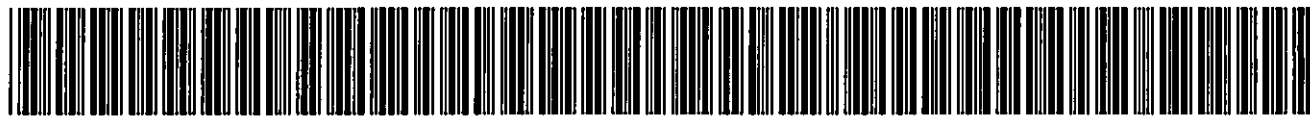
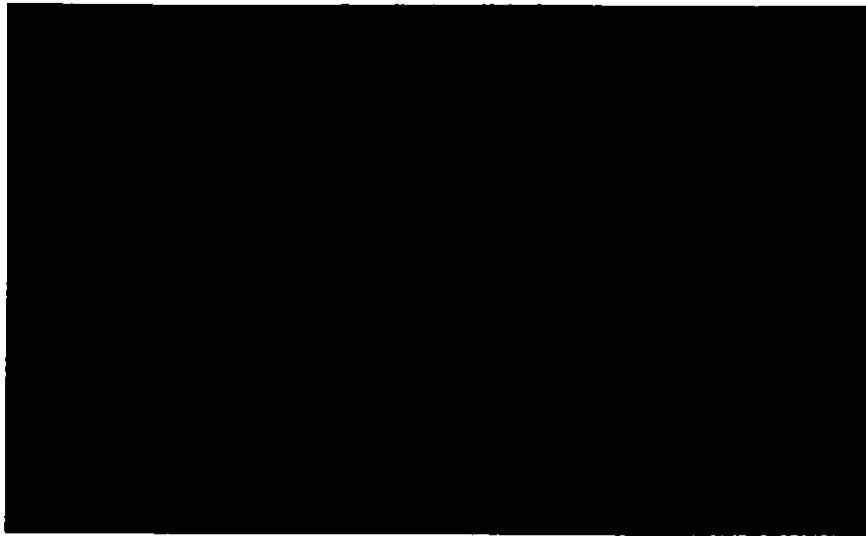


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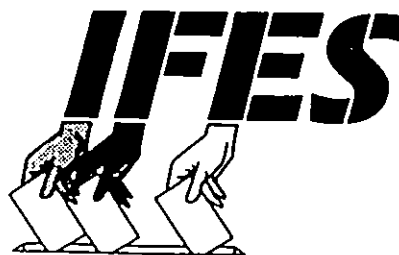


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PARAGUAY
REPORT ON THE 1988
GENERAL ELECTION

MARCH 28, 1988



INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

REPORT ON THE 1988 PARAGUAYAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

by

Richard W. Soudriette

Prepared for:

The International Foundation for Election Systems

Washington, D.C.
March 28, 1988

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GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

- ANR Asociacion Nacional Republicano
 (National Republican Party also known as the Colorado
 Party)
- PDC Partido Democrata Cristiano
 (Christian Democratic Party)
- PL Partido Liberal
 (Liberal Party)
- PLR Partido Liberal Radical
 (Radical Liberal Party)
- PLRA Partido Liberal Autentico
 (Authentic Radical Liberal Party)
- PRF Partido Revolucionario Febrerista
 (Revolutionary Febrerista Party)

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

I.1 Overview

General Alfredo Stroessner has served as President of Paraguay since 1954. On February 14, 1988, he was re-elected as the candidate of the Colorado Party to serve another five year term. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) designated Richard W. Soudriette as its official observer to the 1988 Paraguayan general elections. This report offers his observations.

I.2 Historical Overview

Paraguay is one of the least known yet most interesting countries in South America. After winning independence from Spain in 1811, the country has experienced a long succession of authoritarian leaders and a turbulent history.

For much of the first half of the 19th century the country was isolated by its rulers. Yet Paraguay also enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most modern countries in South America. The first wood burning train on the South American continent was built in Paraguay and still operates there.

The country fought two bloody wars with its neighbors. During the War of the Triple Alliance against Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay from 1864 to 1870, Paraguay lost the war and three-quarters of its population. Paraguay defeated Bolivia in the Chaco War in the 1930s at an enormous cost of human life.

Prior to 1954, the political system was plagued by a series of unstable governments and was constantly rocked by coup d'etats. From 1904 to 1936 there were 22 Presidents. The oldest two political parties are the Liberal Party and the Colorado Party, both founded in 1887.

