

Mexican Federal Elections 2000: Electoral Observation Report

**A report by
Global Exchange and Alianza Cívica**

GLOBAL  EXCHANGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From June 25 to July 5, 57 people from Japan, Europe, and North America visited Mexico to observe the federal elections. The delegation was organized by Global Exchange and *Alianza Cívica*, two NGOs, one based in the U.S., the other in Mexico. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) granted the delegates official status as “foreign visitors” so that they could observe the electoral process throughout the country.

The delegation spent four days in Mexico City interviewing officials from IFE and other governmental agencies responsible for electoral oversight, representatives of four political parties including the traditional ruling party and the two largest opposition parties, journalists, labor leaders, and representatives of a variety of civic organizations.

The delegation then broke into six groups to visit the states of Yucatán, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chiapas, Hidalgo and Mexico State. They met with state and local level government officials, party representatives, journalists, civic organizations, and ordinary citizens. Following is a brief summary of the observations made by the delegation.

The federal elections of July 2, 2000, represented a historic moment for the people of Mexico. For the first time, Mexicans elected federal leaders under an electoral system that is independent of president or party control. We were deeply impressed by the work of the IFE in compiling an accurate and certifiable list of voters, recruiting and training hundreds of thousands of volunteer poll workers, and preparing the public to cast a vote that is “free and secret.” Nevertheless, the delegation has several concerns at both the national and local levels:

- Public resources were used for partisan purposes and government anti-poverty programs were manipulated to influence votes, particularly in communities with high levels of poverty and low levels of education.
- Some remote areas did not receive adequate information from IFE officials concerning the voting process. This was the case especially where indigenous languages are prevalent.
- The location of voting stations next to governmental buildings opened the voting process to coercion and insecurity.
- The system for investigating and punishing violations of electoral laws did not and in the means afforded for filing complaints appears to have significant weaknesses.
- As noted by the May pre-electoral delegation, despite the efforts of IFE, there was bias in the mass media coverage of the elections.

In conclusion, Mexico has made impressive improvements in the way it conducts elections, but still faces significant hurdles on the path to democratization. One of the major hurdles is the militarization of the country that continues to breed conflict and insecurity in rural communities, and could play a negative role the legitimacy of future

state and municipal elections. We hope that not only this year, but in years to come, Mexico will continue to build on the foundation it has already laid so that elections at all levels, federal, state and municipal, are “clean and fair.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Be Added

GLOSSARY

CNC	Confederación Nacional Campesina / National Peasant Farmer Confederation (Oaxaca)
EPR	Ejército Popular Revolucionario / Popular Revolutionary Army
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional / Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FCF	Frente Cívico Familiar / Familiar Civic Union
FEPADE	Fiscalía Especializada para Atención a Delitos Electorales / Special Prosecutor for Electoral Crimes
FMVE	Forma Migrante Visitante Electoral / Electoral Visitor Migratory Form
GAFE	Grupo Airemobile Fuerzas Especial / Group of Special Airborne Forces
IEEM	Intstituto Electoral del Estado de Mexico / Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico
IFE	Instituto Federal Electoral / Federal Electoral Institute
INM	Instutio Nacional Migracion / National Migration Institute
INI	Institutio Nacional Indegino / National Indigenous Institute
MCD	Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia / Citizen's Movement for Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PAN	Partido de Accion Nacional / National Action Party
PCD	Partido de Centro Democratico / Party of the Democratic Center
PFP	Policia Federal Preventativa / Federal Prevtative Police
PGR	Procuraduria General de la Republica / National Attorney General's Office
PRD	Partido de la Revolucion Democratica / Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional / Institutional Party of the Revolution
SP	Seguridad Publica / Public Security
TRIFE	Tribunal Federal Electoral / Ferderal Electoral Tribunal

Alianza por el Cambio Comprised of the PAN-PVEM (Partido Verde)

Alianza por Mexico Comprised of the PRD-PT (Partido del Trabajo)-PAS (Partido Alianza Social)-PSN (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista) –CD (Convergencia por la Democaracia)

Alianza por Chiapas Comprised of PRD-PAN-PT-PVEM-CD-PSN-PAS-PCD

Cacique: Local economic elite (usually a land-owner) who exercises control over the political life of a given region.

Caciquismo: The political culture that results from the power dynamics exercised by *caciques*.

Base de Operación Mixta: Military base where state and federal Judicial Police work with the army.

Campeños: Peasant farmer

Casillas especiales: Special voting stations where citizens may vote for President while traveling away from the area where they are registered to vote.

Dedazo system: The President's individual selection of the Presidential candidate.

Dispensas: Basic goods, considered 'necessary' components for rural life as determined by the government.

Ejido: Communal land.

Fuerzas de Accion Rapida: Rapid Action Force

Ley de Libre Transito: The Law of Free Transportation, allows citizens and foreigners alike to travel freely throughout the country.

Progresas: Health, Education and Nutrition Program

Procampo: Program for Direct Support to Mexican Producers

Usos y costumbres: 'uses and customs', a communal decision making process, using traditional practices and values.

Credencial de elector: Voting credential, like a voter's registration card that is also used as the principal form of identification.

INTRODUCTION

The Mexican elections on July 2, 2000 had an historic result. The people of Mexico voted to end the 71-year monopoly of power held by the Party of the Institutional Revolution (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* -PRI). The victory of an opposition candidate, in this case Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (*Partido de Accion Nacional* -PAN), over the PRI presidential candidate (Francisco Labastida Ochoa) is a clear demonstration that great changes have taken place in Mexican society. Fox's victory builds on Mexican citizens' prolonged struggle for democracy and their immense desire for change in Mexico.

This report is the result of an elections observation delegation co-hosted by Global Exchange and *Alianza Cívica*. Global Exchange is an international human rights organization based in San Francisco, California, which has worked on Mexican human rights issues for eight years. *Alianza Cívica* is a Mexican non-governmental organization (NGO) that formed after the fraudulent federal elections in 1988 and has become the nation's largest watchdog organization. The two organizations first collaborated during the 1994 presidential elections, sending a 110 person elections observation delegation. That delegation observed the elections in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Michoacán. *Alianza Cívica* has continued to invite Global Exchange to co-host election observation delegations to Mexico. Collaborations to date include: gubernatorial elections in Michoacán in November 1995; municipal elections in Guerrero in October 1996; federal mid-term elections in Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas in July 1997; municipal elections in Chiapas in October 1998; and gubernatorial elections in Guerrero in February 1999.

In the fall of 1998 Global Exchange and *Alianza Cívica* agreed to organize a series of observation delegations, to both Mexico and the United States, throughout the year 2000. First, Global Exchange hosted a group of Mexican civic leaders who observed and critiqued the U.S. presidential primary elections in California in March. Soon after, Global Exchange invited leading members of Mexican civil society to the U.S. to express their concerns about the electoral process in Mexico to policy makers, media, and the public. In May, six weeks prior to the Mexican federal election, Global Exchange and *Alianza Cívica* co-hosted a delegation of 30 academics from the US, Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the European Union to six states in Mexico, to observe and report on pre-electoral conditions.¹

The final stage in this project was the organization of a 57-person delegation to observe the federal elections on July 2. On this date, the presidency, the entire upper and lower houses of Congress, as well as the mayoralty of Mexico City were voted by the Mexicans.

¹ See <http://www.globalexchange.org/gx/campaigns/mexico/preelection2000/>

The goal of this report is not to present a comprehensive analysis of the election results. Our numbers were insufficient to gather such data.² The observation reports leading up to and on election day in Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chiapas, Yucatán, Hidalgo, and Mexico State are based on direct observation and testimony gathered by Global Exchange observers. The report does provide a picture of the climate surrounding the elections and the varied experiences of observers at more than 100 voting stations throughout the rural south of Mexico. The report concludes with a brief analysis of the options and dilemmas that face Mexico on the eve of a new administration.

On the advice of *Alianza Cívica* analysts the two Global Exchange delegations observed primarily poor, rural, and indigenous areas of the country where vote buying and illegal pressuring could most likely occur. In many of these same regions, where an estimated 14 million Mexican voters live, daily life is affected by long-standing social conflicts, some of which have flared into armed rebellion and resulted in heavy militarization. Despite the fact that nearly all observers agree that the victory of Vicente Fox was clear and unequivocal and that overall the election process showed a marked improvement from previous presidential contests, this report highlights the many electoral irregularities and problems that still exist.

The report does not focus on persistent problems to be contrarian, but rather to indicate areas where substantial improvement is still needed. Were the electoral results closer, these problems could have become the focus of bitter dispute. It is worth noting that had the election been based exclusively on the results from impoverished zones where millions of voters depend on government assistance programs for survival, Labastida would have defeated Fox by a wide margin.³ *Alianza Cívica* points with concern that vote buying and coercion were widespread in the rural states, and that in these areas important elections will take place soon in the near future.

In a final introductory note, it should be understood that the vast majority of attempts to sway votes through illegal or unethical practices documented in the report – such as the illegal conditioning of government aid to influence voters, the illegal transport of voters for electoral purposes, or the unethical distribution of goods or services paid for with party funds to influence voters – were carried out by the ruling party, but opposition parties also participated in similar practices in some instances. This fact points to the need for the IFE, civil organizations, and citizens throughout Mexico to remain vigilant to the possibility that, despite the advances of the opposition, manipulation of voters, especially in impoverished rural areas, will remain a temptation for unscrupulous politicians of all stripes.

² See <http://www.ife.org.mx> for final numerical results. See <http://www.laneta.apc.org/alianza> for statistical breakdown of polling day irregularities.

³ “Tareas pendientes. Informe preliminar de Alianza Cívica sobre la calidad de la jornada electoral del 2 de julio de 2000,” Mexico City, <http://www.laneta.apc.org/alianza> (downloaded 12 July 2000).

Background to the election

Observing Mexico's federal elections presented a special set of challenges. In a liberal representative democracy, elections are supposed to allow the population to choose its government freely and to hold the rulers accountable to their campaign claims through regular re-election or rotation of power. However, in Mexico's authoritarian political system dominated since 1929 by one party, elections had mainly served as a mobilizing tool for the PRI.

Through electoral victory the PRI claimed to embody the spirit and goals of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. These historic ideals included effective suffrage and non-re-election, agrarian reform, labor and social rights, and free, public, secular education. During the recent decades of the 20th century, the PRI's adherence to these ideals has been challenged. After the debt crisis of 1982 Mexico, under the tutelage of international creditors, embarked on a 'shock program' of economic restructuring which greatly increased socioeconomic polarization. Rising discontent with the hegemonic party-state manifested in a variety of ways, including labor and other social movements mobilizing outside PRI mechanisms of control, even rebel organizing.⁴ Some of this discontent was channeled into an electoral opposition, which peaked in 1988 when center-left opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was widely believed to have won the presidency, but the PRI claimed victory by fraud.⁵ Cárdenas ran again as the candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolucion Democratica* -PRD) in 1994 and 2000, but failed to mobilize the same level of broad-based support.

