

TERRORISM: RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

An Experience. Some Thoughts

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This paper was prepared with the endeavor in mind of trying to answer specific questions—posed by the H.F. Guggenheim Foundation for a week-long seminar on the subject, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in October 1987—about the possible contributions of independent (academic and journalistic) research to policy makers on the subject of terrorism. The questions covered the general as well as the particular level: What should be the ideal relationship between academic research and policy making as far as terrorism is concerned? And, How could or would my own research contribute in that respect?

The concerns that were first elaborated in some of the papers, were further discussed during the seminar in Santa Fe. Some of the markedly different approaches were the subject of sometimes intense, but very illuminating discussions. This paper reflects my attempt to address those questions.

I

The besieged or beleaguered rulers call on their wise men for enlightened help. That has seldom led to the ruler's disappointment, although it is hard to say the same for the wise ones.

Then why not call the learned people to help shape public policy toward terrorism? After all, few phenomena would seem more in need of a close cooperation between the practical concerns of policy-making, with the presumably broader and deeper interests of academic research, than terrorism. As in every situation in which a society feels itself under certain peril, answers and practical solutions are demanded of its thinkers. The terrorism problem, however ambiguous or abused the term may be, is no exception.

There would be many fields in academic research from which policy-makers could benefit with additional knowledge, advice or both. Such fields might range from psychological profiles of individual terrorists within a given violent organization, to thorough research of the organization's group dynamics and/or history, to comparative research about different terrorist groups. The causes of social violence, and the circumstances that tend to diminish or smother the violent response would be of interest as would comparative studies on the effectiveness of terrorist actions as the main strategy or as part of a wider one. And much can be learned about the better approaches to counter-terrorism or insurgency.

All of the above, and certainly more aspects, would benefit from further research. And most, if not all of them, address very concrete concerns of governments. It seems obvious to me that, insofar as terrorism is concerned, most governments that confront its threat need very much the approach both fresher and deeper, that independent academic research can provide.

There are, of course, specific forms of research which governments tend to prefer. As a rule, the more concrete and action-oriented, the better. That kind of expectation--from a government's perspective--is probably well illustrated by the ideal picture of, say, psychologists probing the hidden spiritual injuries of captured terrorists, in order to find a pattern which would allow predicting, pinpointing, and preempting. But they also know that any well done research in matters related to their concerns will ultimately be of help both to immediate decision-making and to longer range policy planning. From that stand-point, pressure on research may be felt as legitimate, and to try to comply with it, may also be felt to be in society's best interests; especially if not doing so, may mean a far greater evil than infringing on the propriety of research methods.

But I think that the important questions come the other way around: is academic research on terrorism helped or harmed by a close working relationship with a given government? In my opinion, the problem lies there: in the relationship between governments and academics on terrorism-related problems, the policy-makers have everything to benefit from, unless they have unrealistic expectations about the immediate application and/or use of most of the research.

But the social scientists, historians and otherwise bona fide intellectuals are those who should be quite wary of the damage potential of such a relationship

If ethical and methodological problems are important issues in social research in general, particular attention should be paid to them in research that deals with insurgency, terrorism. Besides moral reasoning, these issues have to do, among other things, with the quality of scholarship on terrorism, with not only preserving intellectual freedom, but with maintaining and, if possible, increasing a wide and different range of sources, without contaminating research with suspicions or certitudes about the non-academic, state security endeavors of the researcher.

The problems of government-academic relationship in this field, have different forms, dimensions and relevance according to the specific kind of research on terrorism. The different types of which range from a focused, individualized, in-depth research on an existing terrorist organization, using essentially primary sources, to comparative historical research that relies on available bibliography. Each approach poses different problems, but it is evident that the focused, contemporary, primary-source one, is where the terms of the relation of the independent researcher with a given government become a critical issue. It has several points in common with the work of a certain kind of investigative journalism, and partakes of its problems too. I will try to identify some of them, stemming from my own journalistic experience in the concrete circumstance of covering and doing simultaneous research on an ongoing insurrection.

I would like to say from the beginning that I don't pretend to have a definitive answer to several of the questions I pose. Some of them have been a permanent worry to me in my work as a journalist, whose relevance, I felt, grew in direct proportion to the depth of my eventual research of specific, sensitive information which a journalist, rather than an academic, is apt to get. But most concerns cover ground that is, I think, common to both.