During the first half of the 20th century the Liberals dominated Paraguayan politics until the Civil War of 1947. Out of the chaos emerged the government of General Stroessner in 1954. He embraced the Colorado Party and became its leader. Ever since then the Colorado Party and the military have been the two institutions that have maintained Stroessner in power.

From a population of 3 million, the Colorado Party claims a total membership of 1.4 million. It is responsible for a degree of popular support that even Stroessner's most fervent critics admit he enjoys. It is also paradoxical that General Stroessner, the head of the armed forces, runs every five years as the peace candidate. A large neon sign in downtown Asuncion, proudly proclaims, "Peace and Progress With Stroessner". This symbolizes the basis of Stroessner's program.

Prior to 1954 Paraguay was an extremely poor country wracked by civil wars, bloodshed, and political instability. During Stroessner's tenure in office the country has seen progress. The construction of the joint Paraguayan/Brazilian Itaipu Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric dam, brought millions of dollars into Paraguay, raised living standards, and brought electricity to more than 200 communities.

With improved living standards there has also been a rise in expectations. There is disgust over widespread corruption in the government and an increasing desire to permit the political system to open up like their neighbors in Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia.

II. CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCENE

After 34 years of rule by President Stroessner the winds of change are beginning to blow. Following his re-election in 1983, many Paraguayans realized that Stroessner would not survive forever.

Beginning in 1983 there was increased pressure for more press freedom. An independent newspaper known as ABC COLOR, became the most popular paper in the country by fearlessly printing articles openly critical of the government. ABC Color was shut down by the government in 1984. From 1985 to 1987 other media also defied the government. Radio Nanduti, an opposition station, and the paper of the Febrerista Party "El Pueblo" vigorously challenged the Stroessner government until they were also closed in 1987.

During this same period there was an increase in political activity and turmoil. Paraguay experienced its first riots in decades in 1986, when police used clubs and tear gas to quell demonstrations by medical personnel demanding increased wages at the government hospital in Asuncion and by students at the National University.

II.1 Colorado Split

Despite this violence the political process started to show signs of opening up. Within the Colorado Party two factions arose and actively contended for power - the traditionalists and the militants. Both factions actively campaigned during inner party elections held in 1986. The militants won and quickly became the dominant faction. This election was important because it represented the first example of an openly contested election.

In 1986 Paraguayans wondered if President Stroessner would run for an eighth term. Many traditionalists urged him to step aside. The militants rallied around the President and successfully encouraged him to run again. In August 1987, the militants seized control of the party and literally locked the traditionalists out of the Colorado convention. They purged the party and unanimously affirmed their support for Stroessner as the party standard bearer for the 1988 elections.

II.2 Weak Opposition

Since 1985 there has been increased activity by all opposition groups, yet they remain weak and badly divided. They consist of both legal and non-legal parties.

The legal parties consist of the Colorado Party, the Liberal Party, the Radical Liberal Party and the Revolutionary Febrerista Party. All legal parties are entitled to representation in Congress. The majority party holds two-thirds of the legislative seats and the minority parties divide the balance of the seats.

The non-legal parties consist of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), and the Christian Democratic Party. There is a tiny Paraguayan Communist Party in exile. Within all parties, including the Colorados, there are also many sub-factions. An umbrella group known as the "National Accord" consists of representatives of most of the opposition political groups.

The leader of the PLRA is Domingo Laino. He is one of the most visible opposition politicians in Paraguay and is also well known abroad. To the dismay of the Paraguayan government he regularly meets with top officials of the U.S. State Department.

Laino returned to Paraguay in 1987 after several years of government imposed exile.

III. PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

The Paraguayan Congress extended invitations to foreign parliamentarians to observe the February 14th elections. There were official observers from the following countries: Brazil, Colombia, the European Parliament, France, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Congressman James M. Inhofe was invited, but could not attend. As Staff Director to Congressman Inhofe, I went in his place.

III.1 Final Colorado Rally

I arrived on Thursday, February 11th and attended the closing rally of the Colorado Party's 1988 campaign. It was attended by all of the highest ranking party and government officials. President Stroessner gave the final speech of the three hour long event. The crowd estimates varied from 50,000 claimed by Washington Post correspondent Bradley Graham, to 150,000 claimed by Colorado officials.

The crowd appeared enthusiastic. The participants repeatedly interrupted all of the speakers, including the President, with impassioned and frenzied harangues of praise of General Stroessner. They shouted in both Spanish and Guarani, the indigenous language of Paraguay.

It should be noted that most of them were government workers brought in from across the country. Failure to attend would have resulted in being docked two days pay.

