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## Major Parties Jockeying for Position Ahead of Mexico City Mayoral Election

by LADB Staff

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The three major political parties have begun the process of selecting their candidates for the mayoral election in Mexico City, to be held July 6, by announcing the dates of special assemblies to choose party candidates. The governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was scheduled to select its candidate on Feb. 19, followed by the opposition National Action Party (PAN) on March 2, and the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) on March 9.

In all three cases, the parties expect strong internal competition for the nominations. This will be the first-ever mayoral election in Mexico City. Until now, the mayoral post had been an appointed position similar to a cabinet post. Constitutional changes enacted in mid-1996 paved the way for direct election of the mayor (see SourceMex, 08/07/96). The PRD election features two candidates with strong name recognition and ample political experience former presidential candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and former party leader Porfirio Munoz Ledo. In the PAN, meanwhile, former party leader Carlos Castillo Peraza will be competing for the nomination with Francisco Paoli Bolio, a member of the Mexico City legislative assembly (Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, ALDF).

### *PRI nod might go to ex-Mexico State Gov. Del Mazo*

Former governor Del Mazo expected to gain PRI candidacy For the PRI, three party members tossed their hats into the ring: former Mexico state governor Alfredo del Mazo, Mexico City attorney general Jose Antonio Gonzalez Fernandez, and ALDF president Manuel Jimenez Guzman. According to early projections, the PRI selection was expected to be a tight contest between Del Mazo and Gonzalez Fernandez. However, by Feb. 18 the day before the selection of the candidate many members of the PRI-Mexico City organization were privately conceding the candidacy to Del Mazo.

Speaking to reporters, Roberto Campa Cifrian, president of the PRI in Mexico City, hinted that leadership had settled on Del Mazo, since three separate surveys taken on Feb. 17-18 showed the former governor with a 26-point lead over both his rivals. Still, according to some reports, the choice of Del Mazo was predetermined by national PRI leaders. Democracia 2000, a semi-independent group affiliated with the PRI, accused former agriculture secretary Carlos Hank Gonzalez of illegally attempting to influence the vote on behalf of Del Mazo by offering bribes of 200,000 pesos (US \$25,000) to PRI voting delegates.

Hank Gonzalez who has been linked to the old guard of the PRI known as the "dinosaurs" adamantly denied those charges. Del Mazo has also received the endorsement of the powerful workers confederation (Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico, CTM). CTM leader Fidel Velazquez explained the choice by noting that Del Mazo has "greater name identification" among workers in Mexico City. Del Mazo is currently head of the public-housing fund (Instituto del Fondo

Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores, INFONAVIT). The CTM's endorsement of Del Mazo angered Gonzalez Fernandez, who said the move could "disrupt" the normal selection process among PRI delegates.

Some political observers said that Del Mazo may not be the best choice for the PRI in the general election. In an interview with the Mexico daily newspaper *The News*, sociologist Joel Estudillo of the Political Studies Institute (Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Politicos) said Gonzalez Fernandez has the best chance of winning the mayoral elections. Still, in a survey conducted in Mexico City on Feb. 14- 15, the political polling company Gabinete de Estudios de Opinion, SC, found 50% support for Del Mazo, 7% for Jimenez Guzman, and 6.8% for Gonzalez Fernandez. The survey, which was commissioned by the daily newspapers *El Economista* and *El Diario de Monterrey*, polled 800 adult residents of Mexico City, regardless of political affiliation.

When asked about the PAN candidates, 46% of the respondents chose Castillo Peraza, and 16.5% selected Paoli Bolio. Similarly, 43% of the respondents said they preferred Cardenas for the PRD nomination, compared with 31% for Munoz Ledo.

### *Early surveys show preference for PAN*

According to other public opinion surveys held in January and February, the PAN has taken an early lead among the three major parties. If correct, the polls could spell bad news for the PRI, which has consistently come in third behind both the PAN and the PRD in the voter surveys. The polls conducted by such respected organizations as Indermec/Louis Harris, Covarrubias y Asociados, and Centro de Estudios de Opinion (CEO) at the Universidad de Guadalajara found support for the PAN ranging from 36% to 43%. The three polls also consistently placed the PRD in second, with support ranging from 21% to 24%. In all three cases, the PRI received less than 20% support.