Serious research on contemporary terrorist organizations has several specific problems. It seems to be mixed--at least from the perspective of an interested journalist--with a larger output of hurried, poorly researched, or slightly disguised pamphleteer work. Probably some of the reasons are that the subject is hazardous in itself, that good, reliable data is very hard to get, at least through standard research methods, and because of the ill-defined boundaries between such investigation and

more practically oriented state security work. Actual research has to tread in this rather undefined and often ambiguous area, one of the most important aspects of which is the definition of terrorism itself.

Dozens of governments, with many different ways of addressing opposition, dissension, human rights, confront some form of rebellious violence or disobedience which are often labelled as "terrorism". Several, if not most, of these governments, have been able to enlist the help of a certain number of their psychologists, psychiatrists, social scientists and, well, journalists--and seldom in high-minded ways

The participation of physicians, for instance, in torture in many countries has been one of the gravest concerns of human rights organizations and of concerned physicians, too¹. The use has been more specialized in the USSR, at least in the pre-"Glasnost" era, through the infamous role of psychiatry as a weapon against dissent, insofar as state security assumed that dissent was in itself a sickness². Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle* is another account of a certain specific relationship between scientific research and state security.

Under certain circumstances, therefore, the cooperation between academic knowledge and state security (rather than public policy) is liable to become a "Marathon Man" kind of nightmare.

If we are ready to part company with the communist governments, that still leaves the West. As a category, it sounds nicer. Unfortunately, it includes many governments which are not so nice

Take the Argentinian generals, for instance. If we are to believe Jacobo Timmerman's testimony about his imprisonment and torture at the height of the so-called "Dirty War" (1974-79), the generals had an almost obsessive fixation against psycholo-

¹ See, for instance, *Torture in the Eighties: An Amnesty International Report*; Amnesty International, 1984. Also, *Human Rights in Chile: The Role of the Medical Profession*; Amnesty International, July 1986; and Robert Kirschner, "The Use of Drugs in Torture and Human Rights Abuses", *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, December 1984.

² See Charles Jyd, "Psychiatry: A New Form of Repression", in *S.O.S. Torture*; #3, 37-39 rue de Vermont, Geneva 1202; Albert Jonsen and Leonard Sagan, "Torture and the Ethics of Medicine" and Walter Reich, "The World of Soviet Psychiatry" in Eric Stover and Elena Nightingale, eds., *The Breaking of Bodies and Minds* (New York: W.A. Freeman, 1985).

gists and psychiatrists³ As Timmerman writes, scores were brutally arrested by the then familiar heavily armed men moving about in the Ford Falcons without plates. Then the endless torture . . . as it is, paranoid rulers tend to have lethal phobias and obsessions. However, even in that reality there were a number of professionals (including psychologists and priests), helping to keep prisoners alive and minimally articulate, so that interrogation could go on⁴. These examples may be thought of as far-fetched, but they point out the relation between state security concerns and expert knowledge, which has a relevance when discussing the possible ways whereby academic research may suggest policy-making options on terrorism to governments. So, probably one of the first preoccupations in this field should be the ways in which academic research on terrorism might be related to expert help on the mechanisms of state security.

Another important and related question is whether the working definition of terrorism includes state terrorism or not. If it does, the whole approach about the contributions of academic research on terrorism to a state that uses terrorism on a partial or comprehensive way, on its internal or external front, or that -while not committed to state terrorism itself, cooperates with states or groups that do- becomes problematic, to say the least.

There are other, less harmful, cases, when the interaction between a government and academics may be used as an instrument to achieve other purposes, such as helping a given government to legitimize itself; or, for instance, trying to influence tacitly the accepted working definition of "terrorism". An example may come in handy here: at the end of August 1987, the Chilean Ministry of the Interior and one Chilean university organized an international conference on "terrorism". Among the participants was, for instance, Juan Maria Bordaberry, the Uruguayan former President, who handed over power to the Military at the beginning of 1970, just before the height of the counter-insurgency drive against the Tupamaros. For several years after the Tupamaros had ceased to be the slightest threat, Uruguay's Democracy--the longest living in South America--was a casualty of the military

³ Jacobo Timmerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), Chapter 8.