III.2 Opposition Political Activities

It took me two days to learn the names of the two opposition presidential candidates who would challenge President Stroessner in the elections. The candidate for the Liberal Party (PL) was Dr. Carlos Ibarra Ferreira. The Radical Liberal Party (PLR) candidate was Dr. Luis Maria Vega.

The legal parties held campaign rallies around the country. The President of the PL, Senator Joaquin Atilio Burgos, told me that 20,000 liberals attended the closing Liberal rally in Luque, a suburb of Asuncion. He said the Liberals had six rallies throughout the country.

The Radical Liberal Party held several rallies that were attended by 20,000 to 30,000 people. The PLR presidential candidate, Dr. Luis Maria Vega, also told me that it was virtually impossible for the PLR or the PL to win because the government controlled all the election machinery and the media. Dr. Vega said that the PLR could not communicate their program to the people.

Other non-participating parties advocated different strategies for the voters. The PLRA, the Popular Democratic Movement, and numerous dissident Colorado factions urged people to abstain from voting. The Febreristas, the Christian Democrats, and the traditionalist faction of the Colorado party advocated casting blank ballots.

IV. ELECTION PROCEDURES

Despite the lack of a truly competitive election campaign, the electoral system is fairly well organized. Each voter is required to register. For the 1988 elections, 1,446,665 voters were eligible to vote. Each party is responsible for getting their supporters registered, although voters do not register by party. Registration and voting are mandatory. Failure to vote carries a fine of approximately \$8 dollars.

Voters receive a voting book when they register which they must bring to their polling place. The names of all votes are maintained on computerized voting lists.

The voter arrives at the polling place and goes to the voting table where the three election officials check off his name and give him an envelope signed by the president of the table. Next the voter goes into a room where ballots for the three participating parties are located. The voter then selects the ballot of his choice, seals it in the envelope, and deposits it in the ballot box upon leaving the voting booth.

There is no marking on the ballots and a person can vote a blank ballot by sealing up an empty envelope. Voting is supposed to be by secret ballot.

IV.1 Ballot Preparation

Political parties are responsible for selecting their respective candidates and for ballot preparation. All voting is by straight party. The ballot includes the candidates for President, and senators and deputies for the Congress.

The parties deliver their sample ballot copy to the Ministry of Finance for printing. The parties must pick up the ballots and then distribute them to all of the polling places. This presents a major problem for the opposition parties because they normally do not have enough party officials to distribute their ballots to every polling place.

IV.2 Poll Watchers/Polling Places

All legal parties are entitled to have poll watchers. The polling place usually has several voting tables with ballot boxes. Each table has a President, Vice President, and a Secretary who represent each of the legal parties. These officials supervise the act of voting at each ballot box. They certify the final voter register and participate in counting the ballots at the end of the day.

Each party is responsible for having officials on hand to serve as poll watchers. This requirement makes it difficult for the opposition parties to have observers at all polling places because the two participating legal parties do not have enough followers to adequately man all the polling places in the country.

For the 1988 elections there were a total of 7,213 voting tables across Paraguay. The number of tables varies with as few as five, to as many as thirty tables at each polling place. Voters are assigned to vote on the basis of their place of residence, although there are some exceptions for some of the government officials such as President Stroessner.

The polls are open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the end of the day each table tabulates the results. They are combined with results from the other voting tables at each polling place and are fed to the Headquarters of the Electoral Commission via fax machine.

IV.3 Ballot Boxes

Ballot boxes are not locked during the election. They are merely sealed with tape. Immediately after the the election all ballot boxes are destroyed. Paraguayans have no concept of the need to save the ballots in case of a recount. They customarily do not have close elections.

V. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

On February 14th, I visited six polling places in Asuncion, Fernando de la Mora, San Lorenzo, Yaguaron, and Villeta. I personally observed President Stroessner, and the President of the Colorado Party and Minister of the Interior, Dr. Sabino Augusto Montanaro, vote.

During the day I visited the Central Electoral Commission and learned about the election system. I was given copies of all the pertinent election documents including the ballots.

On election day I visited the headquarters of the Colorado, Liberal, and Radical Liberal parties. The Colorados were the most active. The computerized Election Central was also set up in the Colorado Party offices.

While at the Colorado Party offices I visited with Dr. Montanaro and the Minister of Justice and Labor, Dr. J. Eugenio Jacquet. Dr. Jacquet was in charge of the party's get out the vote drive.

Late in the day I visited the offices of the Liberal Party. I missed the PL presidential candidate because he was out delivering ballots. The PL headquarters was very small. When I arrived the only people I found were the president of the party, Senator Joaquin Atilio Burgos, and a small boy.

