

NICARAGUA

Date of Elections: September 1, 1974

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament under the terms of the new Constitution promulgated in 1974.

Characteristics of Parliament

In accordance with the 1974 Constitution, the bicameral Parliament of Nicaragua, the National Congress, comprises a 70-member Chamber of Deputies and a 30-member Senate. All members of the Congress are elected in conformity with a system of proportional representation for a term of 6 years.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The date of the legislative elections had been fixed on June 28, 1974 — the same day as was lifted the martial law which had been imposed throughout the country since the devastating earthquake of December 1972. Combined with these elections were those for President of the Republic, contested by General Anastasio Somoza Debayle of the ruling Liberal Nationalist Party and Dr. Edmundo Paguaga Irias of the Conservative Party.

General Somoza, whose family had ruled Nicaragua for some 40 years, was President from 1967 until he was prevented from seeking re-election in 1972. Since then he had remained head of the armed forces while Nicaragua was ruled by a three-man transitional National Governing Council, and a National Constituent Assembly, elected in February 1972 *, was entrusted with preparing a new Constitution. This new text, which restored constitutional guarantees and made possible the re-election of General Somoza, was finally adopted on April 3, 1974.

General Somoza gained an overwhelming victory on election day, reportedly obtaining over 80 % of the votes cast. Opposition to him had been reduced drastically when, prior to the elections, a number of competing parties were declared illegal because they had failed to secure the required signatures of 5% of the electorate. The Liberal Party captured 60 % of the seats in the Congress.

President Somoza announced his new Cabinet on November 30, 1974, and took office the next day for a 6-year term.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections VI (1971-1972)*, p. 87.