⁴ On state terrorism see *Nunca Mas: The Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986).

Another participant was the Peruvian retired general Luis Cisneros, an important military politician whose continuous notoriety stems from his role as outspoken advocate of the use of indiscriminate violence as the main counterinsurgency tool. He has affirmed in an interview⁵ that in order to defeat the Shining Path insurgency, it is not only acceptable, but probably necessary, to kill 57 innocent people among every 60 dead, to eliminate 3 Shining Path cadre.

It is clear that the not too subtle purpose of the organizers of such an event was to influence to some extent the working definition of "terrorism", stressing it as a form of warfare in the East-West confrontation, in such a way to help legitimize at least some of the policies of the host government, which in that case meant the dictatorial rule of the Pinochet regime. They have, certainly, their own ideas about "how the West can win", and also their own peculiar interpretation of what Western values are. Among those who think of terrorism as a shadowy and violent expression in the confrontation between communism and anti-communism, they consider themselves the pragmatic and clear-headed lot. It is also clear, however, that when they refer to state-sponsored terrorism, they are not prepared to speak about the Orlando Letelier assassination, for instance.

Moral aspects aside, there is a conceptual problem too. How to cooperate or even interact on terrorism matters with governments that themselves resort to state terrorism on a systematic or even an occasional basis? To do so would mean to make an artificial distinction between the object of study (terrorism) with some of the actual policies of the government, thereby risking an almost inevitable distortion of the disciplinary approach to the subject. Intellectual perspective, distance and objectivity become compromised, and the scientific approach to the study of terrorism may well suffer in a substantial way.

As most academics and intellectuals in general regret the existence of unsavory governments--although some may consider them a necessary evil--they would probably feel the need to narrow the scope to what would be judged acceptable in terms of government-academic research relations about terrorism-related fields.

But even if a rough agreement is possible on what acceptable governments are (probably governments that do not torture on a systematic basis, that do not kill people

⁵ "Quilacur" #20, 1983.

without, at least a previous trial, and whose rulers are elected and somehow accountable), I am afraid several problems of the government-scholar relationship still linger on.

Most of the ethical problems of social research in general are relevant to research on terrorism, even under the best of circumstances. This applies especially to research on existing organizations, more than to comparative or historical research. Herbert Kelman, who has examined at length "the ethical problems surrounding social research with their direct implications for human freedom" ⁶ points out that one of the potential sources of ethical trouble arises from the fact that, "... those who produce social research--both the research sponsors and the investigators--are in a position to gain some relative advantage from it." ⁷ Government-sponsored research on terrorism is sure to try to get, not "some relative" but every possible advantage from it, or to try to make it fit specific needs. That will probably affect the research itself, especially certain aspects of it, like interviews with members of clandestine organizations, as an organized group is unlikely to place itself willingly at a disadvantage--or such research may simply be hazardous to the researcher.

The problem of research on existing clandestine organizations--which is a great part of the research on terrorism--is that at some point they must be asked to open up, to give information. If that request is backed up by the sponsorship of a certain government, it is likely that the subjects will find it hard to make the distinction between academic and police or intelligence work. The outcome can be, at its best, a distortion of the data or the availability of information for present or future research. As this is almost self-evident, research tied up to policy-making aims in the sphere of terrorism-guerrilla, insurgency, has sometimes opted to conceal totally or partially the identity of the sponsor or the aim of the research.

That kind of research means a form of involvement which departs from normal practice of social science. As Kelman points out, "Such involvements, however, are by no means the norm among social scientists; in some fundamental respects, they go

⁶ Herbert Kelman, "The Rights of the Subject in Social Research: An Analysis in Terms of Relative Power and Legitimacy", *American Psychologist*, November 1972

⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 1007.

against the norms of the social science community, particularly if they involve secrecy, misrepresentation, and violation of confidentiality" ⁸

Another problem—that pertains to both the specific and comparative approach—arises from research whose methodology remains within the framework of social science, and whose findings are open, but which is formulated under the sponsorship and within the framework of concrete points of interest of a governmental agency. The ill-fated "Project Camelot" is perhaps the classic example. ⁹ Although it may be open to discussion whether this U.S. Army sponsored project set out to answer legitimate social science concerns, the fact is that it was perceived as a tool in the counter-insurgency efforts of the U.S.A. in Latin America during the 1960s. Obviously, the outcry that ensued did not help very much subsequent anthropological research

A slightly different problem arises when legitimate, open academic concerns, carried out within an academic environment, are partially or totally funded by certain government agencies. An example that comes to mind is that of Harvard Professor Nadav Safran who was at the center of a controversy in late 1985, when it was disclosed that a conference on Middle Eastern Affairs he had organized, was funded in part by the C.I.A. At that time, it was felt that not only future research in the Middle East could be harmed, but that some of the participants of the conference would be in rather uncomfortable positions in their home countries.

