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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior  
Reviewer

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/98  
TAGS: PGOV, ES  
SUBJECT: PCN RE-ELECTS CRUZ ZEPEDA SECRETARY GENERAL  
FOR FOURTH TERM

(U) CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY B. SPROW  
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (U) SUMMARY: THE NATIONAL CONCILIATION PARTY (PCN)  
NATIONAL CONVENTION RE-ELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL CIRO  
CRUZ ZEPEDA AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE PCN NATIONAL  
COUNCIL. IN SPITE OF POTENTIAL DIFFERENCES OVER THE  
INCLUSION MORE THAN A YEAR AGO INTO THE TOP RANKS OF THE  
PARTY OF SOME PROMINENT EX-ARENA MEMBERS, CRUZ ZEPEDA  
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MANAGED TO RETAIN CONTROL OF A UNIFIED PARTY. END SUMMARY

2. (U) ON SEPTEMBER 20, THE NATIONAL CONCILIATION PARTY  
(PCN) NATIONAL CONVENTION RE-ELECTED CIRO CRUZ ZEPEDA FOR  
A FOURTH TERM AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PARTY. THE  
REST OF THE PCN NATIONAL COUNCIL WAS ALSO RE-ELECTED FOR  
ANOTHER THREE YEAR TERM. FINALLY, THE CONVENTION  
RATIFIED HERNAN CONTRERAS AS THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL  
CANDIDATE FOR THE MARCH 1999 ELECTIONS BUT IT DID NOT  
ADDRESS THE SELECTION OF A VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.  
PARTY LEADERS TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE PCN WOULD LOOK  
OUTSIDE ITS RANKS FOR CANDIDATES. CRUZ ZEPEDA TOLD THE  
PRESS THAT IT WAS EVIDENT THAT PCN SUPPORTERS HAD DECIDED  
IT WAS "NOT THE TIME TO CHANGE COURSE" SO CLOSE TO AN  
ELECTION.

3. (U) THE PARTY'S RELATIVE SUCCESS IN THE MARCH 1997  
MUNICIPAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS MAY HAVE LED MANY  
LOYALISTS TO BELIEVE THAT THE PCN IS AGAIN ON THE RIGHT

COURSE. IN THE 1997 ELECTIONS, FOLLOWING THE DEFECTION OF SOME PROMINENT ARENA FIGURES (INCLUDING FORMER VICE PRESIDENT FRANCISCO MERINO AND FORMER SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT MAURICIO GUTIERREZ) INTO THE PCN, THE PARTY STOPPED ITS ONGOING DECLINE AND SUCCEEDED IN REPLACING THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) AS THE THIRD FORCE IN THE ASSEMBLY. PCN SUPPORT (USUALLY THROWN BEHIND RULING ARENA'S POSITION) HAS BEEN KEY ON MANY ISSUES.

4. (U) IN SPITE OF THE PARTY'S APPARENT SUCCESS, CRUZ ZEPEDA'S RE-ELECTION COULD NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. SHORTLY AFTER THE MARCH ELECTIONS, CRUZ ZEPEDA'S  
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LEADERSHIP WAS CHALLENGED FROM THE ASSEMBLY FLOOR, BY THEN-PCN CAUCUS LEADER SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ AND LEGISLATIVE DEPUTY HORACIO RIOS (BOTH PART OF THE GROUP THAT JOINED THE PCN AFTER LEAVING ARENA.) EVENTUALLY, THE RENEGADE DEPUTIES ABANDONED THE PARTY, AND CRUZ ZEPEDA REASSERTED HIS CONTROL OVER THE PARTY.

5. (C) CRUZ ZEPEDA MIGHT HAVE ALSO BEEN CHALLENGED BY TRADITIONAL PCN MEMBERS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH HIS LONG TENURE OF THE TOP PARTY JOB, OR UNHAPPY WITH HAVING TO SHARE PROMINENT LEADERSHIP SPOTS WITH THOSE RECENTLY ARRIVED FROM ARENA. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THERE WAS SOME DIVISION IN THE PCN OVER CRUZ ZEPEDA'S LEADERSHIP. [REDACTED] PARTICULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH CRUZ ZEPEDA'S CHOICE OF FORMER CRISTIANI VICE-PRESIDENT FRANCISCO MERINO TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF ACCOUNTS.

6. (C) COMMENT: THE RE-ELECTION OF CRUZ ZEPEDA AND THE REST OF THE PCN'S GOVERNING BODY HAS, FOR NOW, STOPPED SPECULATION ABOUT RIFTS WITHIN THE PARTY. THE FACT THAT THE ENTIRE NATIONAL COUNCIL WAS RE-ELECTED SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT PARTY LEADERS HAVE, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, PUT ASIDE ANY DIFFERENCES THEY MAY HAVE HAD WITH A VIEW TO THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS OR THAT CRUZ ZEPEDA HAS SUCCESSFULLY MANEUVERED WITHIN THE PARTY TO KEEP BOTH THE FORMER "ARENEROS" AND TRADITIONAL PCN MEMBERS IN AND HIMSELF ON TOP.

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