A victory in the Mexico City election would leave the PAN with control of almost all the country's largest metropolitan areas. PAN mayors currently govern 10 of Mexico's 12 largest cities, following victories over the PRI in Monterrey and Guadalajara in the last two years. Despite an apparent strong preference for the PAN, the party's two candidates appear to have the least name recognition among all potential contenders for the Mexico City mayoral post. According to the Covarrubias y Asociados survey, only 49% of all respondents had heard of PAN candidate Castillo Peraza, and 16% recognized the name of Paoli Bolio.

Paoli has attempted to boost his chances in the campaign by pointing to his experience in the ALDF. He has painted Castillo as a "national" candidate who is out of touch with the needs of Mexico City residents. Meanwhile, the PAN's most recognizable political figure, Diego Fernandez de Cevallos, declined to run for the Mexico City post despite pleas from party leaders. As the PAN's candidate in the 1994 presidential election, Fernandez de Cevallos received 27% of the vote, coming in second to Zedillo.

However, two other former presidential candidates have declared their candidacy in the Mexico City mayoral election Cecilia Soto of the Labor Party (PT) and Jorge Gonzalez Torres of the Green Party (PVEM). In contrast to the relative lack of recognition for the PAN candidates, the Covarrubias y Asociados poll found that 96% of the respondents were familiar with PRD candidate Cardenas and

77% with his rival, Munoz Ledo. The poll was conducted before either Cardenas or Munoz Ledo declared their candidacy. PRD candidates hoping to capitalize on name recognition PRD leaders are banking on the strong name recognition for the party's two candidates, which they hope will drum up stronger interest in the election and translate into a strong showing by party supporters in the July 6 election.

According to one poll, almost 30% of the respondents said they are disenchanted with all the candidates and are not planning to participate in the election. In public statements and debates, Cardenas and Munoz Ledo have said that the PRD is the only party capable of implementing the radical changes necessary in the capital. In fact, during a PRD candidate debate, Cardenas boldly predicted that his party would not only win the mayoral election, but also a majority of seats in the ALDF. Cardenas said he would push for a pact between the party and the citizens of Mexico City to "end corruption" and to form a government with "social responsibility," whose main objective is to better the living conditions for residents of the capital.

Both Gonzalez Fernandez and Del Mazo have made fighting crime the centerpiece of their campaign. This theme could attract voters, given the surge in the crime rate in Mexico City since the economic crisis broke out in 1995, following the peso devaluation in late 1994. As the city's attorney general, Gonzalez may have an advantage. At a meeting with PRI members, he listed four proposals to eliminate corruption, emphasizing the need to severely penalize high-level officials if they engage in illicit activities.

Meantime, in late January the leaders of the PRD and the PAN in Mexico City announced they were negotiating a "civility" pact. Armando Quintero of the PRD and Gonzalo Altamirano Dimas of the PAN said the pact could help avert a potentially dirty campaign and also guarantee transparency in the elections. The two leaders said the pact would include a pledge to respect the outcome of the Mexico City election, regardless of which candidate wins the race. [Note: Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on Feb. 19, reported at 7.78 pesos per US\$1.00] (Sources: Reuter, 01/31/97, 02/08/97; Proceso, 02/09/97; Spanish news service EFE, El Financiero International, 02/10/97; El Economista, 01/08/97, 02/17/97; Novedades, 01/08/97, 01/10/97, 01/13/97, 01/28/97, 02/10/97, 02/12/97, 02/13/97, 02/14/97, 02/17-19/97; Excelsior, 01/10/97, 01/19/97, 02/07/97, 02/17-19/97; La Jornada, 01/14/97, 01/23/97, 01/31/97, 02/08/97, 02/13/97, 02/18/97, 02/19/97; The News, 02/04/97, 02/05/97, 02/10/97, 02/13/97, 02/17-19/97; El Universal, 02/13/97, 02/19/97)

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