits Africa

# 'Riviera' Planned on Ivory Coast

By ROBERT D. LEE



ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast—An ice-skating rink among palm trees. A Disneyland of African animals. An 18-hole golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones with surrounding bungalows for rent to tourists. And an assortment of hotels and motels to suit every traveler's budget.

These are the essentials of a multi-million dollar plan to turn a 15-mile stretch of tropical rain forest along a coastal lagoon east of Abidjan into an African Riviera.

The promoters, an Israeli businessman and the Ivoirian government, hope it will make the Ivory Coast West Africa's first major vacation spot.

Already the Ivoirian capital, Abidjan, has become a favorite stopover for British businessmen going from Sierra Leone to Ghana or Nigeria. And travelers with business in several countries along the coast find excuses to stay an extra day or two in Abidjan to enjoy its luxurious hotels and French cuisine.

In fact, businessmen keep Abidjan's four first-rate hotels so full there is little room for tourists. The best of them, the Hotel Ivoire, a 207-room establishment with two nightclubs and a swimming pool, is booked months in advance during the busiest seasons. (A double room with a view of the lagoon costs \$18.)

Although only three years old, the Ivoire has already begun a three-phase expansion program. The first phase, including a 600-seat movie theater and a 10-lane bowling alley, will be completed next month.

This fall the hotel will build a native-style village on its grounds to house as many as 1,000 members of France's popular vacation association, the Club Mediteranee, on its first visit to the Ivory Coast.

In the third phase, 300 rooms will be added to the hotel itself, bringing the number of hotel beds available in the Ivory Coast to about 2,000 by 1968.

But the Ivoire's owners, who are the Ivoirian government and an Israeli financier, Moshe Mayer believe the

to find tourists but where to put them."

Some observers believe Mayer and the government are nevertheless dreaming when they talk about their "African Riviera."

According to a previously published estimate, the project could cost as much as \$300 million over 10 or 15 years. It would include medium and high-cost permanent housing, built around existing African villages, as well as tourist accommodations.

But a spokesman for Mayer said he had seen no reliable estimates of total cost and knew of no basis for the \$300 - million figure. The spokesman said other private investors would undoubtedly be asked to participate in the project once the foundations had been laid.

These will be based on a master plan by William Pereira, the Los Angeles urbanist. The government plans to start cutting roads into the area at the end of the summer rainy season, and the Mayer group will subsequently begin work on the golf course.

Where will the tourists come from? From both Europe and the United States, say government tourism experts.

They believe they can attract large numbers of Swedes to come spend the winter months, for instance. "We can guarantee them sun from December through March," one official points out.

The Ivory Coast also offers a six-year record of political stability, a rarity in Africa.

Small groups of 20 or 30 tourists have started to find their way here. Many more would come, the government tourist agency believes, if it could offer guided tours of the interior.

Tours of Abidjan are being offered for the first time this week. Prices are \$5 for each of two day-time tours and \$16 for dinner and visits to two nightclubs.

Organized tours of the interior are as yet impossible for lack of hotel accommo-

# Presidential Quiz on Ivory Coast

By ROBERT D. LEE



YAMOOUSSOUKRO, Ivory Coast — The President of the Ivory Coast, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, looking relaxed in gabardine shirt and trousers and a tan felt hat, stood for three quarters of an hour in the shade of two rows of palm trees answering the questions of American Peace Corps volunteers who crowded around him.

The 73 Peace Corps members working in the Ivory Coast were guests of the President at his model plantation in Yamoussoukro, 180 miles northwest of Abidjan.

He took them on a brief tour of his newly cleared fields of rice and ignames (similar to potatoes), then offered everyone cool drinks and a chance to pop questions. The volunteers came up with so many — all short, simple and phrased in good French — that the 60-year-old President had trouble finding chances to mop his brow.

He balked at only one question: "Mr. President, if a ruler loses the support of his people, do you think countries like Russia and the United States should continue to give him aid?"

The President laughed. He had just explained that he believed President Sekou Toure of Guinea, once a close friend and associate in the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), had led the Guinean people astray.

"Ah! That I can't say," replied Mr. Houphouet-Boigny. "You are my guests." The Americans joined him in laughter.

Only three days earlier the number-two man in the Ivoirian government, Philippe Yace, who is president of the Assembly and secretary-general of the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast, had said in Paris it was the "oxygen tent" of American economic assistance that allowed President Toure to remain uncommitted to any single policy.

"In effect, we have the impression, that at the same time Sekou Toure is holding out his hand to the United States, his heart is in Peking," said Mr. Yace. American aid to Guinea amounted to about \$20 million last

nothing in the history of the world."

The President explained why he believed socialism ill adapted to the needs of Guinea.

"Socialism means a distribution of wealth," he said. "But first there must be something to distribute."

He pointed to Russian failures in agriculture as evidence that socialism would be equally unsuited to the Ivory Coast, where 90 per cent of the population depends on the soil for existence.

"Here I can make a plantation as big as I like (he has several thousand acres of coffee, cocoa, rice, igname, rice and other crops) because I am not keeping the land from someone else. Since they are only four million of us, there is plenty of land for everybody."

The Ivoirian problem, he said, is not how to divide the land but to get as much as possible of it into cultivation. The government hopes the country will be self-sufficient in food by 1975.

The chief of protocol finally broke up the session with the cry, "The President of the Republic is served." And Houphouet-Boigny and his elegant young wife led the way past a 50-yard-long buffet to the head table.

The Americans were invited to help themselves to caviar sandwiches, roast mutton, tiny pizzas, slices of tenderloin and foofoo, an African dish made from ignames for which many Peace Corps members have acquired a taste. To go with it there was white wine from Alsace, red wine from Bordeaux, champagne from Champagne and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony from somewhere up in a palm tree.

What the guests could not finish, which was a quite a bit, was devoured by two dozen local children who came running into the garden as the President got up from the table and led the party toward his air-conditioned country house.