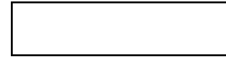




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Latin America Review



25 October 1985

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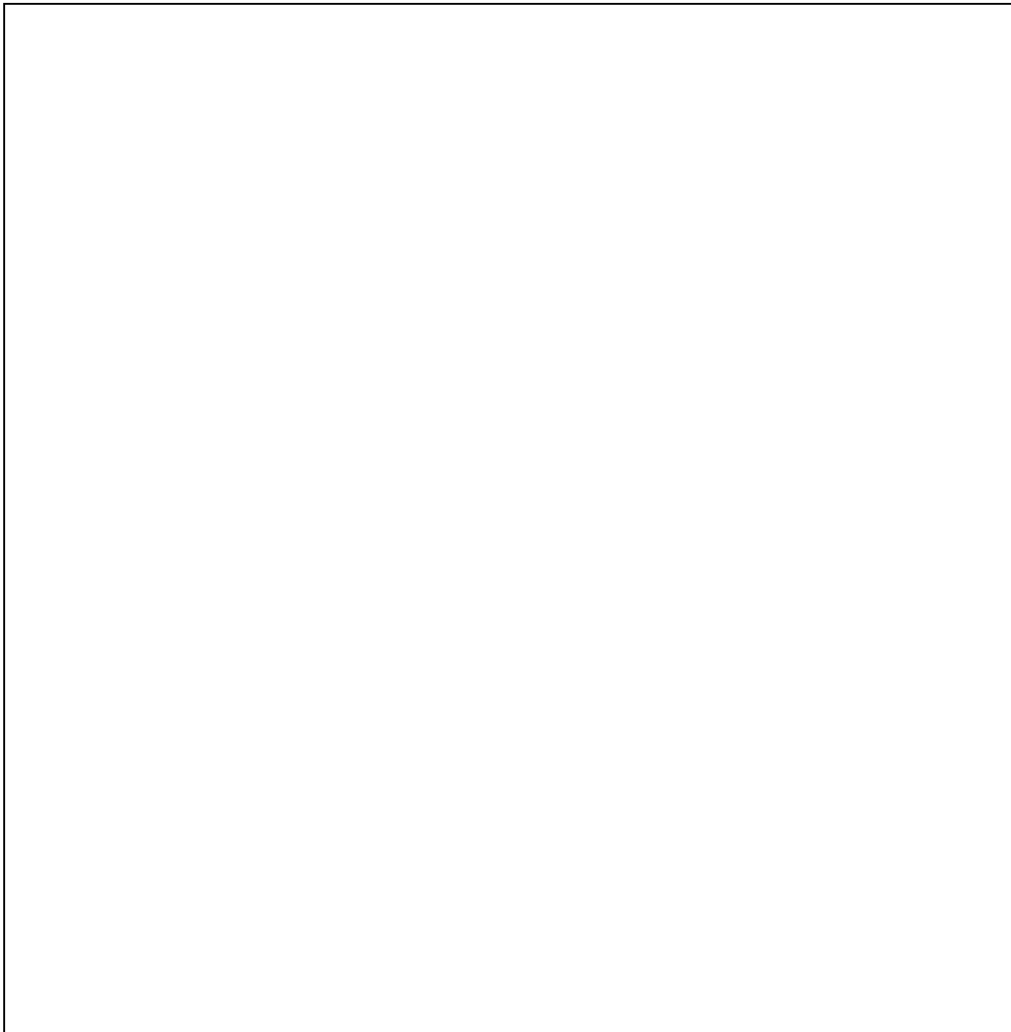
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**Guatemala:
Election Roundup** []

As Guatemala's election campaign heads toward the vote on 3 November, the major presidential candidates are avoiding the issues in favor of more personalistic politics. Although the campaign has been conducted amid seriously declining economic prospects, none of the candidates have argued forcefully for reform and austerity measures that we believe are required to forestall further economic deterioration. Fourteen parties—representing a broad political spectrum—are participating, but numerous sources indicate that Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo of the center-leftist Christian Democratic Party (DCG) and Jorge Carpio Nicolle of the National Centrist Union (UCN)—both pro-US moderates—are the front-runners. Neither, however, is likely to win a majority on the first ballot, necessitating a runoff between the two top votegetters on 8 December. Although prohibited under the electoral law from forming official coalitions after the first round, (sp) there already are signs of behind-the-scenes maneuvering to build nonofficial alliances in anticipation of the second round. []

