

IVORY COAST

The members of the study mission met with President Houphouët-Boigny who led the struggle for independence in French-speaking Africa and whose prestige extends beyond the boundaries of his own country.

The President was a Member of the French Parliament prior to independence. The experience he acquired as a parliamentarian in Europe adds to his ability to govern his nation effectively.

Although the Ivory Coast has 60 tribal groups, none is dominant, thus lessening the risk of political problems.

The President is very conscious of the Red Chinese threat and ambition to colonize Africa. His Government and those of several like-minded countries have taken a strong stand against Peiping in African and international meetings. He advocates a unified policy among African states to counter Red Chinese activity in Africa.

It is to be noted that this nation does not yet have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union nor any of the Soviet bloc countries including Yugoslavia, although last fall the Government announced its willingness to consider establishing such relations.

The Ivory Coast has no dazzling natural assets, but its land area is extensive and it has one of the lowest population density percentages on the continent.

The Ivory Coast is the only country which has announced the goal to be completely independent of foreign assistance by 1970. It is the President's strong belief that independence will not be complete until the nation is economically independent. Although certain economic problems may make the attainment of such an objective in so short a period appear overly ambitious, it is a point to be noted and encouraged.

A visit was made to the National Assembly and discussions were held with the President of the Assembly and parliamentarians.

A meeting with American business representatives produced encouraging discussion on the potentialities of more U.S. private investments in the country.

ECONOMY

The Ivory Coast is one of the few African countries today that has become steadily more prosperous since independence. Both gross net product growth and per capita income have increased about 10 percent per year since the nation became independent. Inflation, however, is very much in evidence.