

## WORLD AFFAIRS

## Mexico's Never Seen



A firebrand capitalist could defeat the formidable PRI. BY ALAN ZAREMBO

**T**HE YEAR WAS 1964, AND VICENTE Fox Quesada was driving around Mexico selling Coca-Cola. One of 11 children born to a rancher and his Spanish wife, he had nearly completed a business degree, but the sales job was going so well that he left the university instead of finishing his thesis. In Mexico City, meanwhile, Francisco Labastida Ochoa was working in the Finance Ministry while pursuing an economics degree. The young analyst, whose grandfather

helped write the Constitution in 1917, had recently married. Both men were 22. Over the next two decades, they would rise to the top of their very different fields: one as a businessman, the other as a politician in the world's most enduring political party.

Two paths, but Fox and Labastida share the same goal: the presidency of Mexico. And on July 2, when their momentous, bitterly fought contest finally comes to a climax, voters will be passing judgment not so much on their policies, but on their pedi-

grees—and by extension, on the wild swirl of forces that's reshaping this nation of 100 million people. Labastida's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has ruled Mexico since it was formed 71 years ago. But Fox, the candidate of the National Action Party (PAN), stands a good chance of ending that streak. To many Mexicans, the PRI has become synonymous with everything wrong in the country: corruption, crime, poverty and dirty politics. Fox, known for his populist (and occasionally profane) rhetoric, is in a

LEFT TO RIGHT: SERGIO DORANTES; HERIBERTO RODRIGUEZ—REUTERS