

Woman Candidate for Governor

Beatriz Paredes is one of the most interesting figures to emerge from the ranks of the ruling party.

On November 16 the citizens of the state of Tlaxcala will go to the polls to elect a new governor for the next six years. Beatriz Elena Paredes Rangel, a young woman with a strong academic background and a long history of political and organizational activity, will almost certainly be the winner.

Tlaxcala is the smallest of Mexico's states, but also one of its most dynamic. Located only 25 kilometers from Mexico City, this tiny spot on the country's map conserves many of our finest traditions.

The geographic conditions are particularly hostile, in part due to the rugged terrain. But the state also suffers from a very serious erosion problem exacerbated by monoculture and rudimentary techniques for working the land. Of Tlaxcala's 650,000 inhabitants, some 40% of the economically active population works in agriculture. Nonetheless, because of low productivity, agriculture accounts for only 10% of the wealth produced in the state. The problem is due in part to the continued subdivision of land parcels into smaller and smaller plots. Most people have less than 12.5 acres to farm, making it extremely difficult to apply modern agricultural technology.

This situation generates a constant deterioration in living conditions for Tlaxcala's rural inhabitants, which in turn creates strong pressure for out-

migration to more developed population centers nearby (for example, Mexico City, Puebla and the state of Mexico). In fact, there are reportedly some 150,000 Tlaxcalans living in Netzahualcóyotl, a township that forms part of the greater Mexico City metropolitan area. Most of them are underemployed.

Over the past several years greater emphasis has been placed on the state's development. And while there are now seven industrial corridors that house important manufacturing plants, this sector is still not able to provide jobs for all of those who have been displaced from rural areas. Thus, Tlaxcala is a state beset by a series of urgent social problems.

"To tell you the truth," said one Tlaxcalan to the country's Tlaxcalan President when he was campaigning in the state, "the residents of Tlaxcala are not satisfied with our living conditions. We want sewage systems, potable water, schools, buses, fertilizers; we want playing fields and parks so that we can create the goodwill that is necessary for peace and well-being."

Many improvements were made during the administration of out-going Governor Tullio Hernández, but many serious problems still remain. It is virtually assured that Beatriz Paredes will be the next in line to tackle those problems.

Ms. Paredes, a seasoned activist of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), is a 33 year old sociologist. She was elected to the state legislature when she was 21 and has already held a series of important political positions. These include: State President, National Revolutionary Youth Movement; General Secretary, League of Agrarian Communities and Peasant Unions; Representative to the 51st National Congress; and Under-Secretary for Agrarian Planning, Ministry of Agrarian Reform.

Unlike most other PRI gubernatorial candidates, Beatriz Paredes has the genuine support of her state's citizens. One of the most important women in the country's political life, her nomination generated great pleasure in Tlaxcala and sparked interest around the entire nation. As VOICES goes to print, no other party had yet to name a candidate to run against her.

According to Adolfo Lugo Verduzco, a major figure in national PRI politics and himself a candidate for governor in Hidalgo, Beatriz Paredes "is an honorable representative for the people of Tlaxcala. Because of her origins, her training and her deep roots in her native state, and because of the support of many men and women from this progressive state, she will certainly form a government mindful of the needs of the majorities."

The candidate has crisscrossed the state to study its problems and gone door-to-door to talk to everyone she can, to listen to their ideas and their proposals. While this kind of campaigning is common in Mexico's presidential elections, it is quite unusual in gubernatorial races. Her efforts to seek out the opinions



Beatriz Paredes, dynamic young woman candidate for governor of Tlaxcala.

Photo by Marco A. Cruz/IMAGENLATINA

the nation

of so many residents, in so many communities is surprising and impressive.

The Tlaxcala electoral campaign has turned out just as Paredes announced it would when she was nominated: a civic celebration, a call for unity and for the participation and efforts of "all the descendents of the land of Xicoténcatl."

If she wins on November 16,

Mexican people believe that we can."

Regarding the specific situation in Tlaxcala, the candidate believes that if Tlaxcalans unite, we can find an equilibrium between the rural and urban regions "without creating poles or depending on miraculous resources such as oil."

In meetings with workers,

guez, in the Independence War and Carmen Serdán in the Mexican Revolution.

Nonetheless, even though Mexico's Political Constitution establishes full equality for men and women, it is only recently that Mexican women have really been able to occupy high-level administrative and political positions in increasing numbers.

home state greatly restrict her options for confronting the multiple problems described by the thousands of people she's consulted during the campaign. But despite the adversity of the moment, many Tlaxcalans from all walks of life believe that with Beatriz Paredes at the state's helm, they may soon enter into a new period of development. The likely governor-to-be is optimistic that she will be able to

Photo by Sergio Dorantes



Tlaxcala is one of Mexico's poorest states.

Beatriz Paredes wants to "promote a vigorous and concientious movement that expresses the democratic aspirations of teachers, rural workers and business people to assure integrated development in our communities." She believes that it is necessary to consolidate a people's government based on democracy and social justice and built on a solid relationship between those who govern and those who are governed, in which analysis and responsibilities are shared.

Regarding Mexico's current problems, Paredes states, "the country is in the midst of a very serious economic crisis; but we face the crisis with some very important resources: solid institutions and a very mature population with an incredibly strong tradition of resistance, participation and preservation. There's one condition that will allow us to overcome the situation: if the

peasants, students, with women and all sectors of the population, all of the state's problems are being analyzed in attempt to get a full picture of the situation. The government's future state-wide plan will be based on this effort.

Beatriz Paredes will be only the second woman in Mexico's entire history to occupy a governor's office. Griselda Alvarez Ponce de León was the only other woman; she was governor of Colima from 1980 to 1986.

It is important to emphasize this point because there is a long tradition of women's involvement in Mexican political struggle. Their participation has not been limited to fighting only for their specific demands as women, but also for more general social demands and to defend our national interests. To give just two examples of important leaders: *doña* Josefa Ortiz de Domín-

guez will soon get her turn. She will face a tremendous challenge, as the country's difficult situation and the particular conditions in her

handle the state's problem, and she's already working very hard to prove it. ★

Ariel Rivera



Photo by INAH

Mural at Cacaxtla, the most important archeological site in Tlaxcala.