Next I went to the Radical Liberal Party headquarters. I met with the presidential candidate, Dr. Luis Maria Vega, and the party president, Mr. Emilio Forestieri. We had a very frank discussion. They characterized the elections as unfair and said that it was impossible for them to win. Yet Dr. Vega told me that his party felt that the best way to bring about true democracy was to work within the system and that is why the PLR participated in the elections.

I saw long lines at all the polling places I visited. The only irregularities that I observed were a lack of PL ballots and poll watchers at most of the polling places.

The PLR appeared to be better organized than the PL and had ballots and poll watchers at all the polling places that I visited. I tried to talk with several PLR observers but they were reluctant to talk in front of the Colorado Party officials.

The Colorado Party was out in force and was making a concerted effort to get its supporters to the polls. This observation was also made by the numerous observers from the U.S. Embassy that traveled around on election day. It was surprising because the Colorado Party did not have to do anything to be assured of an election victory, and yet they were out hustling to get their voters to the polls.

The atmosphere at the polling places can best be described as festive. Vendors sold food and non-alcoholic beverages. This was especially true of the rural polling places. Election day was obviously a big social event and offered a chance for people in the smaller villages to see family and friends.

During the day I monitored election coverage on the Catholic Church's radio station, Radio Caritas. It reported the activities of the non-participating opposition parties. These parties included the Authentic Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats. The station reported the beatings of several traditionalist Colorado politicians and Martin Anderson, an observer for the National Democratic Institute in Washington, D.C.

I monitored the election reports on Radio Caritas because I wanted to determine how successful the opposition groups had been in getting out their messages to either abstain from voting or to cast blank ballots. The catholic station reported turnouts for some 20 towns of between 68% to 95%.

VI. POST-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

After the polls closed, I returned to Asuncion to Election Central to wait for the returns. Both television networks provided live coverage and minute by minute details of the votes from each locality. At 9 p.m. I was invited to the official news conference, where the President of the Colorado Party and the Chairman of the Electoral Commission declared President Stroessner the winner on the basis of 92% of the vote.

VI.1 Final Tabulation

The final tally showed the Colorados with 1,187,738 votes or 88.6%, the Radical Liberal Party with 95,500 or 7.1%, and the Liberal Party with 42,442 or 3.1%. Only 7.3% abstained and 1% cast blank ballots.

VI.2 International Reaction

The international media portrayed the election as a farce. The enormous presence of so many foreign correspondents was quite unusual. The Associated Press correspondent for Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay told me that the international press was now going to focus attention on Paraguay, as they focused on Haiti and South Korea.

U.S. Ambassador Clyde Taylor came under renewed attacks for his comments which characterized the election as "a lost opportunity." This has caused the government to focus again on Ambassador Taylor. He has been relentlessly attacked in the Paraguayan media ever since the election.

VI.3 Opposition Reaction

As expected, all non-participating political parties branded the election as fraudulent. Interestingly, the Liberal Party presidential candidate, Dr. Carlos Ibarra Ferreira, also charged that there were irregularities. The PL leader claimed that is why his party came in third.

The second place showing of the Radical Liberal Party is important because they will receive the largest bloc of seats reserved for the opposition in the Congress. The breakdown of seats in the Chamber of Deputies is now 48 seats for the Colorado Party, 17 seats for the PLR, and seven seats for the PL.

Shortly after the election I spoke with Dr. Juan Manuel Marcos, a spokesperson for the Authentic Radical Party. He said the PLRA did not participate because there was no chance of winning during a presidential election. Dr. Marcos stated that the PLRA plans to contest several municipal elections in Paraguay in 1990. Without President Stroessner on the ballot, the PLRA feels there is a greater chance to win control of one or two city halls.

VII. CONCLUSION

I was pleased to have the opportunity to observe the 1988 general elections in Paraguay. Although they would not be classified as totally free elections by U.S. standards, the process cannot be totally dismissed as a fraudulent exercise. Paraguay has never known totally free elections. It was obvious after talking with the government officials that the elections were free and democratic in their minds. They did not have anything to compare them with.

The fact that the government felt compelled to invite election observers was also positive. The organization of the actual election system was also impressive. It suggests that the mechanics will be in place if and when Paraguay develops a truly democratic system.

The prognosis for Paraguay is for increasing political turmoil. President Stroessner is still firmly in control and will remain that way for the unforeseeable future. Yet at the age of 75 even his most passionate backers are beginning to talk about the "biological formula" which means that the President will not live forever.

The question arises of what the post-Stroessner era will hold for Paraguay. The country's current constitution does not even provide for the office of vice president. There is speculation about President Stroessner's son, Gustavo, as a possible successor, but no one really knows what will happen when the President dies. The greatest fear is that the transition will be chaotic and will plunge the country back into political instability.

