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Cuauhtemoc Cardenas Accepts "citizens Nomination" For 1994 Presidential Elections

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Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who received 32% of the popular vote in the 1988 presidential elections, became the first major candidate chosen for the July 1994 presidential elections after accepting a "citizens nomination" in early February. The candidacy has not been officially endorsed by the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD), under whose banner Cardenas ran in the 1988 elections. However, PRD officials said they expect Cardenas to again be the party nominee, especially since he remains very popular. At a campaign rally for the PRD gubernatorial and deputy candidates in Hidalgo state on Feb. 13, Cardenas said a victory in the 1994 elections was secondary to ensuring fair and democratic elections. He said his priority if elected would be to try to raise the standard of living for 40 million Mexicans who currently live in poverty and to seek to create jobs for the country's 3.5 million unemployed and 9 million underemployed persons. Cardenas was defeated in the 1988 elections by current President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. National Action Party (PAN) candidate Manuel Clouthier, who died in an automobile accident in October 1989, came in third behind Salinas and Cardenas. According to El Financiero International weekly business newspaper, Cardenas's early candidacy raises concerns by both the PRI and the National Action Party (PAN). Cardenas could force the PRI to start its own campaign earlier than usual. The move also gives Cardenas a head start against the PAN, which is immersed in a fierce internal struggle. In addition, political analysts believe a 20-month campaign would give Cardenas an opportunity to build a better system for combating electoral fraud. Finally, the "citizens candidacy" would help Cardenas justify street mobilizations during the election. Cardenas was backed by many center-left parties in the 1988 elections. However, a source for the committee that nominated Cardenas in February said a dissident faction of the center-right PAN including Tatiana Clouthier, the daughter of the late Manuel Clouthier is backing Cardenas for president in 1994. The PRI is not expected to name a candidate until early 1994, but Finance Secretary Pedro Aspe, Mexico City Mayor Manuel Camacho Solis and Social Development Secretary Luis Donaldo Colosio are considered leading contenders. The PAN also has not yet named a candidate, although Chihuahua Gov. Francisco Barrio Terrazas and Baja California Gov. Ernesto Ruffo Appel have been mentioned as top contenders. (Sources: Notimex, 02/02/93, 02/03/93, 02/13/93, 02/15/93; Agence France-Presse, 02/04/93, 02/16/93; El Financiero International, 02/08/93, 02/22/93)