Key Parties and Candidates

The Christian Democratic Party. []

[] the DCG—representing the center-left—is run by a well-seasoned leadership that has attempted to portray its candidate as the only one capable of attracting foreign investment and reversing Guatemala's international isolation. Running on a slogan of "credibility and confidence," the party's support comes from mainstream lower middle class, campesinos, labor groups, youth and other reformist elements, including the Catholic Church. Cerezo's strategy appears predicated on the belief that he is unlikely to win a majority on the first ballot, and [] his advisers already have begun planning for a runoff. [] party leaders currently believe that Cerezo would have a better chance of defeating Carpio of the centrist UCN than he would the center-left Democratic Party of National Cooperation/Revolutionary Party (PDCN/PR) coalition ticket headed by Jorge Serrano Elias. []

Throughout the campaign, Cerezo has quietly courted the military by giving assurances that he does not plan to follow the example of President Alfonsin in Argentina and punish military officers for past abuses. Moreover, [] he has tried to reassure the armed forces that he will not attempt to open a dialogue with leftist insurgents as has President Duarte, his Christian Democratic counterpart in El Salvador. In an effort to deflect criticism from Serrano and others that he is too closely associated with the military, Cerezo has taken a strong public stance against military interference in civilian government. []

Cerezo's economic platform has relied heavily on his pledge to find postelection external financial support to reverse the country's economic slide. Although he assiduously has avoided outlining a comprehensive economic program, [] Cerezo has formed an economic team to study possible austerity measures and is considering a 90-day state of economic emergency upon taking office. If elected, we expect he would focus on increasing government revenues by reforming tax collection procedures. Moreover, his public statements to date indicate he also would be likely to concentrate on integrating Guatemala's peasant farmers into the national economy by supporting cooperatives and providing financial credits, rather than embarking on politically risky land or tax reforms. []

National Centrist Union. The UCN—the major party of the political center—has proved resilient in the face of defections by key coalition partners from the right and left. Throughout the campaign, the UCN has carried out an extensive public relations effort to keep party coffers solvent and its candidate in the political forefront. Nevertheless, Carpio's generally lackluster public showing reportedly has

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Guatemala: Election at a Glance

The Political Spectrum:

<u>Left</u>	<u>Center Left</u>	<u>Center</u>	<u>Center Right</u>	<u>Right</u>	<u>Extreme Right</u>
Social Democratic Party (PSD)	Christian Democratic Party (DCG)	National Centrist Union (UCN)	National Renewal Party (PNR)	National Authentic Center (CAN)	National Liberation Movement (MLN)
Civic Democratic Front (FCD-5)		Democratic Party of National Cooperation (PDCN)	Peoples Democratic Force (FDP)	Institutional Democratic Party (PID)	Anti-Communist Democratic Front (PUA)
		Revolutionary Party (PR)	Emerging Movement for Harmony (MEC)	National Unity Front (FUN)	

The Major Presidential Candidates

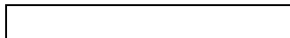
Vinicio CEREZO Arevalo, DCG
 Jorge CARPIO Nicolle, UCN
 Jorge SERRANO Elias, PDCN
 Marlo SANDOVAL Alarcon, MLN


Key Dates

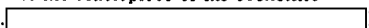

3 Nov 85 National elections
 8 Dec 85 Presidential runoff
 14 Jan 86 Presidential inauguration;
 Constituent Assembly dissolved and new Congress sworn in; new constitution enters into force.


Vital Statistics

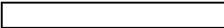
Eligible voters—3.9 million (estimate)
 Registered voters—2.8 million (estimate)
 Registered parties—14
 Congressional seats—100
 Governorships—not applicable
 Mayoral/local races—329




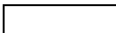
cost him some support and raised questions among seasoned political observers about his ability to lead a civilian government forcefully. 


Not unlike the platforms of his opponents, Carpio's economic program has been long on generalities and short on specifics. More recently, he has made his promise to provide some 250,000 new jobs in his first year in office the centerpiece of his economic program.  he has been noticeably silent on details, including how he would pay for such an expansion. 

