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## Guatemala: Jorge Serrano Wins Presidential Run-off

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Jan. 6, Guatemalans went to polls to vote in a presidential run-off election between Jorge Serrano Elias of the Solidarity Action Movement (MAS), and Jorge Carpio Nicolle of the National Center Union (UCN). The two candidates obtained the largest number of votes in the Nov. 11 elections, but each receives less than an absolute majority of ballots cast. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) announced Jan. 7 that Serrano had won the election. Based on results from over 94% of polling stations nationwide, Serrano took 68.7% of the vote, or 901,081 votes compared to Carpio's 420,711. Serrano won in 21 of 22 departments. Carpio led in Jalapa department. Voter turnout was calculated at only 45.8%. Events and statements preceding and following the election are summarized below.

Jan. 3: Serrano told reporters that the military holds the real power in Guatemala, not because they have the weapons but because of an infrastructure which has developed over time. He said that Guatemala has relied on its military forces for over 170 years, and substantial change cannot be expected to take place instantaneously. The candidate pledged, nonetheless, to work toward establishing a true civilian government. In the capital, a bomb exploded, and two others were deactivated. There were no injuries.

Jan. 4: Both candidates closed their election campaigns. The army stationed troops at main highways leading from the capital to Mexico City and the Pacific coast. Escuintla mayor, Miguel Angel Collado, was shot to death by unknown assassins. Collado was a member of the Christian Democrat Party. In Coban, Alta Verapaz department, Dr. Mario de la Cruz, a national deputy, was the apparent target of an attack by unidentified assailants. While de la Cruz escaped the attack unharmed, one of the assailants and a hospital attendant sustained bullet wounds. De la Cruz is a member of Carpio Nicolle's UCN. At least seven persons were injured when a fight broke out between supporters of the two candidates in the central plaza in Guatemala City. The Peasant Unity Committee (CUC) and Communities of People in Resistance in the highlands (CPR) denounced the candidates for their failure to address basic concerns such as wages, land tenure, military repression and demilitarization. The CPR, which represents some 25,000 displaced Guatemalan peasants, issued a statement demanding that the next president take action to insure their return to their places of origin. The CPR called for "a true democracy which guarantees us the security to return to our places of origin" without fear of repression. The CPR also denounced the army for killing 29 of their members, and injuring another 17 between January and October 1990. During the same period, said the CPR, the army also abducted 222 organization members. President Vinicio Cerezo announced his endorsement of Jorge Serrano. According to Cerezo, Serrano "has much more experience and practice for working toward peace and dialogue."

Jan. 5: The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) estimated that some 100 foreigners were on hand to observe the elections. Cost of the run-off was estimated at approximately 13.7 million quetzals (about US\$ 3 million). Alcohol sales were prohibited after mid-day.

Jan. 6: With 75% of the votes counted, TSE president Arturo Herdruger announced that Serrano won the election by a two-to-one margin. In his victory speech, Serrano told supporters, "We are not alone. God is with us. He'll help us move ahead...Guatemalans will be a family. Guatemalans will get to know each other. Guatemalans will help each other." Serrano told reporters that he would implement judiciary reforms to end impunity for persons responsible for political violence. Carpio conceded defeat late Sunday. Organization of American States representative Ricardo Gjoje said the elections

proceeded smoothly and without incident. TSE spokesperson Alejandro Giammattei accused rebels of attempting to prevent residents of San Marcos and Quetzaltenango departments from voting. Among other actions, the rebels reportedly felled tress to block highways in the two departments. Giammattei displayed for reporters a leaflet allegedly distributed by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) which said that the elections will change nothing because the government will continue following military dictates. The leaflet said, "It will be better for you to remain at home" on election day. Police and presumed rebels exchanged fire on a road linking the capital to the western city of Solola. There were no casualties reported. Reporters visiting polls in western Guatemala found them nearly deserted by midday. At stations where 600 voters were registered, barely 100 had cast their ballots. Jan. 7: Serrano announced cabinet-level appointments, excepting defense and interior. (See article, this issue.) The president-elect told reporters: "As of Jan. 14 it is I who will command the armed forces." (Basic data from AP, 01/05/91, 01/07/91; AFP, 01/04/91, 01/06-07/91; Notimex, 01/03-06/91; ACAN- EFE, 01/06/91; EFE, 01/06-07/91)

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