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## Francisco Labastida to Represent Governing PRI in 2000 Presidential Election

*by LADB Staff*

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On Nov. 7, Mexican voters elected former interior secretary Francisco Labastida to represent the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in the 2000 presidential election. Labastida will face former Guanajuato governor Vicente Fox of the conservative Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) and ex-mayor of Mexico City Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD) in the election scheduled for July 2, 2000.

Labastida, who was widely favored by the PRI establishment, is the first governing-party candidate to gain the presidential nomination through a direct vote. All the party's previous presidential candidates were hand-picked by the sitting president through a process known as the "dedazo." President Ernesto Zedillo, who early in his administration pledged to end the dedazo and "bring democracy" to the PRI, expressed satisfaction with the party's first-ever presidential primary.

In a televised speech, Zedillo called the primary an important step "to firmly consolidate democracy in our nation." PRI officials were pleased with voter turnout, with 10 million of Mexico's 58 million registered voters casting a ballot. Since the PRI, which printed 16 million ballots, opened the election to all registered voters, many supporters of the PRD, PAN, and other opposition parties may have voted in the election.

After the results were announced, Labastida told supporters he won the nomination "not through one dedazo, but through 10 million dedazos." To consolidate his support and promote himself as a candidate of change, Labastida used his victory speech to attack the policies of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari and invoke the name of slain candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio. Colosio was assassinated during a campaign rally in Tijuana in March 1994 (see SourceMex, 1994-03-30). "The new PRI that is born tonight is distancing itself from the path of Salinas," Labastida told supporters. "This new PRI restores the ideals of Colosio and is committed to use power to serve the people."

Political observers said Labastida's sweeping victory will boost the PRI going into the election. "This was an enormous show of force by the PRI," said Sergio Aguayo Quesada, an electoral expert at the Colegio de Mexico. "At this moment this party clearly has the momentum." Rivals say victory orchestrated by party machinery critics, including losing candidates Roberto Madrazo Pintado, Humberto Roque Villanueva, and Manuel Bartlett Diaz, charged that Zedillo and the PRI political machinery secretly promoted Labastida's candidacy in violation of the party's election rules.

In many of his political advertisements, Madrazo said the institutional support gave Labastida an unfair advantage, which in the end amounted to a dedazo (see SourceMex, 1999-07-18). Madrazo, on leave from his post as governor of Tabasco state, won majorities in only 21 of the 300 electoral districts. Most of Madrazo's support came in his home state of Tabasco and in neighboring Quintana

Roo, Chiapas, and Campeche states. In contrast, Labastida scored victories in 273 districts. The other six districts were won by Bartlett Diaz, all in his home state of Puebla.

The fourth candidate, Roque Villanueva, failed to win a single district. Many complaints about unfair practices were lodged against PRI governors, in particular Roberto Albores Guillen of Chiapas. Party leaders scolded Albores for ordering PRI state legislators to work on behalf of Labastida. This tactic backfired because Madrazo won seven of the 12 electoral districts in Chiapas. Still, Labastida's landslide victory does not appear to have caused a major split, which could have hurt the PRI in the 2000 election.

Madrazo, clearly disappointed by the institutional support for Labastida, pledged to remain in the PRI and to work for reform within the party. After the election, Madrazo refused Labastida's request for a meeting. "The struggle does not end today," Madrazo said in a concession speech. "I will continue working for a new PRI, for changes within the party....I still believe there was an official candidate, a favorite of the party."

Responding to his rival's refusal for a meeting, Labastida said he was confident the PRI would win the election "with or without Madrazo's support." Despite the rhetoric, Labastida and PRI president Jose Antonio Gonzalez Fernandez are expected to make a strong push to convince the voters who supported Madrazo to remain in the PRI and not back opposition candidates. Madrazo received slightly more than 2 million votes, roughly half the total received by Labastida. Some political observers said the PRI is worried about a loss of votes in the southern states where Madrazo received strong support.

The daily newspaper La Jornada said many of these voters have threatened to support opposition candidates in the election. In Chiapas state, some of Madrazo's supporters have announced plans to field their own candidate for governor to face the PRI and a coalition of opposition parties. Analysts said Madrazo decided to remain inside the PRI to ensure his political survival. "[Madrazo] is pragmatic, he knows that his only chance of survival is within the party," said political analyst Joel Estudillo of the Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Politicos (IMEP). "Rebelling against the PRI only works if you're inside the party, because most people who leave never get off the ground."

