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POL:ELECTIONS

MANY INCUMBENTS LOSE IN MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS:

BY LIONEL MARTIN

HAVANA, OCT 28, REUTER -A SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTION OF INCUMBANTS WERE NOT REELECTED TO CUBA'S ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY NINE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES OF PEOPLES' POWER ACCORDING TO THE FINAL ELECTION RESULTS WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S GRANMA.

THE STATISTICS INDICATE THAT OVER FIFTY THREE PERCENT OF THE INCUMBANTS WERE DEFEATED. THE NUMBER OF NEW DELEGATES IS HIGHER, SIXTY-TWO PERCENT, SINCE NEW ELECTORAL DISTRICTS WERE CREATED PRIOR TO THE ELECTION.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (PRECINCTS, RIDINGS AND IN SPANISH +CIRCUNSCRIPCINES+) WHERE DELEGATES WERE ELECTED WAS THIRTEEN THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SIX, WHICH IS TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SEVEN MORE THAN IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS HELD IN 1984

THE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES OF PEOPLES POWER WERE ESTABLISHED UNDER THE CUBAN CONSTITUTION OF 1976 WITH THE AIM OF DECENTRALIZING THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES BY CREATING LOCALLY ELECTED BODIES THAT ARE IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION.

WHILE THE ASSEMBLIES ARE DEFINED AS REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS WHICH NEVER CHALLENGE THE PREVAILING SOCIALIST REGIME, ITS PARTY OR ITS LEADERS, THEY DO HAVE A BROAD RANGE OF RESPONSABILITIES FOR THE DAY TO DAY MANAGEMENT OF CUBA'S TOWNS AND CITIES. INASMUCH AS ALMOST ALL BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS ARE GOVERNMENT OWNED IN CUBA, THE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES RUN EVERYTHING FROM LOCAL RESTAURANTS AND MOVIE HOUSES, FROM STREET MAINTENANCE TO MOVIE HOUSES AND FROM HOTELS TO LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

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ELECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES ARE HELD EVERY TWO YEAR. CANDIDATES ARE NOMINATED IN NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS AND THERE MUST BE MORE THAN ONE CANDIDATE FOR THE DELEGATE'S POST. CAMPAIGNING IS LIMITED TO PHOTOS AND BIOGRAPHIES ON PUBLIC BULLETIN BOARDS AND TO MEETINGS DURING WHICH ALL CANDIDATES SPEAK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS.

MANY OF THE CANDIDATES ARE POLITICAL ACTIVISTS ALTHOUGH BEING A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS NOT A PREREQUISITE FOR CANDIDACY. THE MINIMUM AGE FOR CANDIDATES AND FOR VOTING ALIKE IS SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

IN ORDER TO BE ELECTED, CANDIDATES MUST RECEIVE MORE THAN FIFTY PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE. IF NO CANDIDATE SUCCEEDS IN WINNING A MAJORITY A SECOND ROUND ELECTION IS HELD. IN THE PRESENT ELECTIONS, TWELVE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOUR CANDIDATES WERE ELECTED IN THE FIRST ROUND ON OCTOBER 19 AND THE REST IN THE SECOND ROUND ON OCTOBER 26.

THE ELECTION RESULTS SEEM TO RESPOND, BUT NOT DRAMATICALLY SO, TO PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO'S CALL EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR MORE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND YOUNG ADULTS UNDER THIRTY YEARS OF AGE. OF THE TOTAL DELEGATES ELECTED, SLIGHTLY OVER SEVENTEEN PERCENT ARE WOMEN (A 5.6 PER CENT RISE OVER 1984) AND TWENTY TWO PERCENT ARE PERSONS UNDER THIRTY YEARS OF AGE (3.2 PERCENT HIGHER THAN IN 1984).

WHILE ELECTIONS TO THE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES OF PEOPLES POWER IS BY DIRECT POPULAR VOTE, IT IS THE ASSEMBLIES THEMSELVES THAT ELECT DELEGATES TO THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES AND TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH MEETS IN HAVANA SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR.

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