Public reaction to the notorious electoral fraud in 1988 led to numerous electoral reforms and to the dramatic growth of civil society activity and organizations. In 1994, pressure from civil society, responding to the Zapatista uprising and the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, led to the inclusion of provisions for foreigners to observe the elections in the new electoral code of that year. The most important institutional result of electoral reform has been the creation of the autonomous, citizen-controlled Federal Electoral Institute (*Instituto Federal Electoral* -IFE). The July 2000 elections were the first elections overseen by the independent IFE. During this time civil society watchdog organizations such as *Alianza Cívica* have become involved in observing the electoral processes.

In addition to pressure from below, the introduction of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s fueled divisions within the PRI between the internationally-oriented "technocrats" and the "dinosaurs" who controlled the party's elaborate patronage machine. At this time the PAN, the traditionally Catholic and conservative party, repositioned itself as a promoter of economic modernization and clean governance. The PAN's new populist image made it an increasingly popular outlet for the protest vote against the hegemonic party.⁶ This shifting correlation of political forces away from the PRI as well as a set of institutional changes to be discussed in the following section,

⁴ LaBotz D., *Democracy in Mexico: Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform*, Boston, South End Press, 1995

⁵ Casteñeda, J., *La herencia: Arqueología de la sucesión presidencial en México*, Ediciones Alfaguara, S.A. 1999.

⁶ See <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/mexico/dem/campaign.html> for breakdown of Mexican vote.

raised great interest in the 2000 election. For the first time in 71 years there was evidence that a transition from one-party dominance to a competitive electoral system could occur.

Electoral observation

International foreign presence at national elections in an observational capacity has increased in the era of post-Cold War regime transitions, conducted by a wide range of groups including the United Nations, the Carter Center, and U.S. party initiatives such as the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute.⁷ One potential shortcoming of electoral observation is an excessively narrow focus on what occurs on voting day and excluding the longer-term aspects in the pre-electoral environment which can affect the fairness of the process.⁸ Global Exchange and *Alianza Cívica* sought to avoid this hazard by sending an observer group two months before the election to investigate and report on the pre-electoral climate.⁹ The election delegation was in Mexico for ten days, bracketing the July 2 election.

Following the 1988 election debacle, the PRI government was under growing domestic and international pressure to reform the electoral process. Reform legislation in the 1990s created the IFE to oversee elections. However, it was not until a further set of electoral reforms were passed in 1996 that the control of the IFE was removed from the executive branch and given autonomous status. The IFE is now led by a respected, independent figure, José Woldenberg.

The observation project was challenged by Mexican society's historically grounded suspicion of foreign intervention, and by the government's particular use of the discourse of national sovereignty to reject the idea of official international observers for the election. Under pressure to demonstrably reform its electoral process, the government allowed foreigners to apply to the IFE to enter the country as 'electoral visitors.' When accepted, foreigners were granted a special Electoral Visitor Migratory Form (FMVE) visa from the National Immigration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migración* –INM) to observe, but not to pass judgment on, the elections. The delegation did encounter some problems with accessing this visa. In the months preceding the election, Global Exchange's Mexico Program Director Ted Lewis was denied entry to the country after receiving accreditation from the IFE. He was only granted permission to re-enter a few days before the election.

The numerous international observation groups received significant media coverage and were welcomed by their Mexican NGO counterparts.¹⁰ Much of the international media coverage of this focused on the improved technical quality of the

⁷ On recent elections in Latin America, see Middlebrook, K., ed., *Electoral Observation and Democratic Transitions in Latin America*, La Jolla, CA, U.C.-San Diego Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies, 1998. For information on upcoming Latin American elections, see the University of Texas-Austin web site, <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/info/newsroom/elections>.

On Mexican elections, see Domínguez, J., ed., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections and Public Opinion*, N.Y., Routledge, 1999.

⁸ Karl, T., "Imposing Consent? Electoralism vs. Democratization in El Salvador," pp. 10-36 in *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980-1985*, in Drake, P. & Silva, E., eds, San Diego, U.C.-San Diego, 1986; Petras, J. & Vieux, S., "The Transition to Authoritarian Electoral Regimes in Latin America," *Latin American Perspectives*, 21(4), Fall 1994, pp. 5-20; and Robinson W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony*, N.Y., Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁹ Global Exchange, *Pre-Electoral Conditions in Mexico 2000*, San Francisco, June 2000.

¹⁰ In total there were +800 international observers.

election itself. The electoral delegation found considerable improvement in this respect, but also note areas of concern. The combined national and international observer presence may have served to deter the blatant electoral fraud that was widespread in 1988.

However, it is important to note that the reform of the electoral process in Mexico over the last decade did not occur because of international observer groups. The primary credit for these reforms belongs in part to civic groups such as *Alianza Cívica* and the *Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia*, as well as to the mobilization of social movements in which thousands of *campesino*, labor and student leaders have been imprisoned or killed in recent years in the struggle to democratize Mexico. With respect to the question of democratization, the observers found a number of substantial remaining problems which shall now be discussed, as well as questions that will not be answered until after the new administration takes office.

OAXACA

Introduction

Seven elections observers visited Oaxaca City, Yojovi, San Agustín Loxicha, Miahuatlán, and Santiago Xanica. Six others visited communities in the coastal region including Pinotepa Nacional, Tlacamama, Jamiltepec, San Pedro Tututepec, La Luz, and Río Grande. The Oaxaca group included scholars and academics, students, an administrative assistant, an accountant, and Global Exchange representatives. The observers conducted extensive interviews with members of the Oaxaca Council of IFE Directors, IFE staff, *Alianza Cívica*, representatives from opposition parties including the PRD, PAN, and PCD, various NGOs, human rights and religious organizations, local government officials, polling officials, and citizens. The observers made pre-electoral investigations and visited a variety of voting stations on election day. The observers focused on rural areas where serious poverty and the presence of security forces posed special challenges for the electoral process.

Pre-Electoral Context

Based on 1990 statistics, Oaxaca's population of 3,072,000 citizens includes indigenous language speakers: 724,000 Zapotecos, 369,000 Mixtecos, 188,000 Mixes, and 108,000 Mazatecos, many of whom live in small, isolated communities. The National Council on Population found that 76 percent of Oaxaca's 570 municipalities contain high or extremely high levels of poverty as measured by income, housing, and education.

In Oaxaca, 418 municipalities have chosen not to use contests between parties to elect local officials. Instead, as is allowed by Oaxaca state law, they choose their leaders through usage and customs (*usos y costumbres*), local practices rooted in indigenous systems of community service which give particular importance to the judgment of elders, open assemblies, and consensus. For access to government resources, however, these communities remain dependent on the PRI-controlled political system. In many cases this has enabled local political leaders to gain power and subvert community autonomy through the manipulation of *usos y costumbres*.

The PRD has won local elections in key areas such as Juchitán, as the PAN has in Oaxaca City, but the PRI still dominates state politics and military affairs. The PRI recently won the governorship with 47 percent of the vote and control of 114 of the 152 municipalities that practice party politics instead of *usos y costumbres*. In addition to PRI control of the police and state judicial hierarchy, in 1996 the PRI began to intervene in municipal politics with a strong military presence, particularly in the aftermath of actions by the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR). In Xanica, for instance, the community has feared the return of the military who occupied their community for six weeks; in Loxicha long-term military presence produced an atmosphere of intimidation that clouded the electoral process.

Role of IFE and Electoral Reforms

In Oaxaca, institutional reforms and civic projects considerably aided advances toward the democratization of the federal elections. Many civic organizations demonstrated concerted efforts to inform the rural population of their electoral rights, including: the IFE, *Alianza Cívica*, progressive members of the Catholic Church, activists

of the PRD-dominated *Alianza por México*, and community projects supported by the *Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia* (MCD) and the National Indigenous Institute (INI). Efforts included training citizens to be electoral observers, distributing pamphlets and posters illustrating the voting process, advising citizens of their right to a free and secret ballot, and warning against vote buying.

The local IFE council stated that it successfully recruited and trained 27,426 randomly-selected volunteers to staff 99.9 percent of the 3,922 voting stations in the state, despite difficulties in the recruitment and training process. The IFE lost access to mass media for recruitment at a vital point. Also, it lost potential recruits to migration, lack of citizen status, or and personal, religious or gender-related reasons. Attrition of recruits for IFE volunteers raised concerns that pressured potential volunteers to drop out.

Oaxaca's countryside presented a number of challenges to the IFE's efforts such as potential irregularities due to *usos y costumbres* customs. About half of the municipalities governed by *usos y costumbres* held general assemblies to deliberate whether to allow voting stations in their communities. While all but two municipalities choose to do so, it is likely that many continued to use traditional, communal practices such as public assemblies and non-secret voting.

Another difficulty the IFE encountered was illiteracy and the low level of education endemic in rural areas. The IFE had difficulty training volunteers and accrediting local electoral observers. In the regions of Pinotepa Nacional, San Juan Colorado, Xanica, and Río Grande, IFE representatives were sometimes unclear about important procedures. The community radio station XEJAM broadcast informational messages about the elections in Mixtec, but aside from this effort, little election information reached rural communities in indigenous languages. The IFE itself could not find bilingual trainers to instruct indigenous IFE volunteers, to produce training materials, or to provide media outreach.

Intimidation and Militarization

Impunity contributes to the climate of militarization and intimidation in Oaxaca. PRI candidates and authorities are often in a position to threaten or commit acts of violence and intimidation without fear of criminal proceedings. Authorities who commit such acts have the option to appeal to the PRI governor who controls the state police and judiciary.

One such case of intimidation occurred when the municipal agent Soriano Díaz reproached Lucia Valencia for organizing a workshop on voting rights, claiming that such activities divided the community and created a climate of violence. Mr. Díaz warned Ms. Valencia that if she held another workshop, he would take the matter to the Municipal President of San Pedro Tututepec or to the governor of Oaxaca.

Another case of intimidation with impunity occurred when authorities incarcerated a Mixe individual two weeks before the elections. He had previously spoken out at a public meeting against the PRI congressional candidate, Cándido Coheto Martínez. The authorities subsequently deprived the prisoner of all contact with his family. The individual later died in his prison cell, apparently a victim of police brutality.

In Loxicha, the ongoing imprisonment of over 80 men is another example of intimidation. The electoral observers met with women who are part of a group that has held demonstrations in front of the government offices in Oaxaca City over the past three

years to protest human rights violations in their communities. Many of the demonstrators' charges are directed toward the current Municipal President and former officer of the Judicial Police, Lucio Vásquez Ramírez. According to testimony, in 1996 an alleged fatal guerilla attack on a police station in the resort town of Huatulco set off a wave of repression against the indigenous communities. Actions against the communities included the arbitrary arrest of municipal authorities and bilingual teachers, and other arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, and murders. The military presence has increased under the pretext of combating alleged drug trafficking and community involvement with the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR).

