

11-29-1989

Honduras: National Party Wins Presidential Election

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Honduras: National Party Wins Presidential Election." (1989). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3569>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Honduras: National Party Wins Presidential Election

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, November 29, 1989

On Nov. 27, unofficial returns from balloting in the Nov. 26 presidential election showed 50.2% for National Party candidate Rafael Leonardo Callejas, and 44.25% for Carlos Flores, candidate of the governing Liberal Party. The new president will take office Jan. 27 for a four-year term. Assuming Callejas is sworn in, it would mark the the first transition to power of an opposition party since 1932. Two other candidates, Enrique Aguilar Paz of the Social Democrats and Efraim Diaz Arrivillaga of the Cristian Democrats, had loyal but small followings. Hondurans also voted for three vice presidential posts, a 128-seat unicameral congress and 289 mayoralities. Voting was by party slate, with no ticket splitting permitted. The run-up to the elections was dominated by charges of electoral fraud. The mysterious disappearance of more than 100,000 names from electronic electoral rolls caused such a scandal that the elections were nearly postponed. An agreement was reached Nov. 24 permitting disqualified Hondurans to cast their votes directly with the National Electoral Tribunal. Callejas, 46, comes from a landowning family and was trained as an agricultural economist at Mississippi State University. He served as minister of natural resources under military regimes from 1975 to 1980. Callejas won the most votes in the 1985 presidential elections, but current President Jose Azcona Hoyo was declared the winner because other Liberal Party candidates had also run, producing a majority for the Liberal Party as a whole. Flores, 39, is publisher of La Tribuna, one of the nation's leading newspapers, and was trained as an engineer at Louisiana State University. His wife, Mary, is a US citizen. Senior military officers were reported to be supporting Callejas. The Liberal Party charged that Callejas' National Party was close to El Salvador's Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA), and warned voters that an undesirable "parallelism" will result if Callejas became president. Both major candidates' campaign platforms consisted of relatively conservative economic prescriptions and pro-US foreign policies. They voiced support for the presence of a US base in Palmerola, where 1,600 members of the US military rotate through on training missions, and opposition to making the arrangement permanent. Both made it clear they wanted the US-supported Nicaraguan contras out of Honduras. Callejas reportedly fears that without US aid to the contras, however, Honduras alone will have to cope with "persuading" them to leave. Callejas has promised to privatize government-owned companies, cut government spending and open the country to foreign investment. Honduras received about \$186 million in U.S. aid last year, about \$41 million of it military assistance. The US is withholding \$70 million in fiscal support until the government implements austerity policies endorsed by the International Monetary Fund that were not possible during an election year. Callejas has promised to implement the IMF-backed program. Honduras is the second most impoverished country of the western hemisphere after Haiti. GDP per capita is estimated at about \$600. Population is 4.3 million. About 35% of school-age persons and adults are illiterate. More than half of the labor force, 58.9%, works in agriculture. Official figures put unemployment at about 28%. Eighty percent of Honduran exports derive from agriculture, and the main exports are bananas, coffee, lumber, meat and metals. The foreign debt totals over \$3 billion. With the exceptions of bananas and zinc mining, foreign investment has been virtually non-existent in recent years. Half a million war refugees have aggravated economic troubles, and created resentment among Hondurans whose living standards are lower than those afforded by refugees and contras supplied by international relief organizations and the US government, respectively.

Arms smuggling is widespread and ordinary criminals wield assault rifles. (Basic data from AP, DPA, Notimex, 11/27/89; AFP, 11/26/89, 11/27/89; New York Times, 11/28/89)

-- End --