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Paraguay: Opposition Presidential Candidate Invites Provisional President Rodriguez To A Public Debate

by John Neagle

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On April 17, Domingo Laino, presidential candidate for the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), invited provisional president and Colorado Party candidate, Gen. Andres Rodriguez, to a public debate. A spokesperson for Rodriguez said he will accept the invitation, but that it was too early to fix a date. According to recent poll results, Rodriguez is leading with 50%. Twenty-five percent of respondents said they plan to vote for Laino. The remaining 25% were split among other presidential candidates, and undecided. If the Laino-Rodriguez debate takes place before TV cameras and radio microphones, it would mark the first of its kind in Paraguay between two presidential candidates. Political analysts expect Laino to continue picking up commitments by voters result of exposes of corruption and human rights violations throughout the Stroessner regime in which Rodriguez was allegedly a direct or indirect participant. Laino and his party are taking advantage of the exposes. One of their principal campaign slogans boasts the candidate's "clean hands." On April 11, president of the Central Electoral Council told reporters that only eight of 12 legal parties have chosen candidates to run in the May presidential elections. In addition to the PLRA and the ruling Colorados, candidates have been nominated by the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), Febrerista Revolutionary Party (PRF), Christian Democrat Party (PDC), Radical Liberal Party (PLR), Liberal Party (PL), Unified Radical Liberal Party (PLRU) and the Humanist Party (PH). Only one of the parties, the PH, is described as leftist. The PRF is considered Social Democrat in orientation, and the PDC, Social Christian. The remaining five parties range from conservative to liberal in ideology. The winner will take office on August 15 for a five-year term. (Basic data from AP, 04/11/89; AFP, 04/17/89)

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