The electoral observers themselves experienced the effects of the militarization during their visit to Oaxaca. To reach the municipal capital, Loxicha, they passed through a military checkpoint known as a *Base de Operación Mixta* where state and federal Judicial Police work in conjunction with the army. Upon the arrival of the observers, approximately 20 police, some out of uniform, detained the observers, checked identification, and recorded names. Authorities forced the observers to repeat the process twice before reaching Loxicha. The police also accompanied observers to and from polling sites.

Vote buying, Coercion, and the Misuse of State Resources

In Oaxaca, elections observers collected reports of vote buying and coercion committed primarily by the PRI, but in two cases by the PAN and PRD. Such practices are widespread, often accepted as the norm, and may have potentially affected electoral outcome in rural areas.

In Chila, Río Grande, and Chacagua, beneficiaries of Progresá and Procampo reported that local promoters of these programs and the municipal president of San Pedro Tututepec himself, Ramiro Herrera, threatened to end benefits to those that do not vote for the PRI.

Four days before the elections, a representative of the governor attended a gathering in the community of Zoogocho with officials from 14 communities. The representative threatened that if the community members did not vote for the PRI, "many doors would close," implying that their benefits would be discontinued.

In Río Grande, Chacagua, La Luz, and San Pedro Tututepec, observers received many reports of the PRI distributing basic goods (*dispensas*), including chickens, cement, hoes, shovels, paint brushes, pails, roofing materials, credit, cash, and promising housing, electricity, a hospital, pavement of streets, bread shops, and corn grinding mills, as a means of winning votes or garnering attendance at PRI rallies.

In Río Grande, Puerto Escondido, Chila, El Mamey, and Colotepec observers received reports that PRI government officials warehoused disaster relief material for victims of Hurricane Paulina in 1998 and the earthquake of September 1999 and then distributed the materials in the weeks prior to the elections.

Residents of Jolotepec, Tututepec, and El Mamey reported that officials were distributing materials in a partisan fashion. On June 30, two days before the elections, observers found authorities distributing cement from a local storage house located on the Pinotepa Nacional-Puerto Escondido Highway. The officials gave about 55 people from El Ciruelo and Jicaltepec six bags of cement each. Women at the site testified that the

PRI distributed the cement, and that the Municipal President, Alvaro Baños, had told the recipients they were all to vote for the PRI.

In many cases, vote buying involved improper use of voter credentials. In Río Grande the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC), a PRI-affiliated *campesino* organization, distributed 2,000 chickens a week prior to the elections. The organization charged recipients a nominal fee for the chickens and asked them to show their voter credential and to sign their names, urging them to vote for the PRI.

The frequency of vote buying in rural areas is exacerbated by a widespread acceptance of the practice. Although many citizens reported vote buying to the IFE, no one had filed a formal charge until two days before the elections. In Yojovi, a team from *Alianza Cívica* and the PRD helped local officials file formal charges accusing the PRI candidate for Congress, Cándido Coheto Martínez, of large-scale vote buying and coercion. Coheto delivered 88 machetes to citizens, forcing them to sign a form. He also illegally demanded copies of voter credentials from individuals who were to receive fertilizer and chickens from the head of the Women's Committee. The local officials sent Coheto copies of the credentials, although the individuals received neither the fertilizer nor the chickens.

According to IFE and *Alianza Cívica*, it is difficult to determine the impact of vote buying and coercion on the outcome of particular elections. Testimony indicated that many individuals had heard and understood the IFE message that the vote was intended to be 'free and secret.' However, *Alianza Cívica*, the Catholic Church, and NGOs in Oaxaca believe many rural citizens feel obligated to vote for PRI, the party distributing goods and services, because citizens have 'given their word' or because they do not understand the way their vote will be ascertained.¹¹

Election Day Observations

Overall, electoral violations were minor and occurred as a result of the newness of the voting process, the inability of some voters to read the ballot, and the physical conditions of the voting station. However, significant irregularities did occur.

In Santa Rosa de Lima, observers saw an IFE volunteer peering into the voting booth as individuals voted and then acknowledging those who voted for the PRI. One observer learned from the IFE representative that this volunteer had dismissed two original volunteers and pressured the IFE to hire him in their stead.

In La Luz, a PRI party official distributed *dispensas* to citizens immediately after they voted.

Significant electoral violations occurred in the militarized municipality of Loxicha. IFE volunteers were not chosen at random and were poorly trained because, according to the IFE representative, those they initially chose declined to participate out of fear. Heavily armed police officers were illegally present at voting stations. Unauthorized PRI representatives also intimidated voters at several voting stations.

At a voting station in PRI-dominated Tovala Copalita, observers witnessed a wide variety of irregularities. Overall, the voting station was extremely disorganized, making it impossible to ensure that the procedures were being followed properly. The voting station was located on the small porch of a local government office where those who identified themselves as authorities conducted business and watched the voting from just a few

¹¹ See Appendix 1.

meters away. PRI propaganda was visible to voters in the basketball court where they waited in line and in the building itself. The majority of voters arrived by truck, and one of the drivers confirmed that the municipal government paid for the service in violation of electoral law. An IFE volunteer in the position of “second examiner” assumed most of the duties of “president,” and the PAN representative marked the credentials, although upon inspection, it was discovered that he had consistently marked them incorrectly. The IFE volunteers rarely used the indelible ink even after the IFE representative instructed them to do so. At least one man voted twice, and IFE volunteers allowed at least three individuals to vote even though they did not appear on the official list.

Illiteracy and lack of education affected election day activities as well as pre-electoral conditions. Observers noted that many voters, mostly from indigenous communities, had little individual voting experience and needed guidance in the ballot marking process. At rural sites, typically 5 to 10 percent of the ballots were annulled because they were marked incorrectly.

Conclusion

In Oaxaca, the IFE achieved marked success in guaranteeing relatively free and secret elections for urban citizens and made important strides in many rural areas. One sign of this achievement was the mood on the morning of July 3 at the regional collection site for ballot boxes in Miahuatlán. As IFE officials and volunteers brought in their specially marked cases, they expressed pride in having taken part in a process with unprecedented high levels of openness, neutrality, and transparency.

Nevertheless, the pre-electoral conditions of these elections indicate that the political rights of citizens and the legitimacy of election results in rural areas in Oaxaca were threatened in serious ways. Concerns for future elections in Oaxaca should include: Whether or not the electoral processes will be developed for communities that practice *usos y costumbres* so that they may take part in state and federal elections without compromising their right to continue local governance with respect for indigenous traditions. Whether or not areas such as Loxicha will be free of militarization, misuse of police power, and intimidation. Whether or not state elections will be considered illegitimate should illegally bought or coerced votes influence results, as they may have in these elections considering the margin by which the PRI presidential and congressional candidates won in Oaxaca. Whether or not federal investigators and electoral tribunals will adapt procedures to assure that one may challenge illegitimate electoral results in a timely and effective way in order to guarantee the political right to representation.

GUERRERO

Introduction

The Guerrero delegation was made up of thirteen people, among them, academics, a bio-technology researcher, a doctor, a health worker, students, an accountant, a computer scientist, a community outreach coordinator and two Global Exchange representatives. The Guerrero delegation arrived in Chilpancingo three days before the July 2 elections in order to evaluate pre-electoral conditions. The delegation met with IFE officials, human rights leaders, party representatives, and journalists before splitting into two groups to observe the elections in La Montaña and Costa Grande.¹²

The delegation targeted these two regions because of their intensely complicated political culture. In Guerrero the federal elections were set against the backdrop of extreme levels of rural poverty, the presence of four distinct indigenous ethnicities, a political heritage of *caciquismo*, a persistent history of severe political violence, human rights abuses and impunity for government officials involved in such abuses, the presence of two armed insurrection movements, highly organized drug-traffickers, the militarization of the state, and often violent tension between the PRI and the PRD.¹³

Role of Electoral Institutions

The Global Exchange pre-electoral report of June 2000 emphasized the extraordinary efforts made by the state IFE officials in the areas of voter education, media oversight, preparation of registered voter lists, and training of IFE volunteers. The IFE officials expressed that despite their exhaustive work at the state level, the political culture in Guerrero would make it difficult for them to prevent minor irregularities at the local level.

The Federal Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Federal Electoral -TRIFE*) makes final rulings on the validity of results, and the Special Prosecutor's Office for Electoral Crimes (*Fiscalía Especializada para Atención a Delitos Electorales -FEPADE*) enforces electoral laws. State IFE officials expressed concern about the ability of either of these organizations to make independent judgments since they both have ties to the executive branch. IFE officials sent denunciations of electoral irregularities to the FEPADE that were still being processed after several months. The FEPADE had sent no information concerning the status of the denunciations.

The state representative of the PAN-dominated Alliance for Change (*Alianza por el Cambio*) supported this view. They filed denunciations for two cases in which PRI

¹² The state of Guerrero is divided into seven economic regions: Acapulco, Zona Centro, Costa Chica, Costa Grande, La Montaña, Tierra Caliente and Zona Norte.

¹³ For more information see Pedrazzini, C., "Guerrero '95: Represión y muerte," Los derechos humanos en México: La tentación del autoritarismo, Fernández, D., and Acosta-Ortíz, J., eds., México DF, Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, A.C. and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1997, Bartra, A., Guerrero Bronco, México DF, Ediciones *sinfiltro*, 1996, Gutiérrez, M., Violencia en Guerrero, México DF, La Jornada Ediciones, 1998, Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, A.C., La violencia en Guerrero y Oaxaca, México DF, Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, A.C., 1999, and Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, A.C., El imperio de la violencia y la impunidad: Quinto informe, junio 1998- mayo 1999, México DF, Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, A.C., 1999.

party representatives had distributed products to influence voters in Santa Catarina and San Marcos. The local attorney general's office rejected their claims.

Pre-Electoral Climate and Militarization

The observers' meetings with human rights organizers and party representatives in Chilpancingo made it clear that human rights violations carried out by the various police bodies, the military and paramilitary units with the collaboration of local *caciques* are still an alarming problem in La Montaña, Costa Grande, and Costa Chica.

On June 30, several military vehicles circulated in Coyuca de Benítez in the Costa Grande. At 10 p.m., these vehicles, including trucks, vans, and cars, parked across the street from the house of Hilda Navarrete Goyon, a well-known human rights activist. The soldiers and police stayed approximately one hour. According to Ms. Navarrete Goyon, such military presence in Coyuca is a regular occurrence.

