ANNA MAGERKO

FRENCH REPORT

MADAGASCAR

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Madagascar

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Mrs. Newsome

11/15/97

Madagascar

My report is on Madagascar. Madagascar is an island of the continent of Africa. It is the fourth largest island in the world. It is in the Indian Ocean. Madagascar is formed by one large island and several small islands. The country’s total area is 226,658 square miles. It is about the size of Texas. The central part of this large island is made of a mountainous plateau. This separates the sides of the island. Madagascar is partly volcanic in origin. The sides of the mountain rise about 2,876 feet to the top. Maromokotro is located near the north of the island. The massive Ankaratra Mountains, near the capital city of Antananarivo, rise to the height of 2,643 miles. The land slopes steeply to a small or narrow lowland bordering the Indian Ocean in the east. There is a somewhat wider coastal plain next to the Mozambique Channel in the west. The best soil in the country is found along the coast, and in river valley’s of the central plateau. The major rivers of Madagascar are Betsiboka, Mangoky and Onilahy. All rivers start on the east side of the country, and flow west towards the Mozambique Channel. The largest lake is near Toamasina. It is called Alaotra.

The eastern part of Madagascar gets a lot of rain, which is brought on shore by winds coming from the southeasterly direction. Annual precipitation in some areas on the eastern coast is about 120 inches. The central plateau doesn’t get as much rain. Areas in the south and southwest get about 15 inches of rain. Most of the rain falls between November and April. Coastal regions remain at a warm or hot temperature throughout the year. The central plateau has a climate of warm summers and cool winters. Tropical rain forests are also in Madagascar. The Savanna woodlands and grasslands grow in the drier western regions. Desert vegetation occurs in the extreme southwest. Animal life is uncommon in Madagascar. Lemur, is an animal that is found almost always in Madagascar. All the animals that are in Madagascar share characteristics with animals in Africa. The differences indicate they evolved on Madagascar during a long period of isolation.

They have minerals in Madagascar like the ones we have in United States of America. They have coal and nickel. Other important mineral resources include bauxite, chromium, graphite, iron ore, petroleum and copper deposits, as well as small amounts of salt, garnets, and mica.

Madagascar has an ethnically diverse population of 13,005,989. The number of people living there is growing at a comparatively high annual rate of 3.2 percent. Some major ethnic groups are the Merina, who makes up 27 percent of the total population, and the Betsilo [12 percent] who are related to the Merina. Both groups descended mostly from Malaya and Indonesia about 2,000 years ago. The coastal areas are in habited mainly by a group of mixed people. The ancestries among these people are Malayo-Indonesian, black African, and Arab. The ethnic groups are Tsimihety [7 percent ], Sakalave [6 percent ], and Antaiska [5 percent ] . Only 22 percent of the total population is classified as urban. Antananarivo the capital, is the largest city with a population of 703,000. Other important cities are Toamasina [139,000], Fianarantsoa [111,000], Mahajanga [111,000], Toliara [59,000], and Antsiranana [53,000].

The two official languages of Madagascar are the Merina dialect of Malagasy, a language of Malayo-Indonesian origin, and the other is French. Approximately 41 percent of the religion in Madagascar is Christian. Fifty-two percent follows traditional beliefs and 7 percent is Muslim.

In 1976 the government passed legislation making six years of school mandatory. By the middle of the 1980s the literacy rate was up 67 percent. Virtually all children in the age group of six to eleven attended elementary school, and 21 percent of those between the ages of twelve and seventeen were enrolled in secondary school. The country’s main source of higher education is at the University of Antananarivo. Most of higher education centers are located in Antananarivo.

Madagascar’s radio and television broadcasting is provided by Radio-Television Malgasy and Radio Madagasikara. Both stations are state owned. Not everybody has a radio or television, so the government owns a newspaper, Madagascar-Tribune. There is one other newspaper it is the Imongo Vaovao. Both of the newspapers are made in Antananarivo.