The above are, to my mind, some of the problems, ethical and practical, that may accrue from the relationship between academic research and governments in terrorism-related fields. The fact that any academic research on existing organizations is bound to be conducted in proximity to other kinds of investigation, such as police or intelligence work, should be another reason to draw a careful distinction between each of them ¹⁰.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 1011.

⁹ See I.L. Horowitz, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1967).

¹⁰ A caveat here: during the Santa Fe Conference on the subject (October 1987), two high ranking government officials from the United States Government had some rather unexpected arguments to offer, from the government's point of view, in favor of academic independence. Mr. David Long from the State Department argued that the result from a too close relationship with certain academic experts on terrorism had been the unforeseen constitution of an "old boys network" of experts, where original thoughts had become the exception and predictability the rule. It was, in his perception, a rather incestuous situation.

Granted that in open, democratic societies, where the potential leverage of the government over individuals is usually limited, intellectual freedom is bound to suffer less when consulting or working for the government on terrorism-related matters, and perhaps a case can be made for the ways and forms of relationship between independent researchers and governmental agencies to be more flexible. But even then the ideal of free scientific inquiry is, in general terms, much better served by maintaining a distance from policy makers and by interacting with them preferentially through the open vehicles of communication: published material, open seminars and conferences.

II

I find, especially in the data gathering stages of research that involves a fair amount of field work, that the situation is not very dissimilar to the kind of problems that journalism faces in a more acute, readily perceptible form. The points in common between journalistic work and intelligence gathering are all too obvious. This is one of the reasons why journalism makes an excellent cover for espionage. With some kinds of journalism, such as investigative reporting, the distinction becomes even more difficult. Because of that, ethical and methodological problems have been subject to extensive elaboration, and perhaps a closer look to them could help to clarify some of the same difficulties facing academic research on terrorism vis à vis policy making.

To maintain the crucial distinctions between journalistic and intelligence endeavors, in as clear cut a way as possible, has long been recognized, among journalists, as critical, not only for the profession itself, but also to democratic society as a whole. Indeed, one of the ways to measure democracy in a given society, is to assess the independence of journalism from government-related concerns. The ideal relationship between a democratic government and journalism, should be one of creative tension, even at the risk of promoting some cases of adversary relationship.

Mr. Larry Ropka, from the Defense Department was more emphatic. He stressed that in his opinion the best way for academics to relate with government would be to maintain "independence and distance". That way, he added, a fresh perspective, laden with original thought would more likely emerge.

Mr. Long, however, -himself an academic- had not a very high opinion of what he called the academic "virgins", who wouldn't relate with government even through a ten-foot pole. His metaphors made it clear that if he didn't favor the intellectual equivalent of promiscuity -much less incestuous promiscuity- he wouldn't agree either with stalwart chastity. His could perhaps be called the "once in a while" approach. Mr. Ropka's position, on the other hand, held that it was a good thing for academics to keep their flower.

However natural this seems now, especially in the post-Watergate era, it should be noted that this has been more often the exception rather than the rule; and that all too often journalism has surrendered its very independence in favor of interest group or government-related goals. Even one of the most prestigious fields of journalism: war correspondence, historically has very rarely had objectivity as one of its distinctions ¹¹

I think that at this point I may take a closer examination of the Peruvian insurrection, at least with regard to this paper's concerns

It is not necessary to look too closely at the Shining Path insurrection to realize that the Peruvian State is in great need of any help it can get.

From its modest and rather incongruous beginning, the Senderista insurrection has grown, year after year, both in number of actions, territory and population affected by it. What seemed at first a crazy little war has evolved, within a relatively short span of time, into a conflict that may destroy democracy and possibly plunge the country into civil war.