In Cucuyachi, a small community in Costa Grande, severe internal conflicts have altered the life of the community. Six weeks before the elections, a group of armed men recognized to be supporters of the former *cacique* shot down the Commissioner of communal land affairs in the region as he was walking on the road. The Commissioner's son relocated to Chilpancingo for safety reasons, but he returned to the community to vote. The government uses the suspected presence of guerrillas and drug-traffickers in the region as the official rationale for the large number of military and police forces in the region. According to several residents, the internal conflicts and the large military presence create an atmosphere of fear, to the extent that some residents have abandoned farming their cornfields (*milpas*).

El Paraíso is also a historically violent area that remains polarized along party lines. Mario Valdez, a PRD candidate for Congress, has been detained and tortured and, on a separate occasion, ambushed and shot in the face with a shotgun, leaving him blind in one eye. More recently, three 'alleged' drug-traffickers were murdered in a nearby village. Their bodies were subsequently burned and their bones scattered. No one has been charged with the crime. The lack of investigation and punishment of the perpetrators has increased community concern about active vigilante groups. Moreover, community members expressed a lack of faith in the judicial process, which exacerbates the overall environment of fear and impunity.

The military was not visible in La Montaña or Costa Grande on election day, though one of our delegates in Metlatonoc was told about camps and road blocks which had been in place for up to three months prior to election day.

Vote buying, Coercion, and the Misuse of State Resources

Observers noted that both the PRI and PRD carried out vote buying and coercion before the elections and on election day. In some cases, the parties filed complaints. Testimony indicated that PRI militants had been put on the defensive by heightened efforts by the IFE, *Alianza Cívica*, human rights groups, and other NGOs to educate voters and invite both national and international observers.

Government officials and party representatives used programs such as Progresa and Procampo as conduits to send campaign literature to program recipients in the Costa Grande. In San Gerónimo, PRI campaign letters accompanied the Progresa payments to

recipients three weeks before the elections.¹⁴ School administrators and party representatives pressured teachers in Aguas Blancas to recruit 10 PRI voters, or risk losing their jobs.¹⁵ Officials used other types of government programs to pressure voters. For example, in the PRD-controlled community of Atoyaquillo, a PRD supporter, himself a survivor of the Aguas Blancas massacre, brought in a medical brigade on July 1. The brigade provided medical exams and planned to be doing so in the area on election day as well.

Vote buying and coercion were also evident in La Montaña region. The presence of large quantities of fertilizer in the towns of Aquilpa, Tlatlauquitepec, Ayotoxtla, Zapotitlán, and Acatepa in the week before the elections and on election day was particularly flagrant. When observers inquired about the source of the fertilizer, they were told that it had been ordered and paid for in February or March. However, the fertilizer was not delivered until the week preceding the elections, even though the planting season had ended by that time. The fertilizer was not distributed by Procampo promoters, but by the PRI governor and municipal presidents. The recipients paid 10 pesos per sack, half the market price. In Mixtecapa, a PRI local official asked women to show him their voter credentials on election day in order to receive a corn mill.

In Malinaltepec, a PRD-dominated community in La Montaña, the disbursement of corn flour to women on election day through the Temporary Workers Program prompted no protests by opposition leaders. Mexican observers from the Human Rights Center of Tlachinollan explained that the willingness of people to accept these kinds of disbursements was a significant problem in the region. An IFE official in Chilpancingo also pointed to the same endemic problem in Guerrero's political culture; i.e., the extreme poverty that leads people to accept politically conditioned handouts.

In Metlatonoc, observers heard numerous testimonies concerning gifts, including food, drinks, handheld corn mills, fertilizer, hi-fi equipment, money, blankets, and used clothes, made by PRI and PRD party representatives as well as Congressional and Senatorial candidates. The most blatant case of vote buying occurred in Cochoapa el Grande where a local PRI deputy paid 120 pesos per vote in the days before the elections.¹⁶

Election Day Observations

On election day, observers reported cordiality and respect among the IFE volunteers in La Montaña and Costa Grande. However, the voting procedure generated confusion in several communities that led the observers to question the training carried out by the IFE and the system by which IFE volunteers had been chosen.

In El Cucuyachi, observers noted that 1) the booth opened two hours late, 2) the voting curtains were hung like posters on the wall, 3) the voting station volunteers did not use the indelible ink required by the IFE, and 4) the voting station volunteers asked elderly people, "who do you want to vote for" and then marked all three ballots (presidential, senatorial and congressional) for the party that the person indicated without distinguishing between the three different offices. Observers noted that the volunteers did not pressure those people who voted "at the table." In Zapotitlán, there was no curtain on

¹⁴ See Appendix 2.

¹⁵ See Appendix 3.

¹⁶ See Appendix 4.

the front of the voting booth. Throughout La Montaña, almost all polling places were located in front of the local government buildings rather than in schools or private houses, thereby associating the voting process with the state authorities.

In the remote Mixtec communities of Metlatonoc and Mixtecapa, voting booths opened almost two hours late, and there were numerous unforeseen substitutions of IFE volunteers who did not present themselves on election day by people from the voting line. The observers encountered similar confusion in the PRI-controlled town of Xalpatlahuac, where none of the four IFE volunteers presented themselves on election day. They were substituted by individuals waiting in line to vote. In El Paraíso, the 'president' and 'secretary' of the IFE volunteers were absent, so the IFE examiners had to assume their responsibilities. The person who then became the head examiner was illiterate.

When observers asked IFE volunteers at the voting stations in La Montaña whether they felt the training by the IFE had prepared them for the elections, they usually answered in the affirmative. However, many did not know how to deal with voters who possessed an electoral credential but were not on the list. In the Tlacoapa, six voters who were not on the list were allowed to vote. In Tetlacotepec, two people with credentials were not on the list but were allowed to vote.

Observers found a large number of voting irregularities in the remote PRD-governed municipality of Metlatonoc. Numerous mistakes appeared in the lists. At the three voting stations observed, the IFE volunteers were not all present. After additional volunteers were chosen from the lines to fill the vacancies, the total number of volunteers varied from three to six. Municipal officials had placed a large pile of fertilizer bags conspicuously next to the voting station located in front of the municipal building. The municipal police were guarding the bags, and one of them was lying on top of the pile, looking down on the voting station. A group of PRD supporters, including the municipal president, walked around the voting station and were giving directions to the IFE volunteers. Observers also noticed a PRI candidate for Alternate Congressman and two PRI lawyers standing near the voting stations throughout election day.

In other regions as well, observers witnessed both PRI and PRD party officials and representatives attempting to influence the voting process either through coercion or by maintaining an intimidating presence at the voting station. In Xalpatlahuac, PRI officials distributed water buckets, claiming that they were late Mother's Day presents. In this instance the PAN and PRD representatives required the IFE volunteers to file a complaint in the electoral document. In Aguas Blancas, as the final ballot count began, the PRD representative closely monitored the process. An individual who falsely represented himself to observers as the local PRI president used intimidating and aggressive language in an attempt to drive the PRD representative from his position. The PRD representative defended his rights, however, and was not intimidated.

Conclusions

Guerrero is the second poorest state in Mexico. It is also the location of some of the most violent and endemic human rights abuses in recent Mexican history. While both the pre-electoral delegation and the electoral delegation heard testimonies concerning pressures and irregularities leading up to the day of the elections, observers witnessed no major criminal activity on election day itself. Irregularities that observers did witness

were mainly continuations of fraudulent pre-electoral practices or the result of a local political culture that reflects the marginalization to which a vast number of rural Mexicans are subject. The political climate of Guerrero, which has been racked by decades if not centuries of internecine rivalries between local *caciques*, has left the rural, poor, indigenous voter dependent on the vagaries of such power struggles. The climate of fear, vote buying and coercion, and election irregularities are simply symptoms of the conditions of poverty and the political malaise found in the state. In the past widespread violence and electoral irregularities were more commonplace. Electoral counts were readjusted while the ballot boxes were being transported by car or helicopter to the state capital, according to Florencio Salazar Adame, a former high ranking PRI official. In order to combat such traditions, it is essential that the autonomy granted to the IFE be extended to the state and local levels. Legal reforms are also necessary to give the IFE the power to investigate and prosecute electoral irregularities. Most importantly the political climate of fear and intimidation, tolerance of vote buying and coercion, and the use of government resources to influence voters must be eliminated to fully open the political process.

CHIAPAS

Introduction

The Chiapas delegation was made up of eight members: two Sisters of Charity, two professors, two activists, a student and an Amnesty International representative. The delegation spent a total of six days in Chiapas. For three days in Tuxtla Gutiérrez and San Cristóbal de las Casas, the delegation met with government office representatives, political parties, and local NGOs. The day before the elections, the delegation divided into two groups; one of which observed in the eastern Lacandón jungle (*Zona de la Selva*) and the other observed in the central highlands (*Zona de Los Altos*). East of Tuxtla Gutiérrez Chiapas is rural and the population suffers from extreme poverty.

Pre-Electoral Climate and Militarization

The Zapatista (Zapatista Army of National Liberation - EZLN) uprising in January 1994 sparked direct action and organization against the government of Chiapas and Mexico and drew attention to poverty and inequality, particularly all forms of racism against the indigenous peoples, which had existed for decades. The government responded with the immediate military occupation of the state. After long-term negotiations between the government and the EZLN and their support bases, in February 1996 the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture were signed by both the representative government body and the EZLN spokespeople. Soon after, discussion broke down as the government failed to implement the Accords.

Both of the areas observed by the delegation are characterized as conflicted regions and are heavily militarized. In Chiapas it is estimated that up to 80,000 personnel from military and other security forces patrol the state. Many communities have denounced this presence and have made complaints charging the official personnel with various crimes including theft and serious human rights abuses. Although the 1997 massacre of 45 individuals at Acteal was blamed on pro-government paramilitary groups, earlier this year a retired army general and two senior security police were sentenced to eight years in prison for failing to intervene to stop the attack. Reports by human rights groups document survivor testimony of the massacre and suggest that a direct link between paramilitary groups and the military may exist.¹⁷ The presence of government and state forces is a contributing factor to the climate of fear that exists in the state.

Militarization has continued, particularly in the three conflict zones of *Zona de la Selva*, *Zona de Los Altos*, and the *Zona Norte*, where large-scale military bases have been established. Federal Preventive Police (*Policia Federal Preventativa* -PFP), who are partly composed of military police, have recently been installed in San Cristóbal. There are also credible reports of an estimated 15 to 20 paramilitary groups in the conflict areas of Chiapas.¹⁸ According to local human rights groups, paramilitary members in some areas now work for the Rural Police. The following is a list of examples of military hostility leading up to the elections.

¹⁷Chiapas: La guerra en curso, Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" AC, Mexico City, Mexico, 1998, Acteal: entre el Duelo y la Lucha, Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" AC, Chiapas, Mexico, 1988.

¹⁸ CIEPAC, <http://www.ciepac.org/analysis/militar.html> 1997 (downloaded July 19, 2000)

Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, gubernatorial candidate for Aliance For Chiapas (*Alianza por Chiapas*) a coalition supported by the PRD and the PAN, claimed that the PFP and army carried out joint exercises titled “Millennium Operative” at the end of 1999 and that these exercises were designed to train soldiers for war in Chiapas, Guerrero, and other states.