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Personal Interview on the Paraguayan Elections, Asuncion,
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- President Alfredo Stroessner, Personal Interview on the
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- Dr. Luis Maria Vega, Presidential Candidate for the Radical
Liberal Party, Personal Interview on the Paraguayan
Elections, February 14, 1988.

Appendix A: List of Election Observer Questions

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS.

1. How do people register to vote?
2. Is voting mandatory and what is the penalty if they do not vote?
3. Is the election supervised by a bi-partisan board?
4. What is the actual election procedure?
5. What does the ballot look like?
6. Who prepares the ballots?
7. What parties are participating?
8. Are the parties allowed to have election judges at the polling places?
9. Is there any intimidation involved with voting?
10. Is it easy for people to vote?
11. Are all the parties permitted openly campaign?
12. Who has jurisdiction over the ballot boxes?
13. How are the ballots counted and how long are they kept following the election?
14. Who certifies the candidates who stand for office?
15. Do you vote for individual candidates or are they elected by straight ticket voting?

25 Años de Comicios Generales Pluralistas

ELECCIONES GENERALES PARA EL PERIODO 1963 — 1968

<i>Partido Colorado</i>		<i>Partido Liberal</i>	<i>Nulos</i>
Capital	92.924	11.588	
Interior	<u>476.627</u>	<u>36.162</u>	11.314
	569.551	47.750	

ELECCIONES GENERALES PARA EL PERIODO 1968 — 1973

	<i>P. Colorado</i>	<i>P. Lib. Radical</i>	<i>P. Liberal</i>	<i>P. Febrerista</i>	<i>Nulos</i>
Capital	68.512	22.595	2.567	8.268	6.421
Interior	<u>397.023</u>	<u>117.027</u>	<u>25.398</u>	<u>8.603</u>	
	465.535	139.622	27.965	16.871	

ELECCIONES GENERALES PARA EL PERIODO 1973 — 1978

	<i>P. Colorado</i>	<i>P. Lib. Radical</i>	<i>P. Liberal</i>	<i>Nulos</i>
Capital	120.907	20.276	5.424	10.597
Interior	<u>560.399</u>	<u>77.820</u>	<u>19.187</u>	
	681.306	98.096	24.611	

ELECCIONES GENERALES PARA EL PERIODO 1978 — 1983

	<i>P. Colorado</i>	<i>P. Lib. Radical</i>	<i>P. Liberal</i>	<i>Nulos</i>
Capital	180.590	11.266	8.140	8.177
Interior	<u>720.184</u>	<u>43.718</u>	<u>28.919</u>	
	900.774	54.984	37.059	

ELECCIONES GENERALES PARA EL PERIODO 1983 — 1988

	<i>P. Colorado</i>	<i>P. Lib. Radical</i>	<i>P. Liberal</i>	<i>Nulos</i>
Capital	138.693	8.698	5.746	3.237
Interior	<u>805.944</u>	<u>50.396</u>	<u>23.264</u>	8.018
	944.637	59.094	34.010	<u>11.255</u>

Appendix C: Sample of Voter Registration Card

JUNTA ELECTORAL CENTRAL



LIBRETA
CIVICA

1983 - 1993

BO

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DE

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BOLETIN DE VOTO
ASOCIACION NACIONAL REPUBLICANA
PARTIDO COLORADO

Candidato a Presidente de la República

GENERAL DE EJERCITO

DON ALFREDO STROESSNER

PERIODO 1988 — 1993

- 12.- Cont. Pub.
- 13.- Don Eugeni
- 14.- Don Juan F
- 15.- Don Antonio
- 16.- Don Ricardo
- 17.- Don De los
- 18.- Don Mario

- 1.- Dr. Juan C
- 2.- Dr. Guiller
- 3.- Don Fortun
- 4.- Dr. Alberto
- 5.- Don Eligio
- 6.- Don José D
- 7.- Don Homol
- 8.- Don Eugeni
- 9.- Don Leonar
- 10.- Don Bruno
- 11.- Don Arcadi

- 5.- Dr. Bacón Duarte Prado
- 6.- Dr. Ramón Enrique Reverchon
- 7.- Dr. Ramón Méndez Paiva
- 8.- Dr. Raúl Sapena Pastor
- 9.- Ing. Carlos Díaz de Bedoya
- 10.- Dr. Rubén Ramírez Pane
- 11.- Dr. Antonio Masulli Fúster
- 12.- Dr. Oscar Balmaceda Cruzans
- 13.- Dr. Mario López Escobar
- 14.- Don Ramón Domingo Rojas
- 15.- Ing. Enzo Debernardi
- 16.- Dr. Manfredo Ramírez Russo
- 17.- Dr. Arnaldo Rojas Sánchez
- 18.- Dr. Antonio Colmán Rodríguez

