

UPPER VOLTA

Date of Elections: April 30, 1978

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament in the first such poll since the dissolution of the previous National Assembly in 1974*.

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the Constitution of 1977 **, the unicameral Parliament of Upper Volta, the National Assembly, consists of 57 deputies elected for 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of Upper Volta (native or naturalized since 15 years) who are no less than 20 years of age may vote if they are resident in the territory of the Republic. Disqualified are persons convicted of crime or other offences punishable by imprisonment of specified length, undischarged bankrupts, those in contempt of court and persons under legal disability.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Qualified electors who are no less than 25 years of age may stand for election. Besides persons who are prevented from registering on electoral rolls, those who have been deprived of their right to be candidate by judicial order, have been charged with electoral fraud, those under guardianship and debtors may not stand for election.

Any deputy who is called upon to undertake ministerial functions is replaced in the Assembly by his substitute. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the office of civil servant or magistrate and employment in public corporations or the public sector. Deputies in these positions are regarded as being on leave from their non-parliamentary functions, while an "on call" status applies to deputies in the military and a suspension of their contract to parliamentarians employed in the private sector. Incompatibility moreover holds true for membership of the Government, functions entailing professional representation at the national level, and all professional activity.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections VIII* (1973-1974), p. 8.

** See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 13.

Lists of candidates must be submitted at least 60 days prior to polling day. A deposit of CFA 100,000 per candidate is also required; this deposit is reimbursed if the list obtains at least 10 % of the votes cast.

Upper Volta is divided into 10 departments in which the deputies are elected by the party-list system with proportional representation of seats according to the electoral quotient and largest remainder system. Each department elects from four to 10 deputies.

A substitute member is elected with each deputy and, should the latter die or resign, is called upon to replace him by the President of the National Assembly. However, a by-election is held if a vacancy results from a member being incapacitated or if a total of one-third of the Assembly seats need to be filled. No by-election may be held in the latter half of any legislature.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

As previously reported in the *Chronicle*, the December 1970 general elections were followed, in 1974, by the dissolution of Parliament and the suspension of the 1970 Constitution. The new Government attempted to deal with the country's serious economic situation. In January 1976, President of the Republic Government Lamizana promised to introduce a new Constitution. The constitutional commission proposed that presidential and general elections be held, with political parties to be limited to three. In November 1977, a new draft Constitution was overwhelmingly approved by popular referendum *. A provision of the draft called for institutionalization of a three-party system subsequent to the legislative elections.

Eight parties and 367 candidates competed for the 57 National Assembly seats. Of the principal groups, the *Union d'Amocratique voUaique — Rassemblement d'Amocratique africain* (UDV-RDA), on polling day, lost the dominant position it had held in the previous legislature, but was nevertheless hopeful of obtaining an absolute parliamentary majority by the narrowest of margins if supported by a successful independent candidate; the *Union nationale pour la difense de la dimocratie* (UNDD) created a mild surprise by coming in second while the *Pacte du rassemblement africain* (PRA), the oldest party, lost heavily and virtually disappeared from the political scene since only the three most successful parties are to be legally authorized in the future.

General Lamizana was for his part re-elected President for a five-year term in May. Mr. Joseph Conombo is Prime Minister.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 13.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the National Assembly*

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Number of registered electors. | 2,887,550 |
| Voters. | 1,161,824(40.24%) |

| Political Group | Number of Seats won at 1970 |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <i>Union democratique voltaïque — Rassemblement démocratique africain.</i> | 28 |
| <i>Union nationale pour la défense de la démocratie.</i> | 13 |
| <i>Union progressiste voltaïque.</i> | 9 |
| <i>Parti du rassemblement africain.</i> | 6 |
| <i>Union nationale des indépendants.</i> | 1 |
| | 57 |
| | 49* |

* Of the remaining eight seats, six were won by the *Mouvement de libération nationale* and two by independent candidates.