In the months prior to the elections, residents of Tzanembolóm, Chalchihuitán, Pontelhoc, El Bosque (all in *Los Altos*), and Chilón in the *Zona Norte*, denounced an increase in military occupation and hostilities in the unstable regions. People interviewed expressed fear of the possibility of a military offensive in the post-electoral period. On June 22, 2000 the EZLN issued a communiqué warning of the danger of such an offensive.¹⁹

Three weeks prior to the elections, seven Public Security police were killed in an ambush in El Bosque, *Zona de los Altos*. The attack is believed to have been carried out by the local paramilitary group. After the ambush in El Bosque, the Special Forces Airmobile Group (GAFE) was sent to Chiapas.

Role of Electoral Institutions

IFE representatives cited the limitations of their budget as one of their shortcomings in their ability to effectively conduct the electoral process. For example, the IFE produced public service announcements for television and radio to educate voters about the elections and their rights. The announcements also clarified a problematic issue that surveys by *Alianza Civica* highlighted rural populations were less aware than urban populations that social programs came from the government rather than a particular political party.²⁰ This is noteworthy because a higher percentage of rural populations are dependent upon these programs than urban populations. However, funding ran out so the public education ads could only run for two days due to the exorbitant rates charged by television and radio stations. In a similar case in District 5 (San Cristóbal de las Casas and vicinity), the IFE produced a voter education cassette in the indigenous language of Tzotzil which was distributed one week before the elections in some indigenous communities. The tape could not be reproduced or translated into the other local indigenous languages due to budgetary constraints and disagreements among party representatives on the local IFE council.

The IFE was also limited by a lack of coordination between national, state, and local levels. Local IFE officials said they were limited in their ability to respond to complaints of pre-electoral or electoral fraud. Local officials passed complaints on to the federal judicial branch, and were not able to monitor the total number of complaints received or to encourage resolution. For example, state and local IFE officials recognized inequity in the media coverage among the various political parties, but their powers were limited to monitoring media coverage without the authority to take corrective action. Also, there were complaints that voting stations and regional ballot repositories were located primarily in PRI communities so that opposition supporters had to travel to cast their vote. However, state and local IFE officials were unclear about which level of the IFE structure was responsible for selecting locations and how the selections were made.

¹⁹ See <http://spin.com.mx/~floresu/FZLN/archivo/ezln/2000/199600.htm> (in Spanish, downloaded July 19, 2000).

²⁰ See <http://www.globalexchange.org/gx/campaigns/mexico/preelection2000/appendices.html>.

A unique issue the IFE in Chiapas had to address was providing voting access to an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 displaced people and 50,000 to 80,000 military personnel in addition to people traveling away from their voting district on election day. Throughout the country a limited number of special voting stations (*casillas especiales*) are allowed. The election law allows only five such voting stations per electoral district, each accommodating up to 750 voters, and this number was too low for the volume of displaced people in Chiapas. However, opposition candidates seeking to limit the potential for fraud were the ones who insisted on the legal limits for *casillas especiales*.

Vote Buying, Coercion, and the Misuse of State Resources

The delegation heard a number of concerns relating to vote buying, coercion and misuse of state resources. Throughout the election period in Chiapas, opposition parties and Alianza Cívica denounced the unequal access of media time and coverage to candidates in the state.²¹ Opposition parties denounced interim Governor Roberto Albores Guillén's manipulation of the state media after the first presidential debate. PAN representatives in Tuxtla Gutiérrez have obtained a taped conversation of Albores Guillén telling his press secretary to insist that the state newspapers report favorably on Labastida's participation in the first presidential debate, contrary to most media reports in the country. Subsequent local newspaper articles did in fact declare Labastida's victory in the debate.

Additionally, PAN representatives reported that their candidates were not allowed to campaign in the following communities due to intimidation by PRI supporters: Amatenango del Valle, Chanal, Chalchihuitan, Nicolas Ruiz, El Bosque, and San Juan Chamula. The delegation observed virtually no opposition publicity in the rural communities in *Los Altos* and *Selva* either because the PRI was overwhelmingly supported in these communities without opposition, or because opposition absence was a result of intimidation.

The delegation obtained a copy of a manual organized by Julio César Cancino, a Senior Official of Chiapas, outlining party strategy to recruit PRI votes. The manual is entitled 'State Program for Political Proselytism by PRI-Affiliated Public Servants in the Service of the State Government of Chiapas.' The introduction to the manual states, "This document focuses on taking advantage of readily available, PRI-supporting individuals in the state government to participate in a simple scheme that encourages an increase of votes for political institution in the upcoming state and federal elections in the months of July and August of this year."²²

The delegation also obtained a copy of a letter from the Municipal President of La Trinitaria, Israel Calvo Maldonado, dated May 26, 2000, authorizing funds from the public treasury to be used for PRI campaign expenses.²³

Election Day Observations

Both observer groups witnessed many minor irregularities throughout election day. There was no consistency in the irregularities statewide, but these examples indicate

²¹ See Global Exchange Pre-Election Report at <http://www.globalexchange.org/gx/campaigns/mexico/preelection2000/>

²² See Appendix 5.

²³ See Appendix 6.

that the IFE, the political parties and the government still have to make improvements to secure a free and fair vote in Chiapas.

It is not possible to travel in Chiapas without crossing various immigration, military, SP and PGR checkpoints that are in direct violation of the Ley de Libre Transito. On the way to Los Plátanos in the municipality of El Bosque, government officials inspected observers' credentials at a Public Security check point. Irregularities that occurred in Los Plátanos were 1) IFE officials did not use indelible ink to mark voters' thumbs after they voted; 2) party representatives took ballots from voters to put them into ballot boxes; and 3) the voting station was adjacent to a Public Security post.

In Santa Elena, a divided community in the municipality of Ocosingo, an interesting situation illustrated the complex situation in Chiapas. At the polling station the PRI representatives resembled military personnel with military style haircuts and army issue boots. They said they were from Monte Líbano, the site of a large military base. While the PRI party appoints its representatives, it is illegal for military personnel to leave their base on voting day.

In Monte Líbano an observer spoke with a voter from Ranchería San Luis who had traveled for three hours to vote. His wife didn't vote because she could not walk the distance and was at their home with the children. He told the observer that PRI members were able to ride in pickup trucks paid for by the candidates. During the hour that the observer watched the voting station in Monte Líbano, at least three trucks pulled into the station with voters. One driver was a young man with a short haircut and dog tags who, when questioned, denied that he was with the military.

In the PRI-dominated community of El Censo in the municipality of Ocosingo, irregularities were similar to those in Los Plátanos. IFE volunteers called voters into the voting station by name. PRI representatives stood next to the ballot boxes and took the sometimes unfolded ballots as voters exited the voting booths, and put them into the ballot boxes.

In Taniperla in the municipality of Ocosingo, many of the IFE volunteers were participating for the first time and seemed extremely nervous. The voting station was located in the government school next to the military base rather than in the community school. An unaccredited PRI supporter named Pedro Chulín was filling out forms at the voting table, but the IFE volunteer did not challenge him. Military sentries watched the voting station, and Public Security officers armed with automatic rifles deliberately blocked the entrance to the voting station, challenging the observers upon arrival.

The state police had a strong presence at the *casillas especiales* in the municipality of Ocosingo. Municipal Police pick-up trucks, as well as two truckloads of Public Security officers, circled the plaza approximately every ten minutes during the hour the observers were present.

Conclusion

The delegation observed a peaceful voting day in Chiapas with minor infractions of the electoral law. However, the delegation found evidence of vote buying, coercion and misuse of state funds in the pre-electoral period that warrants concern for the governor elections on August 20, 2000. Levels of abstention or absenteeism were ten points higher in Chiapas than the national average. This could be due to a variety of factors, including militarization, fear in the voters, or reluctance of the Zapatista support

bases to participate in Mexican politics. However, these factors present a challenge that the IFE and CEE must address to ensure a free and safe vote in the state.

The August 20 state elections will be another test for the electoral process. The international community has once again been invited to participate as elections observers. Polls indicate a lead for Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, opposition candidate for *Alianza por Chiapas*. Salazar is a former PRI senator and representative on the Congressional Commission for Peace in Chiapas (Cocopa). David Sami Sami is the PRI candidate whom Governor Albores backs. Global Exchange will once again work with *Alianza Cívica* to monitor this election.

YUCATAN

Introduction

The six member Yucatán delegation consisted of two religious Sisters of Charity, a professor, a human rights activist, and a representative of Global Exchange, all of whom are from the United States, and a doctoral student of political science from Japan. Two of the observers participated in the pre-electoral delegation in May 2000. The *Frente Cívico Familiar* (FCF), a Mérida-based civic organization and a founding member of *Alianza Cívica*, hosted the electoral delegation. In Mérida, the observers met with party representatives and candidates, local NGOs, and leaders of the business association, Coparmex. In the two days preceding the elections, the delegation traveled to rural areas south of Mérida, including the municipalities of San Pedro Chumay, Cuzamá, Humun, Kanasín, Tekax, Peto, Tecal, Mamá, and Oxkutzcab, to observe the pre-electoral climate and interview community members. On election day the delegation traveled to many of these same communities, located primarily in the 5th Electoral District, and observed more than 20 voting stations and their immediate surroundings.

Yucatán is located in the southeast of Mexico and is a mainly rural state with a large indigenous Mayan population. In these areas poverty and political marginalization are problematic. While the PAN governs the state capital, Mérida, home to approximately half of the state's population, the majority of the positions in the state legislature and most of the municipal governments are occupied by PRI party members. Unlike other states in the south, armed conflict and militarization are not endemic in Yucatán.

Vote-Buying, Coercion, and the Misuse of State Resources

In the months before the elections the national and international media reported that the PRI governor, Víctor Cervera Pacheco, orchestrated the distribution of goods such as bicycles, washing machines, corn grinders, mixers, and cement.²⁴ Observers heard testimony that such goods were given out by local PRI campaigners, available only to PRI voters. The beneficiaries were required to show their voter credentials to the PRI campaigners.

Based on interviews with community members, manipulating state resources and official positions occurred to coerce votes in favor of the PRI. The *Red Humana Rural 2000* was a coordinated campaign in which 'promoters' were encouraged to form a list of individuals in a certain area, including their complete names, home addresses, telephone numbers, and voter credential numbers. In Tekax, the 'promoters' were the local distributors of Progresa, the secretary of the Commissary, the executive secretary of the communal land (*ejido*), and the local commander of the police. Observers heard repeatedly that many *campesinos* felt that by giving their voter credential number, they were promising to vote for the PRI.

