

7-19-2006

Zapatista Campaign Urged Supporters Not to Vote; Impact on PRD Uncertain

LADB Staff

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

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Zapatista Campaign Urged Supporters Not to Vote; Impact on PRD Uncertain." (2006).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5007>

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 SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Zapatista Campaign Urged Supporters Not to Vote; Impact on PRD Uncertain

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 2006-07-19

On July 2, the same day that 41 million Mexicans went to the polls to cast their ballots for Mexico's next president, the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN) and 2,500 supporters rallied in Mexico City to urge sympathizers not to participate in the election. The rally, led by EZLN leader Subcomandante Marcos, was the conclusion of the Zapatistas' The Other Campaign, which attempted to focus on issues such as poverty and indigenous rights while denouncing Mexico's "corrupt" political system (see SourceMex, 2005-06-29 and 2006-01-18).

Marcos, who assumed the name Subdelegado Zero during the six-month campaign, took his anti-establishment message to 21 states. During his speeches, he criticized all three major parties and their presidential candidates, including Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD). "For the first time in the history of this country, our attention on this election day is not focused above," Marcos told participants at the Mexico City rally. "We now have a place down here on the ground and to the left where we can turn our attention: The Other Campaign."

The impact of The Other Campaign on the number of votes cast for Lopez Obrador is unknown. The final figures released by the electoral institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE) showed that Lopez Obrador lost the election by a mere 243,000 votes (see SourceMex, 2006-07-12). The outcome is still up in the air, however, while the electoral tribunal (Tribunal Federal Electoral, TRIFE) reviews complaints by Lopez Obrador that the electoral process was filled with irregularities and fraud.

Turnout low in EZLN strongholds in Chiapas

The EZLN's message appeared to resonate strongest in the Zapatistas' strongholds in Chiapas. In the municipality of San Andres Larrainzar, which was the site of peace negotiations between the government and the Zapatistas in the 1990s, authorities reported about 30% voter participation.

Similar reports came from communities near the EZLN stronghold of Chenalho. "We are exercising our right to neutrality or abstention," said a communique written by community leaders of Sociedad Civil Las Abejas, who took the opportunity to call for the release of demonstrators imprisoned in San Sebastian Atenco in Mexico state. The demonstrators, who were sympathetic to the EZLN, were arrested following a clash with police (see SourceMex, 2006-05-17). "We cannot go to the polls peacefully when others are deprived of their liberty," said the communique.

Conversely, some organizations that had supported the EZLN campaign urged members to participate in the election and cast their vote for the center-left candidate. One of The Other Campaign's major supporting organizations, the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), which is not a formal registered party, called on members to vote for Lopez Obrador. "[This

represents] an action against the continuation of the right and neoliberalism," the PRT said a week before the election.

As expected, the EZLN received its share of criticism from PRD supporters, who suggested that the anti-voting stance might have cost the party the election. Marcos disputed this contention in interviews with the news media. "They say that AMLO was the victim of friendly fire, in reference to us," said Marcos, referring to Lopez Obrador by his initials. "But we are not friends of AMLO, we are enemies of all political organizations." Marcos later told the Mexico City daily newspaper *La Jornada*, "There were some voices within the Lopez Obrador camp who were quick to accept defeat and who started to look for scapegoats." The EZLN leader pointed out that Lopez Obrador won handily in 14 of the 21 states visited by the Zapatistas as part of the campaign. "AMLO and the PRD won by a wide margin in Mexico state and Mexico City, two locations where we spent most of our time," said Marcos.

EZLN leader urges supporters to join PRD rallies

Marcos agreed with Lopez Obrador's contention that President Vicente Fox's government and the IFE fixed the election in favor of Felipe Calderon of the governing center-right Partido Accion Nacional (PAN). "According to the information we have, the IFE had about 1.5 million votes in reserve to compensate for any disadvantage for Calderon," said the EZLN leader. "Where they got the votes, I don't know. But the electoral rolls have 5 million registered voters who weren't going to participate 2 million who are deceased and 3 million who are no longer in the country."

The EZLN leader said the PRD did not pay attention to the process because party leaders were overconfident that Lopez Obrador would win the election "with votes to spare." Marcos urged his supporters to join Lopez Obrador's rallies to protest the outcome of the election, saying he supports citizens who are mobilizing for a just cause. "This is not a case of supporting a particular candidate," said Marcos. "We know there was fraud, and we want to denounce it."

The PRD candidate had two huge rallies at the Zocalo in Mexico City, one on July 8 and the other on July 15, to support his contention that the election was stolen and to repeat his demand that authorities conduct a vote-by-vote recount. "We're going to start to defend democracy a peaceful civic resistance," said Lopez Obrador, addressing a crowd of about 1.1 million at the second rally.

PRD's victories surprisingly small in Michoacan, Zacatecas

Some PRD supporters said the party underperformed in Zacatecas and Michoacan, two states in which it had traditionally been strong. They criticized PRD Govs. Lazaro Cardenas Batel of Michoacan and Amalia Garcia of Zacatecas for failing to deliver a higher percentage of the vote for the PRD presidential candidate. Lopez Obrador obtained only 35% of the vote in Zacatecas this year, with Calderon coming in a surprisingly strong second with 32.5%.

The center-left party has gained political control of the state during the past decade, winning in the last two gubernatorial and state legislative elections (see SourceMex, 1998-07-08 and 2004-07-14). The PRD has also been growing in Michoacan, the home state of party founder Cuauhtemoc Cardenas Solorzano. The party gained control of the governorship in 2001, when Cuauhtemoc Cardenas' son, Lazaro Cardenas Batel, was elected to that office (see SourceMex, 2001-11-14).

Lopez Obrador received 40.5% of the vote in Michoacan, compared with 32.5% for Calderon. The PAN candidate is a native of Michoacan, which may have accounted for his relatively strong support there. Hecklers outside Lopez Obrador's headquarters in Mexico City confronted Cardenas Batel, accusing him of not doing enough to promote Lopez Obrador's candidacy. The governor countered that no one should question the PRD's performance in Michoacan, since the party received the most votes in the presidential race, won a Senate race, and took eight of the 12 directly elected seats in the Chamber of Deputies. "There is no reason to point fingers in a situation where no one is to blame," Cardenas Batel said in an interview with the Mexico City daily newspaper Reforma. (Sources: El Universal, Spanish news service EFE, 07/02/06; Associated Press, La Jornada, 07/02/06, 07/07/06; Revista Proceso, 07/07/06; Milenio Diario, 06/28/06, 07/11/06; Reforma, 07/02/06, 07/03/06, 07/08/06, 07/12/06; El Economista, 07/12/06; La Cronica de Hoy, 07/07/06, 07/13/06)

-- End --