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belief in the government's denials by removing the Congo from its roster of countries producing legitimate diamonds. This effectively prevented Brazzaville from selling gems on the legal world market.

On August 14 the Congo-Ocean Railway (CFCO) celebrated its 70th anniversary. Long the principal shipping artery between Brazzaville and the port of Pointe-Noire, the CFCO had seen its traffic drastically reduced during the civil wars of the past 10 years. It had received \$13 million from the World Bank in January to help restore its track and rolling stock. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) signed an agreement with the Brazzaville government on September 9 to provide electricity for magnesium and aluminum plants under construction in the district of Kouilou, in southern Congo.

The country marked its 44th year of independence on August 15 with a huge military and civilian parade. The presidents of the DRC, Gabon, Ghana, and Nigeria attended the celebrations at Pointe-Noire. (NANCY ELLEN LAWLER)

an annual level of 13%—its highest rate in six years—the legislature was unable to pass a deficit-reduction package, and many sectors of the population refused to accept the terms of the CAFTA agreement. The legislature had not yet acted on CAFTA, but the agreement was stalled in the U.S. Congress as well. By August 2004 much of the country was paralyzed by a national strike that involved sectors as diverse as schoolteachers and truckers; the administration was forced to make economic concessions.

Once again in 2004 Pacheco's administration was hit by a wave of cabinet resignations. Many Costa Ricans were already focused on the February 2006 presidential election. In March 2004 former president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oscar Arias Sánchez announced his candidacy on a platform to transform Costa Rica into Latin America's "first developed country." In October a wave of scandals rocked the country and resulted in the arrest of two former presidents who were accused of taking bribes.

(MITCHELL A. SELIGSON)

COSTA RICA



Area: 51,100 sq km (19,730 sq mi)

Population (2004 est.): 4,252,000

Capital: San José

Head of state and government: President Abel Pacheco de la Esperiella

For much of 2004, national attention in Costa Rica was riveted on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the United States. By late 2003 bilateral negotiations had reached an impasse, and there were growing hints that Costa Rica would be excluded from the agreement, but in January 2004 the differences were smoothed over. The main sticking point had been the U.S. insistence that Costa Rica's state-run monopolies in telecommunications—including cell phones and the Internet—as well as electric power and insurance, be opened to competition. By the terms of the agreement struck with the U.S., state monopoly status in these areas would be removed by 2011.

Pres. Abel Pacheco de la Esperiella had a hard year. Although economic growth was in the 4–5% range, inflation reached

CÔTE D'IVOIRE



Area: 320,803 sq km (123,863 sq mi)

Population (2004 est.): 16,897,000

De facto capital: Abidjan

Chief of state: President Laurent Gbagbo

Head of government: Prime Minister Seydou Diarra

In 2004 Côte d'Ivoire remained effectively split in two as a result of the civil war that erupted in September 2002. Members of the rebellious New Force alliance (FN) continued to hold the north, while the government, assisted by 4,000 French troops and about 5,800 United Nations peacekeepers, controlled the south. Spasmodic outbreaks of ethnic and religious violence dominated the year. In late April, 10 people died when fighting broke out in the western cocoa-producing area, and in June FN adherents fired on government and French soldiers patrolling the demilitarized zone, killing at least 7 people. Government helicopters immediately retaliated by launching attacks on rebel-held country. That same day hundreds of Pres. Laurent Gbagbo's

supporters demonstrated outside the French embassy in Abidjan, demanding the withdrawal of the former colonial power's forces since they appeared to be unable to prevent rebel attacks.

On May 26 Amnesty International issued a report condemning, for human rights abuses, all factions in the conflict. The United Nations launched its own inquiry on July 17 and sent a special commission to the country. On August 3 UN investigators found three mass graves near the city of Korhogo that contained at least 100 bodies of persons who likely had been killed in clashes between rival rebel factions.

Political proposals for resolving the conflict seemed to win little support. On March 25 security forces killed at least 120 opposition demonstrators and wounded several hundred more. In protest, 26 cabinet ministers representing four opposition parties and the New Forces withdrew from the power-sharing government. Following a UN-brokered summit meeting held in Accra, Ghana, in late July, opposition parties and the FN agreed to return to the government. On August 9 they attended their first cabinet meeting since March. An extraordinary session of the parliament opened on August 11 to vote on the political reforms called for by the January 2003 Marcoussis accords and the subsequent Accra agreement. With the exception of a law adopted on September 10 guaranteeing freedom of the press, the passage of any

In western Côte d'Ivoire in April, a worker gathers up cocoa beans that have been dried in the sun.

Competition for land on which to grow cocoa, the country's major export, was a factor in the civil violence that split the country.



AP/Wide World Photos

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