

## GUATEMALA

Date of Elections: March 5, 1978

### 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 61 members \* elected for 4 years. Deputies are eligible for re-election only once, four years after the termination of their first term.

### Electoral System

All Guatemalan citizens 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 duty, 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 branch, 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.

\* This total represents an increase of six members since the previous (1974) elections.

Deputies are elected by simple majority in constituencies in which there is only one seat to be filled. If two seats are to be filled, the two 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 two highest parties receives one of the two contested places. When there are three or more seats to be filled, a closed list, proportional representation system is used. Distribution of seats is then 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 within eight days to fill a vacancy which might arise between general elections.

#### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The Congressional elections were held concurrently with those for President of the Republic and for the mayors of 47 cities.

Running for President were three military candidates: General Lucas Garcia, of the ruling centre-right coalition Democratic Institutional Party, Revolutionary Party and the Organized Aranista Union; Colonel Peralta Azurdia, of the ultra-conservative National Liberation Movement; and Mr. Azurdia's nephew, General Peralta Mendez, of the centre-left Christian Democratic Party.

The election campaign and voting were generally peaceful, but the count was disrupted by violence and charges of fraud. Abstention was high, running to some 60 %.

General Garcia was declared President-elect by the National Congress on March 13, after none of the three candidates had obtained the required absolute majority of votes cast. Mr. Garcia was due to assume office on July 1, 1978.

## Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	1,800,000 (approx.)
Voters . . . . .	40 % (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Liberation Movement	20
Democratic Institutional Party	17
Revolutionary Party . . . . .	14
Christian Democratic Party . . . . .	7
Organized Araftista Union . . . . .	<b>8</b>
	<b>61</b>