

Olympio, Sylvanus

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Born: September 1902 • [Lomé](#) • [Togo](#)

Died: January 13, 1963 (aged 60) • [Lomé](#) • [Togo](#)

Title / Office: [president \(1961-1963\)](#), [Togo](#) • [prime minister \(1958-1960\)](#), [Togoland](#)

FULL ARTICLE

Sylvanus Olympio, (born September 1902, [Lomé](#), [Togoland](#) [now Togo]—died Jan. 13, 1963, Lomé), nationalist politician and first [president](#) of [Togo](#) who was the first presidential victim of a wave of military coups that occurred in Africa in the 1960s.

A leader of the Committee of Togolese Unity after [World War II](#), Olympio was elected president of the first territorial assembly in 1946 and by 1947 was in open (though nonviolent) conflict with Togoland's French colonial administration. One of his main early

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Between 1952 and 1958 Olympio was out of office. When Togo received limited self-government in 1956, his rival Nicholas Grunitzky became [prime minister](#). In UN-supervised elections in 1958, however, Olympio's party won an overwhelming victory, and he became prime minister, leading Togo to complete independence in 1960. He was elected president in 1961, under a constitution granting extensive presidential powers. Togo became a one-party state, but its seeming stability was deceptive. Many Togolese, especially those with Western education, resented the regime's authoritarianism; northern leaders felt left out of the predominantly southern government, and the more radical members of Juvento (once the party's youth wing) wanted Olympio to be less dependent on French aid. By early 1963 some Juvento leaders were in detention and other opposition figures had left the [country](#). In January 1963 Olympio was assassinated in the first successful army [coup](#) in postwar sub-Saharan Africa.

This article was most recently revised and updated by [Amy Tikkanen](#), Corrections Manager.

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Gnassingbé Eyadéma

When President **Sylvanus Olympio** refused to take 626 Togolese veterans of French wars into Togo's tiny army, a group of them, including Eyadéma, assassinated him in an otherwise almost bloodless military coup (January 1963) and installed a civilian, Nicolas Grunitzky, as president. After an abortive coup by...



Lomé

Lomé, city, capital of Togo. Lomé lies on the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic coast) in the extreme southwestern corner of the country. Selected as the colonial capital of German Togoland in 1897, it became important as an administrative, commercial, and transport centre. A modern town wa...

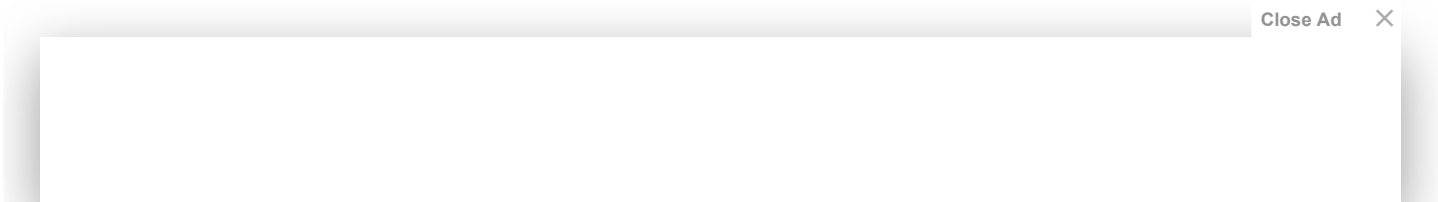
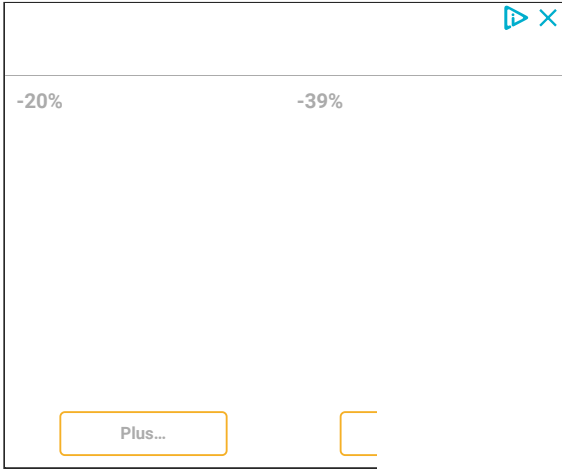


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