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DISCREPANCY IN HOW LIMA'S FIFTEEN
TERRORIST VIOLENCE, AND THE VARIATIONS DO
THE PAPER'S GENERAL IDEOLOGICAL OR
TOP-DOWN DAILY "LA CRONICA" WHICH
NOT INvariably MODERATE, TENDS THE GOVERNMENT LINE BY
ADVISING ALARMIST FRONT-PAGE HEADLINES ON THE LATEST
ATTACKS YET THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS TAKES A HIGHLY
SENSATIONALISTIC APPROACH, IN APPARENT DIRECT
CONTRADICTION OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT WANTS FOR
INSTANCE, "MONTAÑA" OWNED BY DAS AMBASSADOR AND GARCIA
CONFIDANTE LUIS GONZALEZ POLITICAL BUNK FRONT-PAGE BANNER
HEADLINES ("ARMY MAJOR MURDERED-NEW DEPARTED TERRORIST
ATTACK") AND PHOTOS OF BLOODY, BULLET-RIDDEN CORPSES
LIKEWISE, LEFTIST "LA REPUBLICA" INvariably GIVES
PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 03488
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USIA FOR AN
SECSTATE FOR ARA/AND, AMBASSADOR BREMER S/CT
USCINCPAC FOR SUGRO

E.O. 12356 DECL. OADR
SUBJECT: TERRORISM AND THE PERUVIAN MEDIA

THE CONSERVATIVE AND CENTER-RIGHT DAILIES EXHIBIT A
SIMILAR SCHIZOPHRENIA. "EXPRESSO", A RESPECTED
CENTER-RIGHT DAILY, GAVE THE MURDER OF PERUVIAN
BUSINESSMAN JORGE MORALEZ A FRONT-PAGE BANNER HEADLINE
AND A GRAPHIC PHOTO. CONSERVATIVE, INFLUENTIAL "EL
COMERCIO", ON THE OTHER HAND, GIVES FRONT PAGE COVERAGE
TO MAJOR ATTACKS, BUT WITHOUT PHOTOS, WITH MUTED
HEADLINES, AND IN LESS PROMINENT POSITIONS.

THE ENIGMA IN ALL THIS IS "OJO", LIMA'S MOST POPULAR
DAILY, A TABLOID WHICH DELIGHTS IN COVERAGE OF THE
BIZARRE, THE RISCUE, AND THE VIOLENT. WHILE BANNIS
HEADLINES LIKE "FALSE MORN RAPER IS GIRL" ARE COMMON,
"OJO" NEVER FRONT-PAGES AND BARELY BURNS PHOTOS OF
TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

1. THE PERUVIAN MEDIA ONCE AGAIN FACE THE WRENCHING
QUESTION OF HOW TO REPORT ON THE ACTIONS OF PERU'S TWO
TERRORIST GROUPS, SENDERO LUMINOSO (SL) AND THE TUPAC
AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA). PERUVIAN NEWS
COVERAGE TENDS TOWARD SENSATIONALISM AT THE BEST OF
TIMES, AND THE DAILY PORTION OF VIOLENCE SERVED UP BY
THE TERRORISTS IS DIFFICULT FOR THE MEDIA TO RESIST. SO
WHEN SL FIRST BURST ONTO THE SCENE IN LIMA, COVERAGE OF
ITS ACTIONS WAS EXTENSIVE AND GRAPHIC AND, INTENTIONALLY
OR NOT, FIT RIGHT INTO THE TERRORISTS' PLANS. (AN
AUGUST 1986 SL DOCUMENT STAFFLY UNDERLINED THE ROLE OF
THE MEDIA IN TERRORIST STRATEGY. "THE CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE CAPITAL PERMIT ACTIONS WITH GREAT REPERCUSSIONS
... GIVEN THE CONCENTRATION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS
MEDIA.")

2. PERCEIVING THIS, EARLY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION
PRESIDENT ALAN GARCIA MET WITH OWNERS AND EDITORS OF THE
MAJOR MEDIA OUTLETS IN LIMA TO ASK THAT COVERAGE OF
TERRORIST ACTIONS BE AS MODERATE AS POSSIBLE. MOST OF
HIS INTERLOCUTORS AGREED AND BEGAN TO TONE DOWN
COVERAGE. THAT "IDENT. LIMA'S AGREEMENT" WORKED
SUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME, BUT THEN BEGAN TO STRAY
DOWN. TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST PROMINENT PERUVIANS
HAVE GENERATED HEAVY COVERAGE, AND SPECTACULAR TERRORIST
TACTICS LIKE CITY-WIDE BLACKOUTS IN LIMA NATURALLY
INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC ATTENTION AND ENCOURAGE
FURTHER SENSATIONALISM. IN RESPONSE, SOME MEMBERS OF
THE MEDIA HAVE INCREASED THEIR COVERAGE, WHILE OTHERS
HAVE TAKEN TO EDITORIAL DRIPPING AGAINST THE
COLLEAGUES. "YELLOW JOURNALISM" IN FEBRUARY
PARAGUAYANA TELEVISION ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD CONVINCE
A MEETING OF MEDIA LEADERS TO CONFRONT THIS PROBLEM AND
TO ENCOURAGE MORE RESPONSIBLE COVERAGE. ALTHOUGH THERE
WAS NO FURTHER PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON THE MATTER.