- 22.- Don Pablino Mendoza Espínola
- 23.- Srta. Agustina Miranda González
- 24.- Lic. Perla Matiauda de Cibils
- 25.- Don Juan Francisco Isasi
- 26.- Dr. Braulio Machuca Vargas
- 27.- Don Felipe Matiauda
- 28.- Dr. Víctor Duarte Pistilli
- 29.- Don Guillermo Gaona Orué
- 30.- Don Heriberto Torres
- 31.- Don José María Candia
- 32.- Don Pedro Rodolfo Maciel
- 33.- Don Arnaldo Paredes Soria
- 34.- Don Nicolás Sarubbi
- 35.- Don Dante Cazal
- 36.- Don Isidro Chaparro

SUPLENTE

- 1.- Don Gregorio Gómez
- 2.- Dr. Luis Araujo
- 3.- Don Livio Modesto Flecha
- 4.- Don Ignacio Cárdenas
- 5.- Don Salomón Duarte
- 6.- Don Gilberto Agustín Lichi
- 7.- Dr. Miguel Angel Bestard
- 8.- Don Pedro Celio López
- 9.- Dr. Rodolfo Blaires
- 10.- Don Guillermo Naumann
- 11.- Don Flaminio Arruabarrena

- 12.- Srta. Celia Delgado Von Lepel
- 13.- Don Luis Alberto Romero
- 14.- Don Severiano Cardozo
- 15.- Don Fabio Guerrero
- 16.- Don Federico Fernández Ruiz Díaz
- 17.- Don Reinaldo Cuevas Méndez
- 18.- Don Eligio Guachiré
- 19.- Don Félix Valois Brizuela
- 20.- Don Domingo Campos
- 21.- Don Flaviano Silvio Saucedo

Paraguayan Election Extends

Stroessner's Rule to 8th Term

By Bradley Graham

Washington Post Foreign Service

ASUNCION, Paraguay, Feb. 14—Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, already the Western Hemisphere's longest lasting ruler, today extended his presidential reign for an eighth term in an election branded fraudulent by opposition groups.

Clusters of demonstrators in various cities braved antiriot police forces to protest the lack of democratic freedoms. Several opposition leaders, among them Domingo Laino, were detained briefly for trying to promote an election boycott.

Some foreign observers reported seeing irregularities, including people voting more than

once, a lack of secrecy in polling places and an absence of ballots for some parties at some tables. A Paraguayan newspaper columnist, who went to vote 10 minutes before his local polling place closed, said he was told his name had already been checked off as having voted.

Using the measures that Stroessner's critics say are common here, state security agents clubbed a group that included leading dissidents from the ruling Colorado Party, foreign journalists and a visiting member of the U.S. Democratic Party's foreign affairs institute as they tried to enter the town of Ypacarai, a focus of dissident activity.

Although refusal to vote is subject to a fine,

independent spot checks in numerous districts late today found an abstention rate of 10 to 20 percent. Opposition parties had urged voters either to abstain or to cast blank ballots.

With most of the ballots counted, the electoral center at the Colorado Party headquarters gave Stroessner 89 percent of the vote for another five-year term. Dropping his own ballot in a box this morning, the 75-year-old Army general, who has governed since 1954, said, "This is democracy," and pledged to devote "my energy to the national good."

On a continent that in this decade has seen most other countries restore or maintain dem-

See PARAGUAY, A37, Col. 1.

PARAGUAY, From A29

ocratic rule, Paraguay keeps to an autocratic order. But with the wane of the Stroessner era widely considered to be under way, there are mounting signs of maneuvering both inside and outside the government for influence over the succession.

Since seizing power 34 years ago, Stroessner has ruled by repressing his critics and bestowing favors on his fellow generals and civilian bosses in the Colorado Party. Backers extol the political stability and economic growth that the Stroessner years have brought, particularly in contrast with the warring and chaos that ravaged Paraguay earlier this century.

But a recent economic slowdown, following completion in the early 1980s of the mammoth Itaipu dam on the border with Brazil, has sapped the government's strength. Street marches protesting low salaries and political oppression erupted in 1986 for the first time in years.

The country's Roman Catholic bishops have started pressing for a transition to democracy as have business leaders demanding economic modernization. The United States has become more critical of Paraguay's human rights violations and performance in controlling drug traffic.