The observers noted widespread concern that federal government programs such as Procampo, Progresa, and Probecat were used to promote the PRI. The pre-election observers in May were present in Oxkutzca for the distribution ceremony of Procampo, a government program to support farmers. The governor spoke at the ceremony, which was traditionally held in September. In 2000, it had been moved before the elections, provoking concern that it was being used to provide leverage for the incumbent party.

²⁴ "Mexico's Election Test of Democracy", San Antonio Express-News, June 30, 2000 p.4B.

Observers also noted that the women responsible for distributing Progresa and other aid programs were often regional leaders of the PRI in that region. A report on coercion and vote buying in Yucatán, released by the FCF in June, states that in 79 percent of the communities surveyed, benefits were distributed in a manner preferential to one party. The study was based on surveys done in 26 municipalities in District 1 and District 5 and in eight precincts (*comisariás*) of Mérida.

Observers heard reports that public school and hospital employees in some communities organized meetings presumably about health and education only to campaign for PRI candidates. Observers also heard reports that municipal governments provided food and transportation for citizens to attend PRI candidate rallies, including Labastida's closing campaign rally, and that they funded the food and *dispensas* that were handed out to PRI sympathizers on election day.

In many small, rural communities, observers heard repeatedly that there were repercussions for voting for the opposition, including the loss of social benefits such as Progresa, and all other government support. The instigators of such tactics were, in most cases, the local distributors of these programs and even municipal officials. Most of the community members interviewed reported that, in the weeks before the vote, campaigners for the PRI had come to homes asking for individual voter credential numbers. In most cases, the campaigner was a local official or the person responsible for distributing government support. This campaign to collect credential numbers is reported to be part of the *Red Humana Rural 2000*.²⁵

The FCF suggests that practices of coercion are widespread in the poorer regions of the state. In 93 percent of the cases considered, the continued receipt of public benefits had been conditioned on voting for the PRI, and in 74 percent, there had been door-to-door campaigns to collect information from voter credentials.

PRI party representatives pressured government employees to vote or campaign for the PRI. Many employees reported that they feared losing their jobs if they did not comply. For example, at a government hospital in Mérida, the administration did not renew a nurse's contract after she denounced, a few weeks before the elections, an attempt by one of the doctors to collect voter credential information and to pressure the nurses to vote for the PRI.

In several municipalities rumors were circulated that secret cameras or computers inside the voting booths would record how each person voted. In conjunction with other forms of coercion, this apparently false but widely-believed rumor undermined the freedom of the vote.

Observers also heard reports of direct pressure on IFE volunteers. One of the most egregious cases involved a teacher in Tekax who was chosen to be the IFE "president" of the voting station. In an interview with observers, he explained that just a few weeks before the elections, his payment for a public loan assistance program unexpectedly rose by 50 percent. When he called the loan office, instead of giving an explanation, the government official told him that the loan was "not a present," and that as IFE voting station "president," he "should act in favor of our party." When the teacher refused, the official told him, "You lost the opportunity of your life."

²⁵ See Appendix 7.

Despite the pattern of coercion by government officials, however, observers noted that in many areas, a growing number of people within and outside of the PRI were organizing and attempting to resist such practices.

Election Day Observations

Prior to the elections, observers saw IFE publicity in many of the rural communities and heard IFE commercials on local radio reminding citizens that their vote was secret and free. The local IFE councils worked professionally and efficiently on election day as well.

On July 2 at the observed voting stations, voting proceeding smoothly, secretly, and according to the law. In most cases, the IFE volunteers were the ones who had been selected and trained by the IFE. In all of the voting stations visited, representatives of the three major parties were present. In some cases IFE volunteers had not been well instructed and made mistakes. IFE officials traveled in official vehicles to check on voting stations and address problems.

Observers heard reports of cases in which people were showing their ballots to party representatives to assure that they had voted for the party.

Activities immediately outside the polling station clearly demonstrated the limitations of the IFE's effort. Before election day, observers were told that just after voting, people who voted for the PRI would go to propaganda houses, known as *Casas Amigas de Labastida*, and receive food and *dispensas*. On election day observers witnessed this practice in numerous towns. In Tzucacab, a man left a PRI campaign office with a bag of sandwiches. In Tekax, a woman entered one of the *Casas Labastida* after voting. In Tekit and Mama, numerous people left the houses with bags of food and, in at least one house, people showed their voter credentials and signed a list as they entered.

Coercion also continued on election day. In some voting stations, party sympathizers were present, pressuring people to support their party. In at least one case, the PRI representative sat in front of the voting station all day. Such actions, legal or otherwise, in conjunction with pre-electoral coercion, can have a significant effect on voting behavior.

Conclusion

In the majority of voting stations, the voting process was carried out according to electoral law. However, evidence from each municipality visited by observers points to a coordinated campaign by state and local government officials on behalf of the PRI and a corresponding fear in poor areas that voting for the opposition will bring severe repercussions. The blurring of PRI and the government greatly curtails the right to vote freely for the candidate of one's choice, especially for the poorest citizens of the Yucatán who are dependent on government support. As long as practices of vote buying and coercion continue, the IFE, despite its best efforts, will be unable to ensure fair elections in the state. Coercion and vote buying by state and local officials could play a decisive role in the upcoming May 2001 state and local elections. These elections will not be organized by the IFE but by the state electoral institute, which is not independent from the government.

HIDALGO

Introduction

The Hidalgo group of six elections observers included a university professor, students, a language specialist, a musician, and a Global Exchange representative. The group traveled to the northern region of the state to the municipalities of Huejutla de Reyes and Molango de Escamilla. The observers examined the pre-electoral conditions several days before the July 2 elections and observed the election day itself. While the conditions before the election raised significant concerns, the election day was free of serious problems.

Pre-Electoral Context

The PRI traditionally dominated Hidalgo and commanded victories as recently as the 1997 federal elections and the 1999 state gubernatorial elections. However, the constancy of PRI victories masks underlying social strains. In recent decades, the advancement and retraction of land reform has been the primary source of local political and social conflicts in certain areas of the state. The increased military presence was a response to and often an exacerbation of the tension surrounding these conflicts.

Militarization

The military maintains a presence in northern Hidalgo's rural communities. On June 29, three days prior to the elections, the observers visited a small community in the municipality of Huautla. Members of this community filed complaints with *Alianza Cívica* about the long-standing and intimidating military presence in the area. The community members attributed the military occupation to a pattern of general repression of *campesino* activism, repression that escalated after the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. Community members reported that the military maintained an encampment within 500 meters of their community. Three women from the community guided the observers to the camp to verify military presence and to ask the military about their activities and the nature of their mission. The group encountered approximately 25 soldiers on a road near the encampment. The commanding military officer refused to answer the observers' questions and denied that his troops were camped in the location where the community members claimed. The observers found the suspected camp freshly abandoned and observed soldiers moving supplies from the abandoned camp site to another area, slightly removed from the community.

Vote buying, Coercion, and the Use of State Resources

The most common pre-electoral irregularities reported were incidents of vote buying and coercion. According to testimony, the PRI distributed or withheld governmental aid in a calculated attempt to influence voting behavior. Almost all testimony given by those other than PRI officials included evidence that national social programs such as Progresá and Procampo were routinely used to serve partisan ends. On election day, one rural voter testified that he came to vote because after not voting in the last elections, the government withheld his Procampo benefits.

Allegations of vote buying included gifts and programs other than the national Progresá and Procampo ones. For instance, in Atapesco, a representative from the group

Unión en Defensa de Derechos y Cultura Indígena reported that a PRI congressional candidate, Carolina Viggiano, gave 15 rolls of barbed wire to community members less than a month before election day. Similarly, a PRD organizer from the village of Xochiatipan reported that the local government distributed machetes to men on Father's Day and cloth to women on Mother's Day, in each case instructing recipients to vote for the PRI.

Community leaders of Huejutla reported an incident of vote buying. The municipal government informed a rural community leader that it was his responsibility was to assure electoral support for the PRI in his community. The community requested five rolls of electrical cable from the municipal government in order to install lights in its church. The Huejutla government delivered three of the five rolls of electrical cable ten weeks before the federal elections with the following message, "These supplies come from the PRI. If you want more supplies, you should vote for the PRI."

Allegations of voter coercion, most commonly asking individuals to divulge their voter credential numbers prior to election day, accompanied testimony regarding vote buying. Those interviewed were concerned that revealing their voter credential numbers would compromise the secrecy of their votes. A teacher in Huejutla reported that his supervisors, all of whom are members of the PRI, instructed him to compile a list of teachers' names and voter credential numbers. The teacher stated that his supervisors intended to pressure him and his colleagues to support the PRI.²⁶

In Ixcatla, three PRI officials, Onorato Alvarado, Victoria Trinidad, and Lorenzo Angeles, canvassed the community the night before the elections requesting voting credentials and warning individuals that if they did not comply, the government would withdraw their support.

Election Day Observations

During election day, the observers visited a range of urban and rural voting stations in the municipalities of Huejutla and Molango. While observers witnessed many minor violations of electoral rules, these violations were not grievous and were unlikely to significantly effect electoral results.

Voting stations in urban centers operated with few irregularities. In the large town of Huejutla, IFE volunteers were professional and impartial, party representatives were good-humored and cooperative, and most voters were knowledgeable of the proper voting procedures. In one violation of the electoral code, however, two uniformed soldiers approached a small plaza during voting. One soldier used a public telephone while the other casually watched the voting station. The presence of the soldiers at the voting station violated electoral code, even though their actions were not overtly intimidating. Other irregularities observed in Huejutla were limited to those committed by the few voters who did not understand proper voting procedures.

Electoral irregularities increased relative to the distance of voting stations from urban centers. The rural voting stations were relatively disorganized and minor irregularities occurred, despite the efforts of IFE volunteers. At some voting stations, IFE volunteers did not apply the indelible ink to voters' thumbs. At others, volunteers inked only those who were willing and did not ink those who refused. In Tlatzintla, a

²⁶ See Appendix 7.

community in Molango, IFE volunteers did not hang curtains in front of voting booths until about 12 p.m.

Many of these irregularities did not necessarily favor one party, but some irregularities seemed less neutral. In a 30 minute visit to a PRD community, observers witnessed that three individuals possessed valid voter credentials but their names were not on the list. This problem did not occur in any of the PRI-dominated rural communities that observers visited. At many voting stations, the PRI had more than the maximum of two party representatives. In Ixcatlan, a community in Molango, a PRI representative refused to give his name to the “president” of the voting station, as mandated by electoral law.

Conclusion

The northern region of Hidalgo is characterized by traditional PRI dominance and rural militarization. Within this context, observers received testimony that vote buying, coercion, and misuse of public resources were all problematic in the days before the elections, although the incidents were less grievous than in previous elections and less marked than in certain other areas of Mexico. Most of the observed election day violations seemed to have occurred unintentionally or because of a lack of procedural knowledge. In certain cases, party representatives violated electoral code in minor ways.

