

# Few Persons Predicted Survival When Gambia Was Born

The West African nation of the Gambia probably should not exist. In fact, when it gained independence in 1965, few thought it would survive.

It is tiny—about four-fifths the size of Connecticut. It has only 601,000 people. It is poor. And it has boundaries that made sense only in the colonial era, when the British administered the narrow strip of land on either side of the Gambia River inland from the Atlantic Ocean.

The Gambia, best known to Americans as the place to which "Roots" author Alex Haley traced his ancestors, looks like a finger probing some 200 miles into the heart of Senegal, which surrounds it on three sides. Senegal is much larger, in size and population; its capital, Dakar, alone has a population of 800,000.

**French Next Door**  
But Senegal is a former French colony, with French as its official language and with cultural and economic ties to France. The Gambia uses English as its official language, and is culturally and economically linked to Great Britain.

This "colonial overlay," as one American expert calls it, has been enough to keep the Gambia independent for 17 years. Earlier attempts to merge the two countries, in which many of the same tribal groups appear, foundered because of it.

But now, as a result of a coup attempt in the Gambia last summer, a confederation called "Senegambia" has been formed.

Gambian leaders had asked for Senegalese troops to put down the rebellion. Afterward the two nations decided to move ahead with the confederation, in which each will retain a separate identity, but share some powers.

There are Gambians, however, who fear that confederation will mean the end of their nation. These Gambians, particularly in the educated elite, fear that the larger country in such a merger inevitably swallows up the smaller partner.

On a continent where instability and anti-Western feelings have been the norm, Senegal and the Gambia—"the" distinguishes the nation from Zambia—have been exceptions.

**Friendly to West**  
Though predominantly Moslem, both have been pro-Western democracies that have ejected Libyans suspected of fomenting discontent. Both have tolerated legal opposition and have held free elections. Neither has seen a successful coup.

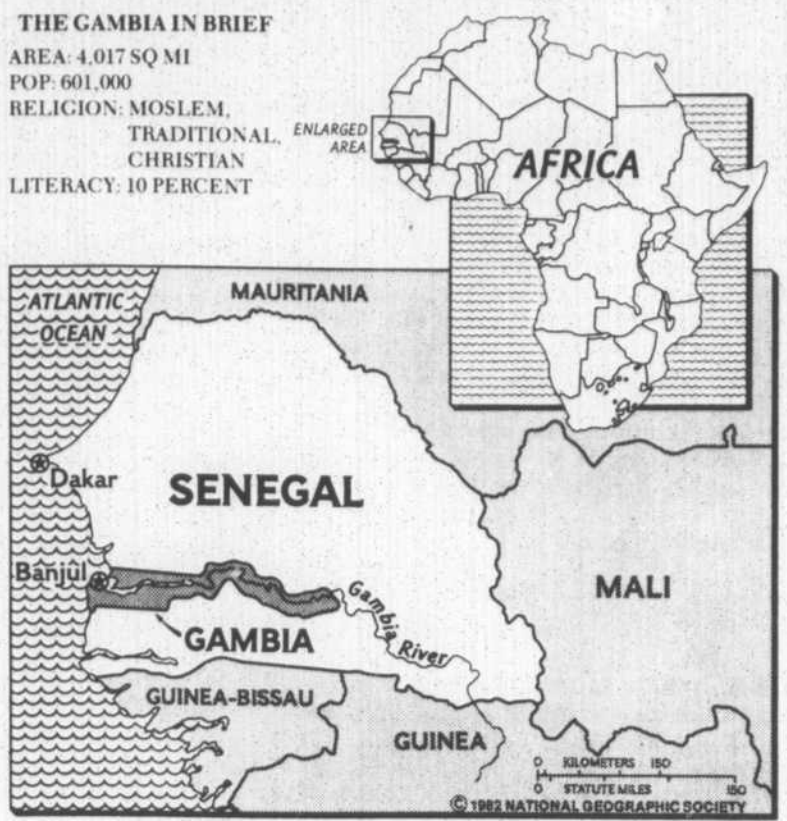
Both are poor. The per capita annual income in Senegal is \$430, and in the Gambia is \$260. Life expectancy is barely over 40 years.



A Gambian woman carries all her necessities in a pot on her head, rather than in a purse. More than 85 percent of the population of the Gambia, a tiny West African nation, live in rural areas not far from the Gambia River.

