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Since the July 2 elections, several hundred supporters of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) in Michoacan state have been protesting the results, charging that the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) tampered with voting lists and ballots to capture the majority of state legislative seats. Highways, roads and government buildings have been blocked by PRD supporters in and around Morelia, the state capital, to pressure the state and national governments to investigate charges of electoral fraud and to overturn the results. On the main plaza in Morelia, dozens of PRD supporters gather every day under a makeshift tent to hear speakers encouraging their support and denouncing the government. In mid-July the PRD formally submitted to federal electoral officials evidence it claimed demonstrated that the PRI committed fraud. On Aug. 9, PRD supporters in Michoacan commenced a series of actions to show the government that protests over the alleged electoral fraud would continue until their demands are met. About 80 PRD militants occupied Morelia's town hall for an hour, and blocked traffic on nearby streets. Protesters in Pastor Ortiz municipality occupied government buildings. Mayor Jose Partida Garcia stayed in his office. On the same day, PRD supporters blocked traffic for three hours on seven main highways. Lorenzo Meyer, a political scientist at the Colegio de Mexico and newspaper commentator, cited by Copley News Service, said: "The legitimacy of the system is very much in doubt. The government knows it committed fraud." Until this year, the ruling PRI had won every presidential and gubernatorial race since 1929. On July 2, the election of Ernesto Ruffo Appel of the National Action Party (PAN) as governor of Baja California state was perceived as an example of the PRI's willingness to concede ground to its political opposition. Samuel Schmidt, a visiting Mexican political scientist at San Diego State University, told Copley that the PRI is being forced to yield because of its deteriorating political image abroad, especially in the US. The PAN has been the traditional opposition party, supported primarily by business interests in Mexico's northern states. The PRI-controlled national government has worked with PAN candidates who have been elected as federal legislators and mayors of small municipalities. President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's economic policies are not radically different from those promoted by the PAN. The relationship between the PRI and PRD is another matter, however. The PRD was established early this year, successor to a coalition of parties that supported a former PRI politician, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, in the presidential race against Salinas, the PRI's candidate. Cardenas is a former governor of Michoacan state and son of one of Mexico's most revered presidents, Lazaro Cardenas. The PRD opposes the PRI's new economic policies, and has found a base of support among urban workers and peasants, who make up the majority of Mexico. According to Meyer, "The fight between the PAN and the PRI is not over what the policies will be but who is going to lead. The fight, however, between the PRD and the PRI, is not only over who is going to govern but what the policies are going to be." (Basic data from Copley News Service, 07/24/89; Notimex, 08/09/89)
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