



Director of  
Central  
Intelligence

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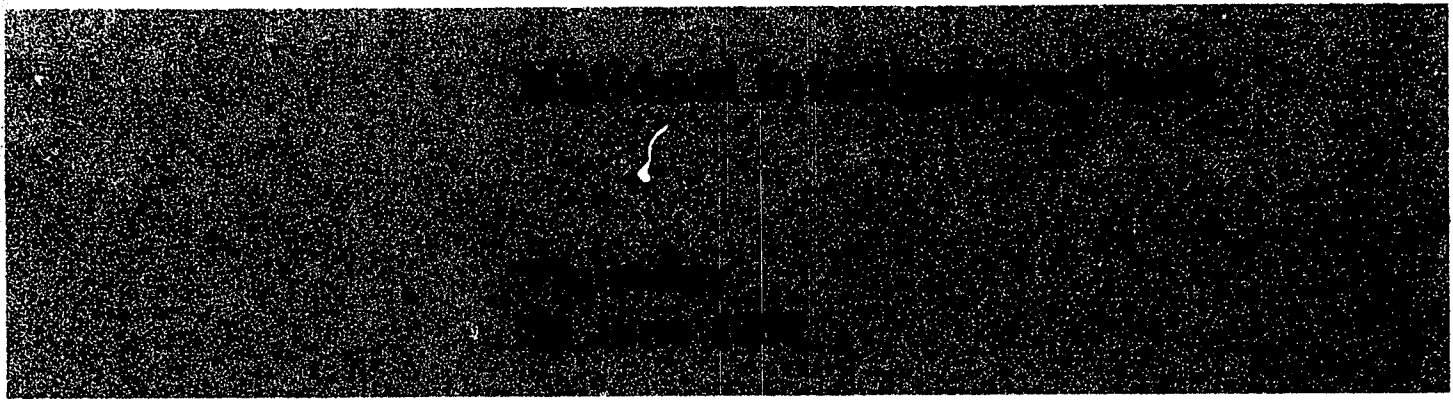
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30 June 1988