## THE GAMBIA IN BRIEF

AREA: 4,017 SQ MI  
POP: 601,000  
RELIGION: MOSLEM, TRADITIONAL, CHRISTIAN  
LITERACY: 10 PERCENT



Abdou Diouf, Senegal's president.

**Confederation Born**  
Within weeks, a move toward confederation was announced. A communique issued after Diouf's visit to the Gambia in November said the confederation would be "based on" integration of the armed forces, economic and monetary union, a coordinated foreign policy, and cooperation in other areas.

"The Senegalese are worried about the kind of security problems an unfriendly Gambia could pose," said Walter C. Carrington, U. S. ambassador to Senegal in 1980-81 and now director of the Department of International Affairs at Howard University.

"There are miles of border where things could happen. There is smuggling. The Senegalese were worried when the Libyans were in the Gambia. Senegal feels that if it has to bail out the Gambia, it wants a say in how security forces are organized.

The Gambians feel that

though they are the smaller partner, they bring something of value to the confederation.

"Our civil servants are competent and experienced," said Gorre-Ndiaye. "We have a river, which can be used for irrigation and hydroelectric purposes. There is a tourist infrastructure to complement that of Senegal. There is a lot of virgin land, a port that could be beneficial, and an international airport."

Some details remain to be worked out for the confederation, which became official Feb. 1, 1982. President Diouf of Senegal will be president of Senegambia, and Gambia's Jawara will be vice president.

**Some U. S. Aid**  
The direct American stake in the area is not large. There is little U. S. investment in Senegal, virtually none in the Gambia. The United States gave nearly \$35 million in economic aid to Senegal in the last fiscal year, about \$7.5 million to the Gambians.

State Department officials, while emphasizing that details should be settled without outside involvement, say that the merger could help stabilize the area. Former Ambassador Carrington believes a successful confederation is in the American interest.

"Here you have two democratic, pro-Western states friendly to the U. S.," Carrington said. "Both are in the vanguard of trying to contain the Libyans, and both have long had anti-Soviet cast in their policies."

"The most important question to be solved is their economic problem. As the U. S. looks at aid programs, I'd hope and expect that this is one place where the U. S. will focus."

Gorre-Ndiaye agrees. "We are well-endowed naturally; what we lack is financial support," he said. "But we are looking for investment to help Gambians manage the business later. We don't want someone just to come in and take out our resources."

## from HISTORY'S SCRAPBOOK

DATES AND EVENTS FROM YESTERYEARS

- May 27, 1818—Amelia Bloomer, women's rights advocate after whom an undergarment was named, born Homer, N.Y.
- May 28, 1929—Warner Brothers studio releases *On With the Show*, first talking film produced entirely in color.
- May 29, 1917—John F. Kennedy, 35th president and 4th to be assassinated, born Brookline, Mass.
- May 30, 1911—Ray Harroun wins first Indianapolis Speedway 500-mile race by driving his 16-cylinder Marmon "Wasp" at amazing speed of 74.59 mph.
- May 31, 1819—Poet Walt Whitman, author of *Leaves of Grass*, born West Hills, N.Y.
- June 1, 1819—Mme. Adolphe of Paris performs first tightrope walk in United States, at Anthony Street Theater in New York City.
- June 2, 1924—Congress declares that all Indians born in United States are citizens.

In both countries there is heavy reliance on a single crop, peanuts, known locally as groundnuts, though Senegal has made some progress in introducing other industries. Dependence on the nut crop subjects the economy to the vagaries of the weather. Severe drought has been common in recent years in the Sahel region, though the 1981 rainy season was excellent, promising an improved harvest.

A bad harvest led to a sharp drop in Gambian exports, from \$58 million in 1979 to \$31.5 million in 1980. Imports turned upward from almost \$141 million in 1979 to \$163.6 million the following year.

Meanwhile, there was a decline in the number of tourists, many from Sweden and others lured by "Roots." Many Gambians fear that tourism, by bringing in outsiders with different values, will destroy traditional Gambian values. Those values are based on religion, a village structure led by an elder, and a communal system in which women in colorful garb help with farming and prepare meals of rice, goat, fish, palm oil, and groundnuts.

The difficult economic situation, plus a perception of corruption and a lack of dynamism in the government of President Dawda Kairaba Jawara, the nation's leader since independence, brought support for the group that began July 30.

"People wanted a change," said Galandou Gorre-Ndiaye, first secretary of the Gambia Embassy in Washington in explaining the attitude of many Gambians. "Sixteen years of independence didn't prove useful to them. The government had imposed a tax on essential commodities, which made life harder. So people were disenchanted."