In 1975, Madagascar’s government said, under the constitution, that the country was ruled by a president who was elected for seven years. They have a twenty-two member Supreme Revolutionary Council, which is appointed by the president. They also have a Council of Ministers that is lead by the Prime Minister. They have yet another council it is called the People’s National Assembly. It is a 137 member assembly, elected by the people. The members serve a five year term. Madagascar’s Judicial system is based upon that of France. It includes a supreme court, located in Antananarivo, a court of appeal, eleven courts of first instance, and special economic and criminal tribunals. Madagascar’s military has 21,000 members. Madagascar is a member of the United Nations. It also is a part of the Organization of African Unity, and several other organizations.

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world. The country remains, like in colonial times, mostly agricultural. Eighty percent of the country’s labor force is engaged in agricultural activities.

The main food crops in Madagascar are rice, cassava, beans, bananas, corn, sweet potatoes, and taro. The production of goods has not kept up with the growing population. Also, the importation of large amounts of food, can’t keep up with it either. The cash crops are coffee, cloves, sugarcane, sisal, tobacco, and eighty percent of the world’s supply of vanilla. Livestock includes 10.6 million cattle, one point one million goats, and one point four million pigs. Not a lot of commercial fishing is done in Madagascar. Most of the fish caught is consumed locally. Efforts to replenish the forest lands are underway. They are planning to do this because in the middle 1980s 7.3 million cubic feet of forest land was cut.

Public transportation in Madagascar is not very high. The country has only 549 miles of railroad track. They have some 11,560 miles of road. Thirty percent of the roads are paved. Only about 36,000 cars are in use. Toamasina is the main port handling 35 percent of the nation’s foreign trade. Mahajanga, Toliara, and Antsiranana are some other port cities. Madagascar only has four major airports. The international airport is located in Antananarivo. Madagascar has its own airline, which is called Air Madagascar.

Foreign trade in Madagascar generally has a negative balance. In the late 1980's import and export values have increased. Coffee has made up 28 percent of all exports by value, followed by vanilla [twenty-six percent], sugar [five percent], and cloves and clove oil [four percent]. Exports include Chemicals [fifteen percent], machinery [fourteen percent], crude petroleum [ten percent], motor vehicles and parts [nine percent], and metal products [seven percent]. The major trading partners of Madagascar are France, United States, Germany, and Japan.

Of course Madagascar has its own money. The money in Madagascar is called Malagasy franc. One dollar in US currency is equal to 1846.87 Malagasy francs.

The history of Madagascar, first European to sight the island was Diogo Dias. Dias was from Portugal. He found the island some time in the 1500s. During the 17th century, the Portuguese, the English, and the French successively and unsuccessfully tried to colonize Madagascar. The French got a temporary hold on the island in 1642. They were driven out in 1674. They finally acquired trading places along the east coast in the following century. From 1810 to 1828, during the reign of the Merina king, Radama I, who didn’t like the French, allowed the English to come and live there. British officers trained Merina troops, and British missionaries introduced Christianity. After the death of Radama I, a strong reaction towards European culture developed. Reforms were abolished, the missionaries were persecuted, and trade relations with Great Britain were severed. Radama II reigned from 1861 to 1863. He was a generally a progressive ruler. He got along with the French. Radama II was killed because of this fact. There was a period of time when they’re arguing with the French. After that period of time, Queen Ranavalona III took over ruling Madagascar, in 1895. In 1896, because of popular uprisings, Madagascar was proclaimed a colony of France. Then military rule was instituted, and the queen was sent out of the country and was not allowed to return. Now Madagascar has its own government, and is progressing well. They have a system similar to the United States. They have a congress, a constitution, and a president. Their president is elected for a seven year term. Unlike our president’s term that is only for four years. The official name for Madagascar is Democratic Republic of Madagascar.

I chose to do my report on Madagascar because it is an island. I love islands. I have always wanted to live on an island. Another reason I choose Madagascar was because I had heard of Madagascar but never really found out where it was until I did my report.