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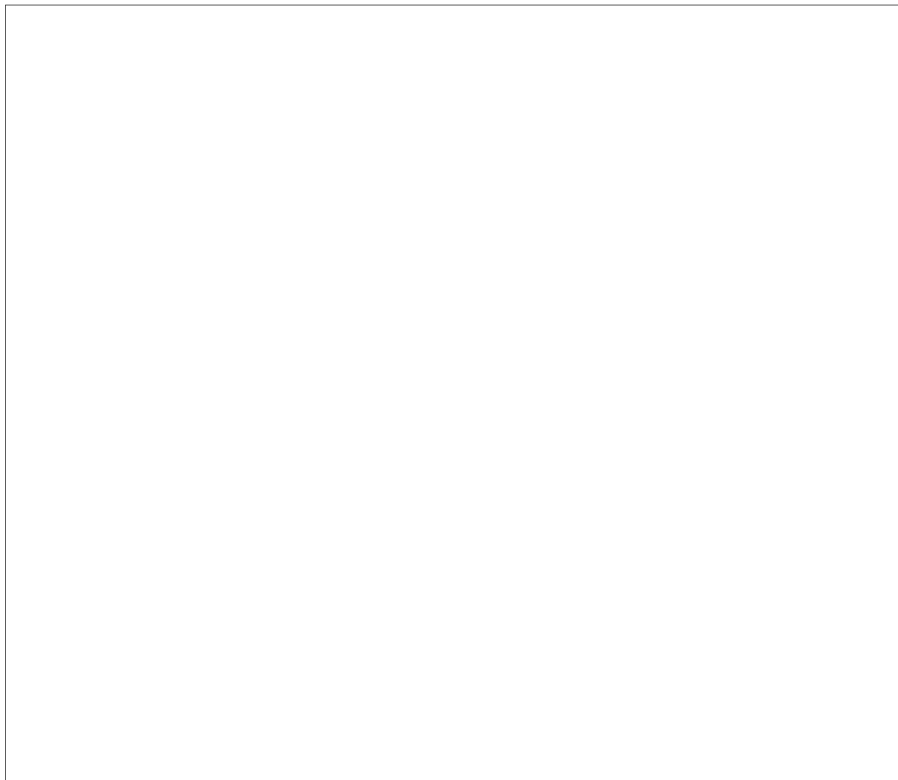
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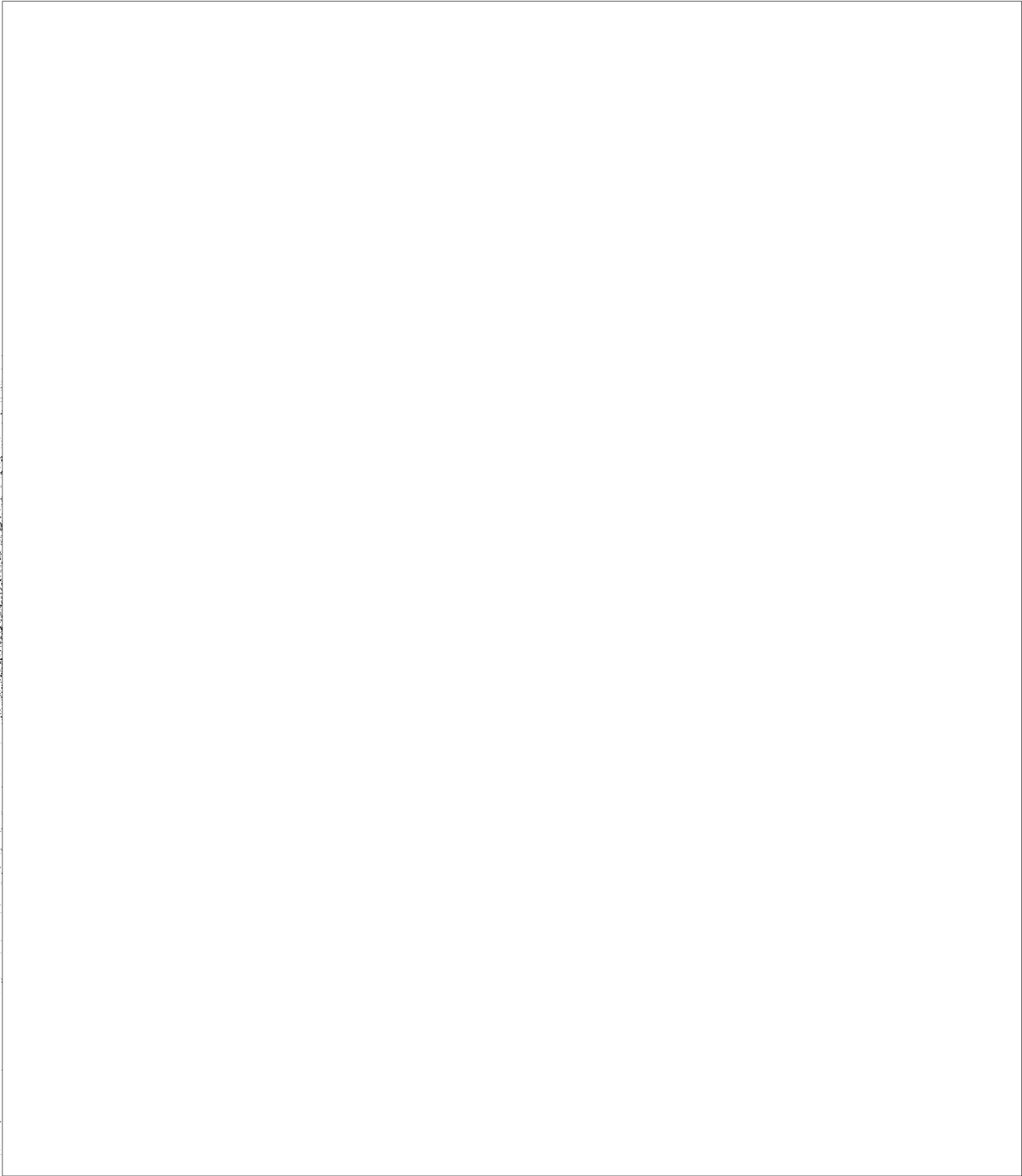
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MEXICO:

**Election Tension Builds**

**Significant popular backing for opposition presidential candidates on the left and the right, combined with expectations that Mexico's ruling party will rig the vote, is increasing the potential for confrontation after the election on 6 July.** [redacted]

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Large opposition rallies in Mexico City have underscored increasing popular dissatisfaction with the ruling party and have significantly enhanced the opposition's standing. Leftist challenger Cuauhtemoc Cardenas drew more than 200,000 people in his closing campaign appearance last week, according to press reports. Earlier this month, Manuel Clouthier of the conservative National Action Party—running third in the polls—was able to draw nearly 100,000 followers in the capital. Both decried expected fraud; Cardenas called on the Army—a staunch supporter of the ruling party—to guarantee a fair election.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] the ruling party is worried about the opposition's popularity and the impact of obvious fraud on political stability.

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[redacted]

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**Comment:** The ability Cardenas has to assemble huge crowds presents a dilemma to ruling-party strategists. If the government rigs the election to allow Clouthier to finish in second place and thereby undermine the credibility of the Cardenas campaign, it risks large urban disturbances and increased popular unrest. To allow Cardenas to legitimately capture second place, however—which he is likely to do in a fair election—would enhance the left's credibility and encourage its challenges to ruling-party legitimacy. [redacted]

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The opposition is no doubt buoyed by evidence of increasing popular support, and Cardenas and Clouthier are likely to protest the election results vigorously. The right has shown little ability to sustain protest efforts, but Cardenas's increasing and widespread popularity suggests the left may pose problems for the government well beyond the election. [redacted]

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The government's ability to stem violence, however, remains strong. Security forces are likely to react with moderation, as they did during election protests in 1986, but will move quickly. [redacted]

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