Even the Colorado Party, long a monolith of power with 1.4 million members in a nation of 3.7 million people, has split into bitter factions over the issue of one-man rule. Militant supporters of Stroessner ousted so-called traditionalists from influence last year.

Despite efforts to inject spontaneity into what virtually has become a ritualistic process, Stroessner's reelection campaign was dogged by a sense of exhaustion. At the final party rally here Thursday night, pro-Stroessner forces failed to pack Independence Plaza. Organizers claimed 150,000 attended but diplomats and other independent observers put the number at under 50,000.

Stroessner addressed only three major campaign rallies in the last six weeks. At the last one, he read a perfunctory message on the gains of the past three decades—more

schools, hospitals and power transmission lines.

Two other candidates representing the tiny parties that participate in government with the Colorados provided token opposition to Stroessner in today's balloting. A man-on-the-street survey in a local newspaper found no one able to give the name of either. The two, Carlos Ferreira Ibarra of the Liberal Party and Luis Maria Vega of the Liberal Radical Party—also ran for Congress.

The official election result contrasted sharply with a nationwide political opinion survey by the Catholic University in late January. The poll showed 43 percent intending to vote for the Colorado Party, 31 percent planning to abstain and 11 percent saying they would cast blank ballots. Another survey taken by the university three years ago produced similar breakdowns in political leanings.

Asked in the recent poll if a "climate of unrest" existed in Paraguay, 53 percent said "yes," and a majority blamed either the government or the Colorado Party leadership for it. Asked to name the person most capable of leading Paraguay, 48 percent declined to respond. Among those who answered, Stroessner ranked first but Laino, 52, an attorney and leader of the officially unrecognized Authentic Liberal Radical Party, came in second.

"We could say that the citizenry has assumed more the role of a spectator than a protagonist," concluded the study. "It is as if the public attends a spectacle without the power to affect the outcome."

Attempts by Paraguay's small opposition groups to build their bases of support have been frustrated by police repression of public rallies and frequent temporary detentions of leading dissidents. Political and personality differences among the opposition also have gotten in the way of a unified strategy for challenging Stroessner.

Efforts by the Catholic Church to promote unity have reached an impasse. A church-sponsored "national dialogue" drew together political, labor and social groups—except the Colorado Party, which refused to participate. Its report in December was highly critical of Stroessner's regime. The church reached a point where it didn't know what more it could do with the dialogue process," said Ilde Silvero, editor of the episcopate's daily paper, Sendero.

Given the opposition's weak condition, many here see the main hope for democratic transition resting

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The Washington Times

SMITH HEMPSTONE

The general just keeps rolling along

No messy caucuses, boring debates, exhausting primaries or demeaning press conferences for him. Gen. Alfredo Stroessner wins his presidential elections — as he did Sunday, for his eighth five-year term — the old-fashioned way: He steals them.

Although he gave precisely three speeches in the election campaign, nearly complete returns at the electoral center of his ruling Colorado Party give Gen. Stroessner, the 75-year-old son of an immigrant Bavarian brewmaster and a Guaraní Indian woman, 89 percent of the vote.

This is interpreted by the credulous as further evidence that Gen. Stroessner has miraculous powers, including that of raising the dead to vote for him. After all, an authoritative public opinion poll conducted by Asuncion's Catholic University and the West German Naumann Foundation, published just before the election, showed the president with 43 percent support, while an equal percentage indicated their intention of abstaining or spoiling their ballots (government employees get fired if they don't vote early and often).

Indeed, he has been around so long that most Paraguayans can neither remember nor imagine their California-sized country without Gen. Stroessner at the helm. When he seized power in 1954, Asuncion was a sleepy, flea-bitten river town that boasted neither running water nor electricity.

When Gen. Stroessner signed his first presidential proclamation, Dwight D. Eisenhower was at play on the presidential putting green, Chubby Checkers was rocking around the clock and Mickey Mantle was roaming centerfield for the Yankees. The French army was bogged down in a place called Indochina, the first commercial jet flight had not yet roared down the runway and American public schools were still segregated.

Most of the authoritarian rulers of the 1950s — Mao Tse-tung, Nikita

Khrushchev, Fulgencio Batista, Juan Peron, Rafael Trujillo, Anastasio Somoza, Haile Selassie, William Tubman, Ho Chi Minh and Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier — have long since gone to their graves. Only North Korea's Kim Il Sung and Jordan's King Hussein have ruled longer than Gen. Stroessner.

Like Old Man River, the general just keeps rolling along, ruling by an emergency decree in force since 1923, which he lifts every five years, regular as the cuckoo clocks he collects, to hold a fraudulent presidential election from which he emerges victorious. How to explain this remarkable durability in an age of instant communications and constant change?