The Democratic Party of National Cooperation. 

 the PDCN Serrano—running third in most polls—has the potential to play the role of spoiler and is likely to have considerable clout in a runoff between Cerezo and Carpio.

 Serrano remains one of Guatemala's most articulate, charismatic, and controversial politicians, whose

verbal offensives during the campaign often have put him in the political spotlight. 

Serrano's party draws a large measure of its support from evangelical Protestant groups, peasant cooperatives, and moderate members of the middle and upper classes. In our judgment, Serrano probably is correct in predicting that his coalition running mate's well-known election symbol—a map of Guatemala—will win him support from illiterate voters, but we also believe his chances have been hurt by his party's lack of organization and the questionable value of evangelical support in a largely Catholic country. 

Serrano's campaign has focused largely on his allegations that the election is being rigged by the military. Convinced that he would win a fair contest, he appears prepared to charge fraud if he is not

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elect[redacted]
[redacted] Serrano has promised to retire the high command, reduce military privileges, and assert greater civilian control over military affairs. Such actions make him anathema to the armed forces and his election would put the new civilian government at considerable risk. [redacted]

The National Liberation Movement. Historically the strongest and best organized of Guatemala's traditional parties, the National Liberation Movement (MLN) has been openly described by its longtime leader, Mario Sandoval Alarcon, as the party of "organized violence." As the party of the extreme right, support for the MLN traditionally has come from the most conservative large landowners and business-oriented segments of the middle class. More recently, we believe any chance the party had to win has been considerably dimmed by Sandoval's refusal to relinquish control to more moderate leaders, and the decision last summer of the more moderate right to pull out of coalition. [redacted]

Furthermore, although [redacted] Sandoval has attempted to convince voters that he has moderated his views, [redacted] he is having difficulty escaping his political past. The MLN has been blamed by some for inciting antigovernment riots during strikes and demonstrations over busfare hikes in late August. [redacted] Cerezo has accused Sandoval of orchestrating an assassination attempt against him in June 1985. [redacted]

Minor Parties. In our judgment, none of the minor parties contesting the election are likely to win a sizable share of the votes during the first round. We believe, however, that their significance will increase during a runoff as the major contenders scramble for support. Although [redacted] most minor parties already have tipped their hand—at least privately—as to where they will throw their support in any runoff, we expect hard bargaining as they attempt to maximize their influence. [redacted]

Campaign Atmospherics
Overall, the campaign appears to have generated popular enthusiasm, and [redacted] the major candidates

have each tried to portray themselves as "the new face" in the political arena. [redacted] not only have they failed to articulate a coherent platform, but also none have succeeded in projecting an image of statesmanship. Instead, most have resorted to personal attacks that impugn the honesty and competence of their opponents. A recent public debate, for example, quickly degenerated into an emotional exchange of insults, with Christian Democratic candidate Cerezo making particularly harsh attacks against his rivals. [redacted]

We believe the emphasis by the major candidates on appealing to better educated urban voters has given a clear advantage to those with access to or control of Guatemala's major media outlets. Carpio and Serrano, for example, have made extensive use of two of Guatemala's major daily newspapers, *El Grafico*—owned by Carpio—and *La Hora*—directed by a PDCN stalwart. [redacted] a candidate of a minor party has benefited from political exposure afforded by his popular television news program. [redacted]

Despite vindictive personal attacks, all the candidates have attempted to avoid rhetoric that could incite civil unrest and provoke the military to delay or cancel the elections. Antigovernment riots in late August and early September, for example, led most candidates to back off from earlier criticism of the regime's economic policies. Most have avoided public discussions of politically sensitive civilian-military relations in the new government. [redacted]

Outlook
We believe the military remains committed to carrying out elections and that the current regime will be able to see the elections through to completion. Given [redacted] no candidate is well placed to win the required majority on the first ballot, a runoff between the two top votegetters—now set for 8 December—is likely. We agree with most local polls—whose findings are backed by nonpartisan political observers—that suggest that Cerezo and Carpio are the most likely candidates to face each other in the second round of balloting. [redacted]

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We expect the interim period between elections to be marked by increasingly intense maneuvering for support by first-round winners, while losers jockey for promises and advantages from political suitors. Campaign rhetoric is likely to continue to focus on personal attacks, with each candidate attempting to discredit the other.

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