### *Opposition parties downplay results*

Meanwhile, the opposition parties noted that only one- sixth of registered voters turned out for the election and questioned whether Labastida can call his election a mandate. "I especially want to congratulate all the 50 million registered voters who did not participate in this farce," PAN candidate Fox told supporters at a campaign stop. Labastida's rivals,,

Fox and Cardenas, both had long expected the former interior secretary to be the PRI candidate. "The only thing that could be considered in any way strange about this election is that [Labastida] did not win all the electoral districts," said Cardenas, referring to the strong PRI political machinery. Political commentator Miguel Angel Granados Chapa said the PRI managed to present the image of a "changed party" while retaining many of the old practices. "The intervention of two powers, the executive and the communications media, are evidence that this was like all other similar events: a state election," he said.

The weekly news magazine *Proceso* said the PRI used familiar tactics to garner support for Labastida, such as bribing voters with building materials and food. In the western state of Colima, for example, PRI officials distributed bags of cement and tin sheets to participants at a rally for Labastida. In Michoacan, support for Labastida could be exchanged for chickens, said *Proceso*. But Manuel Camacho Solis, founder of the Partido del Centro Democratico (PCD), said the primary could be seen as an advantage for the PRI, which received a broader mandate than any opposition party.

Camacho said the PRI's ability to organize a primary, whether fair or not, created the semblance of democracy. Opposition parties, on the other hand, were unable to agree on a process to select a common candidate to run against the PRI, he said. The effort to form a broad opposition alliance collapsed in September because of strong differences between the PAN and the PRD regarding the method for selecting the common candidate (see *SourceMex*, 1999-09-29).

Still, Camacho said the PRI should not take Labastida's landslide as a complete voter endorsement of the governing party. "Six years ago the level of support for the PRI was much higher," said Camacho, a former PRI member. Camacho tried to become the PRI candidate in 1994, but the party machinery instead selected Luis Donaldo Colosio (see *SourceMex*, 1993-12-01).

### *Silva Herzog to represent PRI in Mexico City race*

The PRI's national primary overshadowed the election of former finance secretary Jesus Silva Herzog to represent the governing party in the 2000 mayoral election in Mexico City. Silva Herzog, who also served as ambassador to Washington and as tourism secretary, obtained close to 50% of the vote, compared with less than 40% for Roberto Campa Cifrian and under 10% for Silvestre Fernandez Barajas. Campa Cifrian is the former director of the federal consumer protection agency (Procuraduria Federal de Proteccion al Consumidor, PROFECO), while Fernandez Barajas is a former member of the Chamber of Deputies.

Silva Herzog, like Labastida, was considered the preferred candidate of the PRI establishment. His election was marred by a very light turnout in Mexico City, which analysts said was one of the lowest in the country. Initial estimates were that only about 500,000 voters cast a ballot in the Mexican capital, although PRI officials claim the participation was higher. Silva Herzog is expected to face strong competition in the general election, also July 2, 2000.

The PRD will select its candidate from among former party president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, city-government advisor Marco Rascon, and federal legislators Pablo Gomez, Ifigenia Martinez, and Demetrio Sodi de la Tijera. The candidates to represent the PAN are federal legislators Santiago Creel Miranda and Fernando Perez Noriega, and Salvador Abascal Carranza, director of the PAN's Gabriel Preciado Foundation. The winner will replace interim mayor Rosario Robles of the PRD, appointed in October to serve out Cuauhtemoc Cardenas' term (see *SourceMex*, 1999-10-06).

Until Cardenas' election in 1997, the Mexico City mayor was appointed by the president. (Sources: *Proceso*, 10/02/99; Reuters, 11/07/99, 11/08/99; The San Jose Mercury News, Copely News Service,

11/08/99; The New York Times, 11/01/99, 11/03/99, 11/08/99, 11/09/99; Associated Press, 11/03/99, 11/07/99, 11/09/99; Excelsior, 11/04/99, 11/08/99, 11/09/99; The Washington Post, The Dallas Morning News, The Miami Herald, San Antonio Express-News, Los Angeles Times, 11/08/99, 11/09/99; The Christian Science Monitor, Spanish news service EFE, The Boston Globe, 11/09/99; Reforma, 11/03/99, 11/08/99, 11/09/99, 11/10/99; El Economista, La Jornada, El Universal, Novedades, 11/08-10/99)

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