MEXICO STATE

Introduction

The Mexico State delegation was made up of six members: two academics, three activists and a Global Exchange representative from Mexico City. The observers were based in the municipality of Valle de Bravo. The area's natural beauty makes it an attractive vacation place for Mexico's elite. Nestled in a valley of lush forests, the manmade Lake of Valle de Bravo is a popular sailing spot. The lake, which is one of the largest in the country, provides Mexico City with hydroelectricity. Rarely visited by NGOs and the international human rights community, the inhabitants of Valle de Bravo and its surrounding indigenous communities, predominantly Masagua and Otomí, are poor and marginalized. For example, electrical transmission cables and water lines run through the communities, but most families cannot afford electricity or running water. Some must travel up to three hours on foot to obtain water.

The Role of Electoral Institutes

In addition to federal elections on July 2, Mexico State held state and local elections, about which the population appeared to be more knowledgeable. The local counterpart of the IFE, the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico (IEEM) facilitated the organization of local elections. While the federal elections, organized by the IFE, were relatively free of irregularities, the IEEM's role in the state elections was less impartial and efficient. Many supporters of opposition parties attested to direct connections between the IEEM and PRI municipal officials.

Pre-Electoral Climate and Militarization

Prior to the elections, the political climate in Mexico State saw a rise in police interventions responding to non-violent protest. One incident concerned the proposed construction of a hydroelectric dam to produce power for Mexico City. On September 13, 1999 residents of communities close to the Temascaltepec River gathered to protest the dam because its construction would have detrimental effects on the ecological balance of the area and would threaten the availability of water to local people. In response, 400 anti-disturbance police, Rapid Action Force (*Fuerzas de Acción Rápida*), arrived and arrested 25 protesters. Bonifacio Silva spent five days in jail as a result of this incident, but his case had been dropped by the police at the time he spoke with observers. Santiago Pérez was the PRD candidate for federal representative and was charged with participating in this protest. The police have a warrant for his arrest. Both Silva and Perez felt that their cases had been dropped as a conciliatory gesture by the PRI before the elections. As Santiago Pérez did not win the seat he was campaigning for, he fears that police will now act on the warrant.²⁷

Other incidents of aggressive confrontations between political rivals occurred prior to the elections. PRD members from the community of Cruz Blanca, in the municipality of Oztoloapan, told the delegation that while traveling the day before the elections, they were followed by pickup trucks of PRI supporters, some of them armed. When the PRD and PRI supporters reached an impasse, the PRD supporters were not allowed to proceed for five hours, during which time one PRI supporter threatened them

²⁷ Information on the Temascaltepec River controversy is available www.laneta.apc.org/alianza.

with his gun. In Los Gallos, in the municipality of Ixtapan del Oro, a young man defaced a line of PRD cars with his machete at a PRD rally. The man was detained but quickly released. Observers spoke with Professor Luis Felipe Medina, Assistant Director of the *Escuela Técnica Forestal* in Mihuatlán, and told the observers he believed the incident was an act of provocation instigated by PRI officials.

Vote buying, Coercion, and the Misuse of State Resources

The delegation heard allegations of vote buying prior to election day. On June 27, Francisco Montes, municipal president of San Mateo Almoloc, is said to have promised construction materials to *campesinos* to build a road and bridge in exchange for support for the PRI on election day. In the municipality of Donato Guerra and surrounding communities, residents identified three distribution areas for construction materials, cement, and roof tiles and reported that the materials were used to buy votes.

Throughout Mexico individuals and communities living below the poverty line rely on government subsidies. Local authorities threatened to discontinue subsidies such as Progresa and Procampo to individuals if they did not vote for the PRI. In Donato, a man testified that the government did not give his wife the Progresa subsidy because she was identified as a PRD supporter. Additionally, authorities threatened to cut off the water supply to those not supportive of the PRI on election day. The observers heard two cases of such threats. In Zacazonapan authorities told a woman that if she continued to associate with “*los pinches perredistas*”²⁸ her water would be cut off and the repairs the government had begun on her house would not be completed. A woman from San Pedro Hueyahualco reported that three women in charge of distributing Progresa payments had gone door-to-door announcing that the government would cut off their water supply if the community did not vote for the PRI.

Election Day Observations

On the day of the elections, observers witnessed irregularities such as voting stations not opening promptly, party representatives assisting voters, candidates loitering around polling stations, and party officials allegedly financing the transportation of voters to the polls.

In Cruz Blanca observers noted that PRI representatives were standing less than a meter behind voters, checking names off lists and asking individuals how they intended to vote.

The delegation spoke with Jacinto Jiménez from San Miguel Totolmaloya who reported that he and others were given 100 pesos to vote for the PRI on election day. He also said that he rode to the voting station in a truck that transported only PRI supporters. Also, in San Miguel Totolmaloya, an observer witnessed Antonio Martínez from San Chitlán enter the voting station and ask the IFE volunteers to pay for the gas he used to drive *campesinos* to vote. An IFE representative informed him that, although PRI representatives had compensated him in the past, it would not happen in these elections.

A girl from Donato Guerra said her parents received 500 pesos and a watch for voting for the PRI. A report was filed in San Pedro de Hueyahualco alleging that a PRI representative was handing out supplies of ham, beans, and sugar to PRI voters on election day.

²⁸ “those damn PRD supporters”

In Cruz Blanca at 1:05 p.m., a municipal pick-up truck arrived at the polling station with several armed Judicial Police who watched the voting station for two hours.

Conclusion

The irregularities observed on election day were minor infractions in electoral law. However, taking into account the pre-electoral observations and testimonies heard by observers, the PRI committed electoral crimes in the form of vote buying, coercion, and misuse of state funds throughout the state. The victory of the PRI in rural areas supports these findings.²⁹

²⁹ See <http://www.globalexchange.org/gx/campaigns/mexico/dem/campaign.html> for rural/urban vote split.

CONCLUSION

The reform of Mexico's electoral procedures in 1996 represented a qualitative advance in the fairness and competitiveness of the presidential elections in 2000. Among those reforms, the newly independent status of the IFE was probably the single most important factor that distinguished the 2000 elections from previous ones. There was high levels of confidence and understanding among the general Mexican public and within political parties that the IFE was independent and that the ballots would be fairly counted, and these expectations were generally validated by our observations. A survey in the weeks before the vote showed that 56 percent felt there was not a level playing field among the parties, and 67 percent thought the election process was not clean.³⁰ Nevertheless, problematic aspects of the electoral procedures and institutions remained.

One of the most widespread complaints heard regarded an apparent pattern of vote buying, voter intimidation, and illegal use of state resources for partisan campaign purposes.³¹ Particularly in poor rural areas, the 71-year single party rule had left a strong impression among less educated voters that social programs were gifts from that party rather than public benefits. The delegation was given evidence that the PRI systematically enlisted public functionaries, teachers, and distributors of public welfare benefits to pressure their clients and subordinates into voting for the PRI candidate, under threat of losing jobs or benefits. In particular, programs such as Procampo and Progresa were often used as part of a clientelist machine to buy votes.³² Since Progresa welfare payments for school-age children were linked to teacher certification of school attendance, teachers in poor areas often wielded considerable influence over local community members. While the secrecy of the vote undermined such tactics of pressure and inducement in urban areas where educational levels were higher, the tactics appeared much more influential in poor rural areas. According to an *Alianza Cívica* national survey in April 2000, 25 percent of the population and 47 percent of the beneficiaries of welfare programs believed such programs would end if PRI lost the election.³³ Another survey in May showed that 24 percent thought Progresa was a PRI program, and 11 percent of the population (16 percent of the poor) thought the vote was not secret.³⁴

A structural problem with the political system that affects the electoral context is the role of the military and public security forces. As a percentage of the total population, Mexico's military is one of the smallest in Latin America, but it is a notably opaque institution, with growing signs of internal discord in recent years.³⁵ Its relation to civilian authority is so unclear that the military's commitment to 'constitutionality' was a significant subject of public conjecture when polls began suggesting that the PAN could

³⁰ *El Financiero*, 26 May 2000.

³¹ See Washington Office on Latin America, "Vote-Buying and Coercion of Voters," Mexico Election Monitor 2000, Issue 4, Washington, DC., WOLA, May 2000.

³² Horcasitas, LM. & Weldon, J., "Electoral Determinants and Consequences of National Solidarity," in Transforming State-Society Relations in Mexico: The National Solidarity Strategy, Cornelius, W., Craig, A., & Fox, J., eds, La Jolla, CA, U.C.-San Diego Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1994.

³³ *Alianza Cívica, Boletín*, Mexico City, 7 May 2000.

³⁴ *Alianza Cívica, Boletín de Prensa*, 28 May 2000.

³⁵ Fazio, C., *El tercer vínculo: de la teoría del caos a la teoría de la militarización*, Mexico, Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1996; Camp, RA., *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico*, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1992.

dislodge the PRI from office. In areas with a presence of armed opposition -including Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero- militarization contributed to a pre-electoral climate of fear and intimidation, exacerbated by the systematic violation of human rights by public security forces in these areas.³⁶ On the positive side, after Marcos, the Zapatista spokesperson in Chiapas, issued a communiqué on June 19 promising not to disrupt the elections, the Secretary of National Defense made a commitment that military in Chiapas would stay in their barracks on election day.³⁷ No such commitments were exchanged with opposition groups in other states, but there were no outbreaks of armed conflict on election day. Nevertheless, many voting stations in conflicted areas were located next to military bases, and the delegation observed the armed presence of other security forces in and around voting areas. A related concern was the pre-electoral deployment of a new elite security force called the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) in Chiapas, half of whose members were initially from the military.

Another problem with the electoral process was the limited scope of IFE's mandate within the overall framework of the Mexican political system.³⁸ For example, IFE organized most administrative aspects of the elections, but Mexico's current election laws give enforcement powers to the FEPADE, a government controlled body. Rulings on re-counts or on the validity of electoral results are made by the TRIFE of the judicial branch of government. Neither FEPADE nor the TRIFE enjoys the reputation for independence and competence that the IFE does, and Mexico has a strongly presidentialist political system with a notably weak judiciary. The delegation heard reports that hundreds of complaints of electoral irregularities or crimes had been filed with FEPADE, but not a single prosecution had proceeded by the time of the election. While this does not necessarily mean that election results would have been different had the FEPADE acted, the delayed or absent enforcement undermined confidence in the electoral process and perpetuated a perception of impunity for the powerful. In general, the absence of an independent and competent judicial branch of government was a problem not only for the electoral process, but for the eventual democratization of Mexico.

