

## Political Parties Prepare their Electoral Strategies

President Miguel de la Madrid has rightly called 1987 a "political year". From January on, all the officially-registered parties have been gathering their forces for the 1988 Presidential elections. Eight of them are getting ready to take part: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), National Action Party (PAN), Mexican Socialist Party (PMS), Revolutionary Worker's Party (PRT), Mexican Democrat Party (PDM), Socialist Worker's Party (PST), Popular Socialist Party (PPS) and the Authentic Mexican Revolution Party (PARM).

The governing PRI adopted its election policy at its March National Assembly, which was attended by two ex-presidents, Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo. The so-called PRI Democratizing Tendency has called for changes in the party's presidential candidate selection procedures.

The PAN, chief right-wing opposition party, will elect its presidential candidate at its

October national convention. The approach of the elections has unleashed severe faction-fighting in PAN ranks, with challenges offered to the legitimacy of newly-elected party president Luis H. Alvarez, ex-mayor of Chihuahua

City.

On the left, a new party, the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS), is in the process of formation, product of the amalgamation of two registered parties, the United Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM) and the Mexican Worker's Party (PMT), with three unregistered organizations, the Left Communist Union (UIC), the Patriotic Revolutionary Party (PPR) and the People's Revolutionary Movement (MRP). The fusion was announced at the end of March, and the new party plans to hold its constituent congress in October. It remains to be seen whether the Trotskyite PRT will form an electoral coalition with the PMS or run its own presidential candidate.

Among other parties, only the PST has shown signs of change, but not precisely on electoral issues. The party is locked in a power struggle involving two factions mutually accusing each other of "betraying founding principles". Neither the PPS nor the PARM has made important announcements over the past few months. Probably they will not contest the presidential election, opting, as usual, to support the PRI candidate. Meanwhile, the right-wing PDM has recently ratified as leader ex-presidential candidate Ignacio González Gollaz. No changes there, either.★

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## Parties Select their Presidential Candidates

With presidential elections coming up in July 1988, Mexican political parties are not only drafting strategy and programs, but also picking candidates. By September or October, both governing PRI and its two main opponents, PAN and PMS, will have made their choices.

According to the Mexican press, possible PRI precandidates are, among others, Manuel Bartlett, Interior Minister; Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Planning and Budget Minister; Alfredo del Mazo, Minister for Energy Resources, Mining, and Parastate Industry; and Miguel González Avelar, Education Minister.

In the PAN, the choice is thought to lie between business leader Manuel Clouthier, ex Sinaloa gubernatorial contender; Adalberto Rosas, form-

er Sonora gubernatorial candidate; and Fernando Canales Clariond, another business leader and ex-gubernatorial candidate, this time in the state of Nuevo León. Another name worth mentioning is that of Francisco Barrio, ex-mayor of Ciudad Juárez, considered by many PAN supporters the only leader prepared to "go all out" if nominated.

The PMS is likely to launch one of the leaders of its merging organizations, such as PMT veteran Heberto Castillo; Chihuahua PSUM leader Antonio Becerra Gaytán; or UIC General Secretary Manuel Terrazas. Pablo González Casanova, noted intellectual and ex UNAM rector, has also been suggested as a possible PMS candidate.

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## Voting Patterns in Mexico

One well-known fact about Mexican electoral behavior is the high percentage of votes obtained by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In presidential elections, for example, there have been only two occasions since the PRI's founding in 1929 that the opposition has gained even 25% of ballots cast.

In five of the ten last presidential elections, the PRI won 90% or more of the votes cast; in 1946, 1964, and 1970, it received over 75%. Only in two elections were the figures lower: 74% in 1952 and 71% in 1982.

High abstentionism rates is another feature of Mexican elections. Eligible voters fail to register; registered voters do not attend polls. This second kind of abstentionism has become more important in

recent years. In the 1952 presidential elections, the percentage of registered voters who did not cast ballots was 26%. This figure rose to 28% in 1958, to 30.6% in 1964, and to 35% in 1970. It went down again in 1976 and 1982, however, when abstentionism rates of 31% and 25.2%, respectively, were registered.

These aspects of electoral behavior are not uniform throughout the country. While at a national level the PRI's strength is overwhelming, opposition parties are in some cases important at the state level. By the same token, abstentionism also varies among the 31 states making up the Mexican federation.

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