**Second Thoughts**  
But, observers agree, the coup leaders quickly alienated ordinary Gambians. They relaxed convicts and armed them, enabling the freed prisoners to kill enemies; estimates of the death toll range from 500 to 800. Rebels also took hostages, including Jawara's wife and children, and broadcast anti-religious, left-wing slogans.

When Jawara invoked a 1965 defense treaty and asked Senegal to aid his outmanned "field force,"

Senegalese soldiers quickly restored order and put Jawara back in control. Sandra Alexander, an American graduate student at Howard University in Washington, D. C., was in the Gambia at the time, helping build a village community center in a project sponsored by Operation Crossroads Africa.

"The leftists had already taken over the radio station the first morning," she said. "By then, they had already let the prisoners out. We didn't go to work that day."

"The next morning the local police took us to a more protected compound.

We stayed there, 18 of us in a two-bedroom house, for six days. We listened to Senegal radio, Radio Gambia, and the BBC, and all had different stories.

"Finally, a Gambian field force major came through, and when he learned there were Americans there, he came in. By then, the area had been cleared. They put us on a truck the next morning, and we traveled north. The road was lined with military vehicles, all Senegalese. People were so different, so silent."

The troops remained, including those in the capital city of Banjul. But the coup attempt led to talks between Jawara and



This fool-proof recipe from Fleischmann's Yeast Test Kitchen will produce fresh, moist rolls for a delightful and hearty sandwich.

### ITALIAN BREAD

Makes 2 loaves or 6 hero rolls

- 5 to 5 1/2 cups unsifted flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 packages Fleischmann's Active Dry Yeast
- 1 tablespoon Fleischmann's Margarine, softened
- 1 3/4 cups very hot tap water (120°F. to 130°F.)
- Cornmeal
- Planters Peanut Oil
- 1 egg white
- 1 tablespoon cold water

In a large bowl thoroughly mix 1 1/4 cups flour, sugar, salt and undissolved yeast. Add softened margarine. Gradually add hot tap water to dry ingredients and beat 2 minutes at medium speed of electric mixer, scraping bowl occasionally. Add 3/4 cup flour and beat at high speed 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Stir in enough additional flour to make a stiff dough. Turn out onto lightly floured board and knead until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes. Cover; let rest for 20 minutes.

**To make loaves:** Divide dough in half. Roll each half into an oblong 15 x 10 inches. Beginning at wide side, roll up tightly; pinch seam to seal. Taper ends by rolling gently back and forth.

**To make rolls:** Divide dough into 6 equal pieces. Roll each piece into an oblong, 8 x 5 inches. Beginning at wide side, roll up tightly; pinch seam to seal. Taper ends.

Place on greased baking sheets sprinkled with cornmeal. Brush dough with peanut oil. Cover loosely with wax paper, then top with plastic wrap. Refrigerate 2 to 4 hours.

When ready to bake, remove from refrigerator. Uncover dough carefully. Let stand at room temperature 10 minutes. Make 3 or 4 diagonal cuts on tops with razor blade or sharp knife.

Bake at 425°F. 15 minutes for rolls, 20 minutes for loaves. Remove from oven and brush with egg white mixed with cold water. Return to oven; bake 5 to 10 minutes longer, until golden brown.

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## TIM VALENTINE BELIEVES...

- "Lower interest rates can be achieved through controlled government spending. This would be a shot in the arm to housing and many other markets."
- "A healthier economy will generate real and productive jobs, leaving no need for government 'make-work' projects."
- "We need sound farm programs, like those for tobacco and peanuts, that assure profits for the farmer and plentiful food and fiber for the consumer."
- "Further development of export markets will strengthen American agriculture."
- "Industrial growth in our area is a necessity. But we must protect the quality of the land, water and air around us as well."
- "A strong national defense should be a top priority of the federal government."
- "Social Security is important to the nation's care of its elderly. The system should be maintained without further burdening the taxpayer."
- "Energy reserves should be established and the exploration of new energy resources and alternatives should be accelerated."

Tim Valentine. An experienced North Carolina State Legislator and former State Democratic Party Chairman. A lifelong resident of the 2nd District and graduate of the Military College of South Carolina - The Citadel and the University of North Carolina Law School. Tim understands the needs of the people in our district, our state, and our nation. On June 29th, let's start this man of strength and determination on his way to Congress.

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