

## Central African Republic

**Period of democratic transition: 1993**

**Pro-democracy civic movement: present**

In 1979, the self-styled emperor of the Central African Republic, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, was overthrown and presidential elections held in 1981. The fledgling democracy had lasted barely six months when General Andre Kolingba's military junta overthrew it and suspended the constitution. In 1986, a single-party system was adopted that secured Kolingba's hold on power.

A sprinkling of antigovernment protests began in 1989, primarily involving students unhappy about the lack of scholarship money. These protests had little impact on the government's resistance to political change. However, in October 1990 several thousand protesters braved police brutality to demand that the government hold a national conference to discuss the possibility of democratic rule. In December 1990, to pacify an increasingly restive opposition movement, Kolingba announced the establishment of a multiparty system. Unappeased and persistent in their demand for a national conference, students, teachers, civil servants, press, health personnel, rural development workers, and financial sector employees staged official strikes in April 1991. Violence increased as some opposition groups clashed with security personnel. Strikes and protests waned in 1992 as the government entered negotiations with the opposition to determine a date for the national conference. However, with Kolingba's refusal to accept the sovereignty of such a conference, negotiations stalled. In September 1992, Kolingba finally announced plans for elections in October; however, the government suspended the first round of these elections after accusations of polling irregularities. In 1993, following several attempts to postpone the rescheduled elections, Kolingba bowed to the unified opposition and elections were held in August.

Ange-Feliz Patasse, a former health minister under the Bokassa regime, won with 37 percent of the vote; Kolingba trailed in fourth place. Though the ensuing regime was democratic, its stability was fleeting. Following a coup attempt led by Kolingba in 2001, Patasse was ousted by his former military chief in 2003.