It is not enough to say that he has dealt ruthlessly with his enemies, democratic and authoritarian. Of course he has, but less so than others who have long since disappeared from the scene.

It is not enough to say that his popular elections — the only ones, by the way, ever held in Paraguay — are crooked. Of course they are, but the odds are that he could have won fair ones, had he been willing to risk them.

The sad fact is that, despite the lack of meaningful political freedom and the presence of official corruption so pervasive that it matches that of the Philippines, Mexico or Zaire, Gen. Stroessner happens to be the best and most-effective president landlocked Paraguay has had in its 177-year history.

In some ways, of course, that says more about the quality of Paraguay's presidents — most of whom have been bad, mad or both — than it does about Gen. Stroessner's statesmanship.

The republic's first president, Jose Rodriguez, who ruled for 26 years, affected a Roman toga, banned travel to and from Paraguay, prohibited foreign trade and cut off the mails.

Another 19th-century president, Francisco Solano Lopez, who suffered from a Napoleon complex and an Irish mistress, took on Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina in the disas-



Alfredo Stroessner

trous War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), which neither he nor 85 percent of Paraguay's males survived.

It required a return to polygamy — the church averted its eyes — and Herculean efforts on the part of the country's 28,000 males (221,000 women survived) to get the population back in balance again. Today, Paraguay has a population of 3.8 million, with another 1 million Paraguayans living abroad.

From 1904 to 1936, Paraguay has 22 presidents, several civil wars and innumerable coups. In the 1930s, another president got the republic embroiled in the senseless Chaco War with Bolivia, which cost the lives of another 100,000 Paraguayans.

In one 18-month period just before Gen. Stroessner's bloodless coup, Paraguay was afflicted with no fewer than five presidents. The point is that the task at hand is not to restore democracy in Paraguay but to create conditions under which it just

might, with luck and for the first time, take root.

Perhaps the only good thing to come out of the War of the Triple Alliance was the destruction of the Spanish ruling class. As a consequence, most of Paraguay's elite, like Gen. Stroessner, have some Guaraní blood, and almost all speak Guaraní in addition to Spanish. Almost alone among the Latin American nations, Paraguay's Indians are not a sub-human, powerless, submerged mass: They are the nation.

The dictator has given his country international peace, internal order and a modest degree of economic development. It will be up to his successors to destroy the great smuggling rings that have corrupted Paraguayan public life and private morals, and to encourage the development of democratic institutions.

Gen. Stroessner clearly has many faults, and certainly has overstayed his welcome. But he will not be replaced easily.

Smith Hempstone is a nationally syndicated columnist.

“Quiero ser punto de contacto entre EE.UU. y Paraguay”

El doctor Richard Soudriette, director de la oficina del congresista norteamericano James. M. Inhofe, quien vino invitado por el Gobierno nacional expresó que “hoy es un día muy importante, yo vine con muchas ganas de observar cómo está el proceso actual en la capital y también en las ciudades de afuera. Mi interés es ver cómo hace la gente cuando entra al lugar de votación, cual es el sistema con las libretas, cual es el sistema de dar las tarjetas de votación, si hay lugares donde se pueda votar en secreto, cosas así, y también tengo mucho interés para ver cómo es el proceso para contar los votos, y a qué hora van a saber los resultados”.

Manifestó también el visitante norteamericano que para él era muy importante su visita a nuestro país, porque “yo quiero volver a Estados Unidos y ser un punto de contacto entre el Congreso nuestro y el Paraguay y estoy también aquí porque creo que Paraguay y Estados Unidos son buenos amigos”.

Con relación a la importancia de las presentes elecciones generales señaló que “nosotros creemos mucho en la democracia y es importante que todos en los Estados

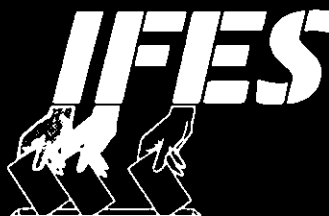
Unidos sepan que hay un proceso democrático. Puedo decir que hay mucha diferencia entre nuestro sistema actual y lo de ustedes, pero eso es lógico, porque cada país tiene su propia idiosincrasia. Otra cosa que yo creo importante es invitar a parlamentarios de otros países a que vengán aquí a observar, porque este es comienzo de un proceso muy importante que espero va a continuar en el futuro y creo también importante que vayan gentes de aquí a observar nuestras elecciones en noviembre”.



Dr. Richard Soudriette, norteamericano: “Esto es un proceso que espero continúe en el futuro”.

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