

GUATEMALA

Date of Elections: March 3, 1974

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Guatemala, the Congress, consists of 55 members elected for 4 years. Deputies are eligible for re-election only once, 4 years after the termination of their first term.

Electoral System

All Guatemalan citizens, of either sex, who are at least 18 years of age and inscribed on the electoral register have the right to vote. Persons who have been deprived of their civil rights pursuant to criminal conviction or judicial interdiction are barred from being electors.

Voting is compulsory for all citizens who can read and write and optional for illiterate voters.

To be elected Deputy a person must be a native Guatemalan, enjoy his rights of citizenship and be over 30 years of age. Public contractors, close relatives of the President and Vice-President of the Republic, persons who have been convicted in a case involving accounts and have not settled their liabilities, members of the armed forces on active service, persons representing the interests of companies or of individuals operating public services, and ministers of any religion or sect are not eligible for the Congress. Officials of the executive and judicial branches and employees thereof or of the legislative branches may not concurrently hold parliamentary seats; persons holding a teaching position and professionals in the service of social welfare establishments are excepted from this incompatibility.

Candidates must be nominated by legally registered political parties. The Constitution prohibits the formation of parties which advocate the Communist ideology, or whose doctrinal tendency, method of action or international connections threaten the sovereignty of the State or the foundations of its democratic organization. For election purposes, Guatemala is divided into

districts. The number of Deputies from each depends on the latter's population.

Deputies are elected by simple plurality in constituencies in which there is only one seat to be filled. If 2 seats are to be filled, the 2 candidates of the party that polled the most votes are elected, with one exception: when the difference between the total number of valid votes obtained by the first-place party and the total number obtained by the second-place party is less than 20 % of the first-place party's total number. In this case, each of the 2 highest parties receives one of the 2 contested places. When there are 3 or more seats to be filled, a closed list, proportional representation system is used. Distribution of seats is effected according to the d'Hondt method.

Within each constituency, an alternate Deputy is elected at the same time as the titular member. The former must be called upon with 8 days to fill a vacancy which might arise between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The Congressional elections were combined with those for President contested by General Langerud Garcia, the candidate of the ruling conservative National Liberation Movement-Democratic Institutional Party (MLN-PID) coalition; General Rios Montt, candidate of the left-of-centre National Opposition Front (FNO), comprised of the Christian Democrats and the Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (DCG-FURD); and Colonel Paiz Novales, candidate for the centrist Revolutionary Party-Guatemalan Democratic Front (PR-FDG).

The electoral campaign was violent. Demonstrations and incidents persisted during and subsequent to election day. On March 4, the Government interrupted its vote count, and General Montt claimed victory while the Opposition charged vote fraud. Since no presidential candidate obtained an absolute majority, it fell upon Congress to decide between Generals Montt and Garcia. On March 12, the latter was declared the winner by a specially formed commission of the largely conservative outgoing Congress, which announced final figures to be 298,953 votes for General Langerud Garcia, 228,067 votes for General Montt and 143,111 votes for Colonel Novales. General Langerud Garcia was due to take office on July 1, 1974.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Congress

Valid votes 631,866

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Liberation Movement (MLN)	.16
Democratic Institutional Party (PID)	.14
Christian Democratic Party (DCG)	.14
Revolutionary Party (PR)	iO
Organized Aranista Coabtion (CAO)	.1
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