4. TELEVISION
BECAUSE OF THE SIZE OF ITS AUDIENCE AND THE POTENCY OF
ITS IMAGES, TELEVISION COULD BE AN EFFECTIVE "ALLY" OF
THE TERRORISTS. ACCIDENTALLY, THE GOP HAS MADE A SPECIAL
EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE OWNERS AND NEWS DIRECTORS OF
LIMA'S SEVEN STATIONS TO TONE THINGS DOWN. ACCORDING TO
RICARDO MULLER, DIRECTOR OF LIMA'S POPULAR AND
SENSATIONALISTIC CHANNEL 7 NEWS, COVERAGE OF TERRORISM
WHEN SL FIRST BEGAN AND LIMA ATTACKS WAS COMPLETELY
UNRESTRAINED. WHEN PRESIDENT GARCIA BEGAN HIS
CONVERSATIONS WITH TELEVISION EXECUTIVES, MOST OF THE
STATIONS WERE READY TO ADMIT THAT THEY HAD GONE TOO
FAR. AN INFORMAL AGREEMENT REACHED IN 1985 ESTABLISHED
BASIC NORMS FOR NEWS STORIES ON TERRORISM. THEY WOULD
LAST NO MORE THAN ONE MINUTE, WOULD BE RUN IN THE SECOND
HALF OF THE NEWS SHOW, AND WOULD NOT BE GIVEN A
SENSATIONAL HEADLINE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOW. THE
EXECUTIVES DID NOT AGREE TO USE BOLD GRAPHIC IMAGES AND
BLOODY CORPSES. REMAIN A STAPLE OF TELEVISION, AS THEY
ARE OF THE PRINT MEDIA.

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...SHIP, WHICH IS AN UNLIKELY
...URE IS THE GOP'S MOST POWERFUL
... USE IF THE CURRENT WAVE OF
... FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE GOP
... LET THE DOLLIES RUN AWAY AS LONG AS THE

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FOR NOW, WE SEEM TO HAVE SUCCEEDED. ALTHOUGH NEWS SHOWS USUALLY GIVE AT LEAST TWO MINUTES TO STORIES ON TERRORISM, THE ITEMS ARE NOT PLACED FIRST (MULLER'S CHANNEL 2 RAN A RECENT ASSASSINATION STORY THIRD, WHILE THE BEST PLACED IT HALFWAY THROUGH THE PROGRAM) AND ARE NOT GIVEN ALARMING HEADLINES.

5. RADIO

THOUGH IT IS AN IMPORTANT MEDIUM IN PERU, RADIO LACKS THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF TV OR PRESS AND PLAYS A LESS PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DEBATE ON TERRORISM.

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OTHER RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS SHOWS DO NOT ALWAYS MAKE THAT DISTINCTION, BUT REPORTS OF THIS KIND ARE BECOMING LESS AND LESS COMMON.

NEVERTHELESS, RADIO DOES FIT INTO TERRORIST STRATEGY. BOTH IN LIMA AND IN THE PROVINCES, STATIONS ARE FREQUENTLY TAKEN OVER TEMPORARILY AND FORCED TO BROADCAST POLITICAL MESSAGES.

6. EDITORIAL COMMENTS

ONLY RADICAL FRINGE PUBLICATIONS APOLOGIZE FOR TERRORISM, AND EVEN THEY DO SO SUBTLY. AMONG THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA, EDITORIAL COMMENTARY UNIFORMLY EXCORIATES TERRORISM, AND THE SENSATIONALIST LEFTIST AND CENTER-LEFT DOLLIES SPICE UP THEIR HEADLINES WITH CONDEMNATORY SUBTITLES LIKE "NO MORE BLOOD" AND "TOWARDS MURDER".

7. SUMMARY

AS IS PERHAPS INEVITABLE IN A DEMOCRACY, MEDIA LEADERS HAVE NOT ARRIVED AT A REAL CONSENSUS ON WHAT IS THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN PERU'S TERRORIST CRISIS. THE

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