

GABON

République Gabonaise

AREA AND POPULATION. The area of the Gabon Republic covers 267,000 sq. km; its population in 1970 was about 475,000, including about 12,000 Europeans. The capital is Libreville (73,000 inhabitants). A population census took place in 1970.

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT. The Gabonese Republic became independent on 17 Aug. 1960 after having been one of the 4 territories of French Equatorial Africa and, from 28 Nov. 1958, a member state of the French Community. In Jan. 1959 it formed an 'economic, technical and customs union' with the other 3 territories of the former government-general of French Equatorial Africa. The Republic was admitted to the UN on 20 Sept. 1960.

President of the Republic, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence: Albert-Bernard Bongo (re-elected for 7-year term on 25 Feb. 1973).

Foreign Minister: Georges Rawiri.

FINANCE. The ordinary budget for 1971 provided for expenditure of 16,700m. francs CFA, and the development expenditure, 7,800m.

DEFENCE. The army consists of 1 infantry battalion and 2 commando battalion companies, totalling 900 men.

The air force is reported to have one C-47 transport, one or two Broussard light communications aircraft, 3 Alouette helicopters and between 50 and 100 personnel.

PRODUCTION. 1970: Manganese dioxide, 30,000 metric tons; uranium concentrates, 1,080 metric tons; natural gas, 17,423,00 cu. metres (1967); gold, 29,157 troy oz. (1967); timber (okoumé), 1m. metric tons. A large deposit of iron ore estimated at 1,000m. metric tons was discovered in 1971 at Mékambo near Belinga.

The petroleum refinery in Port Gentil, a joint venture of the governments of the five members of the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC) and foreign petroleum companies, began trial operations in Oct. 1967. The refinery produced 5.8m. tons of crude oil in 1971.

TRADE. In 1970 imports totalled 22,300m. francs CFA and exports 33,660m. francs CFA). France, USA and West Germany are Gabon's principal trading partners; the share of these countries in Gabon's exports has declined from 80% in 1966 to 66% in 1967, owing to the diversion of a substantial proportion of petroleum exports to other countries. These three countries continued to provide about 66% of Gabon's imports.

Trade with the UK (British Board of Trade returns, in £1,000 sterling):

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Imports to UK	2,641	2,506	1,681	1,152	1,569	2,506
Exports and re-exports from UK	698	804	1,005	960	1,050	1,808

COMMUNICATIONS. Libreville and Port Gentil are the main ports. Together with Pointe-Noire (Congo), they received 1,531 vessels in 1963; merchandise unloaded was 176,400 tons; loaded, 1,319,000 tons. Telephones (1969), 4,300. Under a development plan (1966-70) 2,300m. francs CFA per annum are to be spent on road construction.

French High Representative: F. S. de Quirielle.

Ambassador to UK: Joseph N'Goua.

British Ambassador and Consul-General: (Vacant). *First Secretary:* P. J. Barlow (resident at Yaoundé).

Ambassador to USA: Gaston-Robert Bouckat-Bon-Nziengui.

USA Ambassador: J. A. McKesson, III.

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