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## **Uruguay: Notes On Principal Candidates, Nov. 26 Presidential Election**

*by John Neagle*

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On Nov. 26, 2.3 million eligible voters will have the opportunity to cast ballots for the presidency and members of congress. Nine candidates are running for president, although the race is effectively between Luis Alberto Lacalle of the National Party (Blancos), and Jorge Batile, of the ruling Colorado Party. Under Uruguay's electoral system, which combines primaries and a general election in one event, each of the front-runners is facing two other candidates from his own party, plus three candidates on other party tickets. All votes for candidates of a particular party are totaled, and the party with the most votes takes the presidency. The individual selected as president is the winning party's top vote getter. Congressional seats are allocated on the basis of each party's share of the total vote. Recent polls indicate that Lacalle, a lawyer and senator, is ahead of other National Party presidential candidates, while Batile, also a lawyer and senator, heads his party's candidates. The same polls show the National Party in the lead. The third most important political force is the Broad Front, a coalition of leftist parties. Liber Sergeni, retired army general and independent, is the coalition's presidential candidate. The Broad Front has a strong following in Montevideo, and may win control of the municipal government for the first time. The new president takes office on March 1, 1990. Both leading candidates are committed to privatization and reducing the government's role in the economy, attracting more foreign investment, and enhanced regulation of labor unions. Lacalle said that if elected he would aggressively seek foreign investments as one means of reversing Uruguay's economic decline. He also plans to sponsor legislation regulating labor unions, whose leftist leaders are often blamed for the absence of foreign investment in recent years. Batile supports conversion of the nation's entire \$6.4 billion foreign debt into investment via debt-equity swap transactions. At present, Montevideo pays some \$600 million per year in interest on the debt. According to Batile, Uruguay's "structural inflation" is largely a result of the debt service burden. (Basic data from New York Times, 11/05/89; Notimex, 11/14/89)

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