

## PRESS RELEASE

Friday, July 14, 1978

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PARAGUAYAN OPPOSITION LEADER ABDUCTED

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON STROESSNER GOVERNMENT

International pressure on the government of Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay is mounting as political leaders and organizations worldwide express their deep concern for the safety and freedom of Domingo Laino, Vice-President of the Authentic Liberal Radical Party of Paraguay. The opposition leader was dragged from his car, beaten, and abducted by plain-clothes government agents at 4pm on July 7, less than 24 hours after his return from a visit to the United States, where he met with high Administration and State Department officials on the human rights situation in Paraguay.

The forceful and immediate response to the abduction by officials of the United States Government and the O.A.S., as well as the telegrams sent by such figures as Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the FRG, Prime Minister Mario Soares of Portugal, and Willy Brandt, President of the Socialist International and the German SDP, is seen by observers as the factor which pressured the Paraguayan government's Department of Investigations even to admit that it is holding Laino.

The Paraguayan leader is still being held incommunicado, and, according to the government there, is being questioned with regard to his past involvement with "leftist elements." Laino's jailers have accepted a package of food and clothing from his wife, and have allowed her to see him briefly, but they have given no assurances about his condition or the disposition of the proceedings against him.

The active and open concern of the United States Government, and in particular that of the U.S. Ambassador, Robert White, is, with good reason, a source of serious worry to the Stroessner Regime. The recent State Department statement denouncing Laino's arrest contains the harshest words the Carter Administration has ever had for Paraguay.

Informed sources in Washington confirm that U.S. officials hold the Paraguayan opposition leader and statesman in the highest regard, and that they can only view his continued repression as an indication that optimism about improvement in Paraguay's human rights situation was misplaced. The fate of future U.S. aid to Paraguay will certainly hinge on this crucial test of the Stroessner government's respect for the rights of its citizens.

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There is also serious concern over Laino's abduction among officials of the Organization of American States. These officials note that the Paraguayan Government's action clearly violates resolutions, adopted at the most recent session of the General Assembly, which establish safeguards for persons who have testified before OAS bodies about human rights violations in their countries. It further violates the Rules of Procedure of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. The Commission has sent a cable to the Paraguayan government asking what charges, if any, have been brought against Laino, and asking that a doctor and lawyer chosen by the Laino family be allowed to see the jailed opposition leader.

The kidnapping of Laino is reminiscent of the disappearance of Dr. Agustin Goiburú, leader of the MOPOCO faction of the official Colorado Party of Paraguay. Dr. Goiburú was granted political asylum by Peron's administration in Argentina, but disappeared on February 8, 1977. It is strongly believed that he was spirited back to Asuncion by Paraguayan secret agents acting in collaboration with Argentine intelligence officers. There are well-founded reports that he was submitted to intense torture which he probably did not survive.

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