A significant shortcoming in the electoral process relates to the elections coverage in the mass media. Independent Mexican observer groups such as *Alianza Cívica* studied media coverage during the campaign and documented bias in favor of the ruling PRI party.³⁹ While the IFE monitored the allocation of paid advertising time, it had no enforcement powers. Especially at the state and local level, there were reports of direct party efforts to influence media reporting.⁴⁰ Also, the Radio and Television Chamber of Commerce was uncooperative with the IFE's efforts to broadcast public service

³⁶ Human Rights Watch/Americas, *Implausible Deniability: State Responsibility for Rural Violence in Mexico*, N.Y., April 1997; and Amnesty International, *Mexico: Under the Shadow of Impunity*, London, 9 Mar. 1999.

³⁷ For the EZLN's very interesting analysis of the election, see 'A la prensa nacional e internacional', <http://www.spin.com.mx/~floresu/FZLN/archivo/ezln/2000/199600.htm>, Mexico. (downloaded 12 Jul. 2000.)

³⁸ Washington Office on Latin America, "The Federal Electoral Institute: Preparing the Way for July 2000," *Mexico Election Monitor 2000*, Issue 2, Washington, DC.

³⁹ Washington Office on Latin America, "The Media's Influence in Mexico's Electoral Campaigns," *Mexico Election Monitor 2000*, Issue 5, Washington, DC, WOLA, Jun. 2000.

⁴⁰ See the Chiapas section in this report.

announcements about the election. Regardless of whether this was due to partisan or commercial considerations, it limited civic education about such important matters as voting secrecy and the distinction between government programs and political parties. As in the US, the widespread use of negative, personal and misleading campaign advertising by both incumbent and opposition parties tended to alienate voters from the political process.

The electoral reforms put into place in time for the 2000 election included potentially positive laws on campaign financing, but significant problems remained.⁴¹ Allegations by the PRI of illegal foreign financing to the opposition PAN were countered by the initiation of libel proceedings, but the matter was not resolved before the election. The electoral reforms provided large amounts of public campaign financing of which 30% was to be allocated equally to all qualifying parties and the remaining 70% was to be distributed proportionally to each party's share of the vote in the last election. As in the U.S., smaller parties complained that this formula exaggerated the incumbency advantage; a problem that was worse in Mexico where past elections had been considered less fair. On the other hand, some observers suggested that the threshold for receiving an equal share of the 30% portion of the public funding was too low, resulting in a proliferation of micro-parties that divided the opposition vote. The delegation questioned all the major parties about the private portion of their campaign financing and received vague answers, suggesting a need for stricter reporting requirements.

The large allocation of public campaign finances, as well as the IFE budget, made Mexico's 2000 elections one of the world's most expensive elections in terms of expenses per voter. In a country where at least one quarter of the population lives in extreme poverty, a quarter of a billion dollars was spent on campaign ads. The delegation heard complaints that the campaign had become too long and too expensive, that it was more a contest of marketing techniques (*mercadotecnia*) than issues, and that the real winners were the major commercial media corporations. Interestingly, although foreign campaign contributions are illegal, foreign campaign consultants are not; so Stanley Greenberg and James Carville reportedly advised the PRI, while the PAN reportedly consulted Dick Morris.

Among other problems with the electoral procedures, some observers questioned the criteria for determining the location of voting stations. The delegation heard complaints in some regions that the majority of voting stations were located in PRI strongholds, which could have been intimidating to voters in areas of high political polarization. Another potential problem was the high proportion of voting stations installed in government schools, particularly in states where large numbers of election observers organized by the teachers' union SNTE were controlled by the ruling party. Particularly in poor rural areas, the authority of the local schoolteacher constitutes a major social influence. When IFE officials were questioned about the location of polling places, they appeared to disagree with each other about the allocation of responsibility in this area between national, state, and local levels, suggesting the need for better coordination.

On the specific issue of *casillas especiales*, the delegation found the allowable number of stations inadequate in some areas. The US - Mexico border region where

⁴¹ Washington Office on Latin America, "Campaign Finance: Setting Limits in 2000," Mexico Election Monitor 2000, Issue 3, Washington, DC., WOLA, Apr. 2000.

migrant workers in the United States came to vote, and Chiapas where armed conflict had produced large numbers of displaced people and troops stationed in temporary quarters were two examples.

In this regard, it is of continued concern that the July 2 election is followed by state and local elections in several poorer southern states: gubernatorial elections in the conflicted state of Chiapas on August 20; municipal elections in Veracruz on September 3; elections for governor, legislators, and municipal authorities in Tabasco on October 15; and gubernatorial election in Yucatan in May 2000. Moreover, current election law does not extend IFE's authority to state and local elections, which will be conducted by state electoral authorities that do not have the same independence from party bosses. Global Exchange is planning another election observer delegation for the Chiapas election. However, beyond that election there is no provision in the electoral laws for international observation of state and local elections. Furthermore, international attention is likely to be greatly reduced after the national election of July 2, despite the greater likelihood of election day irregularities in the subsequent contests.

Unanswered Questions

Important issues remain unresolved after the July 2, 2000 elections in Mexico. The PAN presidential candidate Vicente Fox has broken PRI's 71-year winning streak, but it remains to be seen to what extent this alternation of the party in government will alter the contours of Mexico's political system itself.

One source of uncertainty in the post-electoral period is the extraordinarily long lame-duck period between the July 2 election and the December 1 inauguration of the new president. Outgoing President Ernesto Zedillo made a gracious and timely concession speech and pledged to cooperate in an orderly transition. While Zedillo's statement might ensure a more favorable treatment in history books for Mexico's weakest president since the Revolution, it enraged other PRI party powerbrokers, particularly in the party's "dinosaur" wing. In the ensuing recriminations, some openly attacked Zedillo for having chosen the uninspiring Francisco Labastida as his anointed successor. These attacks, in effect, confirmed that the *dedazo* system of candidate selection continued in the PRI, despite the party's showy, first-ever party primary for the 2000 race.⁴² Meanwhile, President-elect Fox's campaign was supported by a combination of traditional Catholic conservatives of the old-line PAN and a populist amalgam calling itself "Friends of Fox," it is not clear exactly what program was elected. When his victory was official he immediately announced to the press that he would govern the nation and not the PAN.⁴³

Even now with party alternation, the extraordinary institutional power of the Mexican presidency lends itself to "delegative democracy," a restricted form of polyarchy in which citizens can choose among several options of rulers but have little ability to influence what they do in office.⁴⁴ The "depth" of any possible democratization of Mexico is also constrained by other exogenous factors beyond voter control, most notably the powerful influences of the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. government over large areas of policy. An interesting sign of how much democratic

⁴² "Rebelión contra Zedillo en el PRI," *La Jornada*, 5 Jul. 2000, p. 1.

⁴³ "Gobernaré yo, no el PAN: Fox," *La Jornada*, 6 Jul. 2000, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, 5(1), Jan. 1994, pp. 55-69.

accountability the newly elected government will bring will be whether it releases the names of the millionaires who looted the Fobaproa fund, Mexico's equivalent of the U.S. savings & loans scandal.⁴⁵

It remains to be seen how a PAN government will reconcile its global market-oriented economic ideology with the bloc of voters who voted against the PRI and its neo-liberal policies. If the PAN chooses to ignore that portion of the electorate, the resulting voter disillusionment could lead to general cynicism, a low sense of political efficacy, and declining electoral participation. It could also produce a backlash that would rebound in the next election in favor of the PRI or in favor of the PRD, particularly if the popular mayor-elect of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has a successful term and becomes the PRD presidential candidate in 2006. It is noteworthy that the peso and the Mexican stock market rose after the election, suggesting that transnational capital expects to be favored under the new government.

The PAN's protest vote was fueled by hopes of a legitimate government. It remains to be seen however, how well the new administration will fulfill those expectations. The Fox government will have to decide what to do with the PRI client-based networks at the local level. This question is complicated by the fact that the PAN itself lacks an organizational network that reaches throughout the country, having a particularly weak presence in rural areas. In fact, in rural Mexico the PRI won the elections 28-49%, according to calculations by Alianza Cívica⁴⁶. The losing PRD candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas promptly announced that he would not accept a cabinet post in a PAN government and hoped nobody in his party would, but the PRI made no such announcement. Exactly what kinds of alliances will emerge among political parties after July 2 is another open question.

Among the many pending questions about President-elect Fox is his relationship (or rather lack thereof) with the quasi-autonomous Mexican military. Early attention after the election focused on his meetings with generals, and his assurances that he would pick a career military official for Secretary of Defense. Before the election, the EZLN in Chiapas warned of a possible federal military offensive in the period between the July election and December inauguration.⁴⁷ Some predict that the Chiapas gubernatorial *Alianza por Chiapas* candidate Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía will be prevented from winning either through assassination or massive fraud in the August 20 state election. One should recall that Labastida as Secretary of the Interior had just presided over a particularly repressive set of federal policies in Chiapas.

The probability of all these dire predictions for Chiapas after July 2 reduced dramatically with the PAN victory. However, many uncertainties remain. Perhaps the local PRI in Chiapas, where the "dinosaurs" still roam the land, will take matters into their own hands to prevent an opposition victory in the state. Another unknown is whether or not the Zapatista communities will actively participate in the August 20

⁴⁵ Fred Rosen, "The \$55 Billion Bank-Bailout Scandal," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 32(3), Nov.-Dec. 1998, pp. 11-14.

⁴⁶ "Tareas pendientes. Informe preliminar de Alianza Cívica sobre la calidad de la jornada electoral del 2 de julio de 2000," Mexico City, <http://www.laneta.apc.org/alianza> (downloaded 12 Jul. 2000).

⁴⁷ See the EZLN communiqué on this, "Al Encuentro Nacional de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz y Contra la Militarización en México," on the FZLN web site, <http://www.spin.com.mx/~floresu/FZLN/archivo/ezln/2000/alencuentro.htm> (Mexico: downloaded 12 Jul. 2000).

election in the hopes of electing Salazar. Fox himself made a number of impulsive statements about Chiapas, including his widely-quoted remark that, if elected, he would solve the conflict in 15 minutes. The presumption here is that Fox would order the military to withdraw from Zapatista communities. Whether the military would follow such orders from a PAN president is unknown. Fox also promised to introduce legislation to implement the February 1996 San Andrés Accords on indigenous rights—which the Zedillo administration signed but reneged on. The PRI's loss of its majority in both houses of Congress could allow him to move the issue, since the PRD also supports the San Andrés Accords. Fox also offered to meet with Zapatista spokesman Subcomandante Marcos and reopen the stalled peace talks. It is not clear however, how the candidate-elect of a conservative party that champions market reforms could reach a substantive agreement over the issues that gave rise to the Zapatista rebellion.

Looking toward the 2006 election, it remains to be seen whether the PAN will use its incumbency advantage and control of the state apparatus in the same kind of monopolistic, partisan way its predecessor did. It might be constrained by the more plural composition of the Congress, the popular pressure on an electoral coalition that called itself the Alliance for Change, and perhaps by what is becoming a tradition of closer international scrutiny of Mexican elections. It also remains to be seen whether the PAN, once in power, will seek to strengthen or weaken the electoral reforms that operated in