

Mexico's Recount

EDITORIAL
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For eight weeks, Andrés Manuel López Obrador has made his claim of electoral fraud the basis for what threatens to become a permanent protest of Mexico's presidential election. Yesterday, Mexico's electoral tribunal kicked away the foundations of his claim. In a recount of 9 percent of polling places, the judges found no evidence of widespread fraud and too few errors to change the results.

The electoral tribunal has not yet declared that Felipe Calderón, of the ruling National Action Party, is Mexico's next president. It has until Sept. 6 to rule on whether President Vicente Fox and business groups interfered illegally in the election. No one should ask Mr. López Obrador to concede before this ruling. But it is time for him to end the protests and pledge to respect the tribunal's final decision.

Mr. López Obrador, who trails Mr. Calderón by less than 0.6 percent of the vote, claims he really won and vows to make the country ungovernable until his claim is recognized. His supporters have set up squatter camps that have paralyzed parts of Mexico City. Mr. López Obrador argues that only a full recount would have settled the question. In a country where electoral fraud used to be routine, a full recount would indeed have been best.

But this vote was apparently well run, and there is a clear and thorough process in place to deal with challenges. The electoral tribunal is respected and independent. Mr. López Obrador's continued insistence that he was robbed now sounds like whining. If he does not desist, his party, now the country's second-largest, should decide that it is bigger than him and that its role is as opposition within, not outside, democratic processes.

Mr. Calderón, however, also needs to reach out. He erred in opposing a recount. And while his advisers insist that they do not need the Party of the Democratic Revolution to govern effectively, they are wrong. Mr. Calderón has less than 36 percent of the vote, and his own party fell short of a majority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The country is split by class and geography, with the wealthy northern states supporting Mr. Calderón and the poorer south supporting Mr. López Obrador.

Even if he could govern alone, Mr. Calderón would be making policy in an echo chamber of Mexico's elite. Mr. López Obrador has flaws that have apparently kept him from the presidency. But that does not mean that the millions of Mexicans who feel represented by him should have no voice.