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Bolivia: On Municipal Elections

by John Neagle

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On Dec. 3, Bolivians had the opportunity to elect 2,887 municipal officials. Slightly more than half of the electorate went to the polls. Bolivia has been under a state of siege since Nov. 15. On Sunday evening, electoral officials said TV host and station owner Carlos Palenque of the Fatherland Conscience (CONDEPA) party took 39.9% of the votes in the race for mayor of La Paz. The incumbent mayor, Ronald Maclean, who represented the ruling coalition of the social-democratic Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and the conservative National Democratic Action (ADN) party was three points behind. The CONDEPA party, founded by Palenque, defines itself as "patriotic," neither leftist nor rightist in orientation. Its objectives include bringing indigenous and mestizo citizens into the political process. In the Obrajes neighborhood of La Paz, abstentionism was higher than elsewhere, result of the Confederation of Urban and Rural Teachers calling on citizens to stay home on election day to protest the arrest of six of its leaders in mid-November. Under Bolivian electoral law, voters choose city councilors who in turn select the mayor. Mayoral candidates thus run for posts as councilors. The leftist Civic Union of Solidarity won a majority in Trinidad, capital of northern Beni province, and finished second in Cochabamba. The new party was established several months ago by brewery owner Max Fernandez. The ruling coalition won in six provincial capitals and remained the most powerful political force. (Basic data from AFP, Notimex, 12/03/89)

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