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On Peru's Municipal Elections: Summary Of Events, Preliminary Results

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On Nov. 12, Peruvians were scheduled to vote for 182 mayors and 1,765 councilpersons in nationwide municipal elections. However, due to death threats and intimidation by the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) rebels, no candidates were running in at least 86 towns. Since campaigning began in August, some 300 candidates withdrew from the elections. In a statement on Nov. 10, the National Election Panel (JNE) said that of some 10 million Peruvians registered to vote, 9.9 million were expected to cast ballots on Sunday. Nearly 35% of the electorate is concentrated in Lima department. Although voting is obligatory, absenteeism in the 1980, 1983 and 1986 municipal elections ranged from 22 to 36%. Peruvian law calls for annulment of election results if the combined rate of absenteeism and null ballots is over 66%. In this year's elections, Peruvian voters in many areas faced rebel retribution if they voted, and a fine equivalent to 125% of the minimum wage paid to the local government if they fail to do so. Nov. 9: Police sources reported the arrest of 44 suspected members of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in the southern cities of Canete, Cincha and Arequipa. Security forces implemented sweeps in those cities and others in an effort to quash a rebel campaign to disrupt the Nov. 12 municipal elections. On Nov. 8, some 600 persons were arrested at the San Marcos University in Lima. (See also Chronicle, 11/09/89.) In Lima, four people were seriously injured in bomb-throwing incidents, and several suspects were arrested. Bombs damaged banks, shops and an office of the ruling American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), but no injuries were reported. In Nazca, 400 km. south of Lima, a bomb caused power black-outs. Bombs exploded at municipal offices in Ranrahirca and Tingos, 400 km. northeast of the capital. No injuries were reported. According to the military high command, pamphlets found during the San Marcos University raid indicated that Sendero Luminoso was planning an "armed strike" on Sunday to prevent people from voting. Guerrillas have reportedly warned bus drivers in Lima and elsewhere to stay at home on election day. The Transport Ministry offered compensation for any damages bus companies and drivers may incur, and also threatened sanctions ranging from the loss of driver's license to jail terms should the drivers adhere to the guerrillas' demands. Nov. 10: Without explanation, on Friday night the Sendero Luminoso cancelled the "armed strike" declared for Saturday through Monday in Junin, Pasco and Huanuco provinces. They added that attacks would be resumed in subsequent days. Rebel bombing of an electrical pylon, caused a blackout in the city of Huancavelica, 500 km. southeast of Lima. A similar attack occurred in Ica, 300 km. south of Lima, minutes after a meeting of the ruling APRA party had begun. Nov. 11: On Saturday evening, more than 20 bombs exploded around Lima. Police reported that in Huanuco province, rebel commandos killed a United Left (IU) district candidate, and the father of an Aprista candidate. The military detained 350 people suspected of links to the rebels in Huanuco. In the Ayacucho district, guerrillas killed an IU alderman, a district governor and professor. AFP reported that police had detained 4,000 people in the past 48 hours for questioning. In the southeast Andean district of San Anton, rebels killed a mayoral candidate and two aldermen. Police reported that the same group dynamited and burned city hall, a medical center and businesses. Police in Cusco, 1,300 km. southeast of Lima, said that rebel groups had accosted about 200 people on the streets in the past
three days, ripping up their ballots or burning them. Nov. 12: Polls opened in Lima at 8 a.m., and were scheduled to close at 3 p.m., but they were kept open another two hours because of thousands of people still waiting to cast ballots. According to early vote tallies reported on local television, political independent Ricardo Belmont won the mayor's race in metropolitan Lima. Belmont, owner of Television Channel 11, is well known for holding an annual telethon. Prior to the election, Belmont said he supports the Democratic Front a center-right coalition headed by Mario Vargas Llosa in the April 1990 presidential election. Police reported that rebels shot and killed the mayoral candidate of the governing center-left Aprista Party early Sunday in Azangaro, near the Bolivian border. In Huancayo, capital of Junin department 140 miles east of Lima, the rebels dynamited a church and a school early Sunday. In the mountain cities of Huancayo and Ayacucho, most bus and taxi drivers stayed off the streets, and most shops were closed. Nov. 13: Voting results on Monday indicated that the Democratic Front won 23 mayoral posts in 30 Lima suburban districts for which results were available. The United Left (IU) won five mayoral posts; the Socialist Accord, one district mayor's seat; and, an independent in another. The governing Aprista Party failed to win a mayor's seat in the Lima area, losing 18 seats it held among the 30 districts. Completed vote tallies for the mayoral races of 15 of Peru's 24 state capitals, showed that the Democratic Front controlled eight of the offices, the IU two, the Aprista Party two, and political independents two. A regional party won in Arequipa, Peru's second major city. Voting results from small towns throughout Peru were not expected for several days due to poor communications. (Basic data from Notimex, 11/01/89; AFP, 11/09/89, 11/11/89, 11/12/89; Xinhua, 11/09/89; AP, 11/12/89, 11/13/89; New York Times, 11/13/89)

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