Violence has already done much structural damage. The trivialization of death has been one of the consequences. The threshold of outrage, horror and shock has varied much. People do not get moved anymore by single deaths, unless it is the death of a prominent individual. But, at the same time, assassinations and other forms of terror, continue to fulfill their specific role, they do not scandalize anymore, but they do scare in a more personal way. Callousness and fear co-exist well together.

Still, it continues to be a peculiar war. One of the most striking aspects of which is the very clouded understanding of it on the part of the Peruvian State, including the military, and also the non-governing Peruvian elites. Part of this is owed to the fact, I suppose, that the strategic horizon is much more difficult to fathom in guerrilla warfare than in conventional armed conflicts, but it is more than that.

The lack of understanding of the insurrection covers both facts and concepts. There is no agreement even on who or what the insurgents are. There is widespread ignorance about the Shining Path's strategic and tactical aims, as well as with its

¹¹ Best work on war correspondents is Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (Andre Deutsch, 1975).

strength, numbers, and organization--not to mention the lack of knowledge about the internal dynamics of the organization and the identities of the second and third-tier leadership. As most of that information was relatively available, it appears that while a part of the intelligence mistakes may have been due to honest incompetence, others were a way of camouflaging corruption.

So, in practical terms, the Peruvian government is in dire need of useful advice to stem the growth of the insurgency and to defeat it. As a struggling democracy, with clear credentials in that respect, groping to find a way and to survive in a part of the world where democracy has generally been the exception rather than the rule, it would seem that Peru's government has indeed a moral right to ask for help. More so if the alternatives seem to be nothing short of social disaster: a bloody coup and/or civil war.

There are, however, other aspects of the way the Peruvian State has waged counter-insurrectionary war, that have practical, as well as moral and legal implications.

The investigative efforts of the police, for instance, have been largely based on interrogation of captured suspects. Usually interrogations have been based on physical torture.

Some police officers have, when talking off-the-record, readily admitted that, but at the same time, they have hotly contended that in comparison to what other police forces elsewhere in the world do, they are almost philanthropic. They also affirm that there is no other way of obtaining information, and some have a standard mimicry about how an interrogation of a captured terrorist by a human rights activist would be. It never fails to provoke laughter among their colleagues.

On a more important level, the military's counter-insurgency doctrine has, as one of its main tenets, the physical elimination of "subversives." That is not, of course, written in the largely exoteric handbooks. It belongs to the esoteric part of the doctrine. Some military officers, talking also very much off-the-record, defend the practice of killing captured "subversives" as a regrettable need. According to them, a "crystallized" communist is beyond hope of redemption.

As Peruvian law forbids capital punishment, the whole legal process was bypassed in the emergency areas, in Peru's Southcentral Andes, especially since the military took charge (December 1982). A military dictatorship within a democratic

government was "de facto" established. As the number of disappeared people mounted, there were tensions and clashes between the military and some branches of the Judiciary, that were not enough to put a definitive end to the abductions and executions.¹² Because of the human rights situation, not only have the two democratic governments that Peru has had since 1980 suffered political attrition, but among a considerable number of people there is the conviction that the cause of much of the violence and suffering is the military rather than the Shining Path.

There is little doubt that the military have been the source of a great amount of gratuitous suffering, especially in the countryside, where their overall approach to counter-insurgency has been to punish rather than to protect. With civilian life so easily expendable, no great effort was made to protect even populations that had sided with the government or were relatively neutral. A comparison of the number of casualties among civilian population and security troops shows that quite clearly.¹³

So, in short, the case of Peru is that of a democracy fighting back a thinly understood insurrection by means which might have been expected to be used by a rather brutal and largely incompetent dictatorship.

That does not mean that democracy has ceased to exist. On the contrary, it remains as a lively, varied, somehow chaotic and definitely confused process. The co-existence between these two incompatible ways of government, lends frequently a surreal face to the nation's reality and to the insurrection too. On one hand, people

¹² On June 20, 1984, for instance, Peru's General Attorney, Alvaro Rey de Castro, sent a very tough letter to Army General Adrian Huaman, Emergency Area Chief in Ayacucho. Rey de Castro reminded Huaman that any excess was punishable by law. A week later, Huaman sent a personal letter to his direct chief, Army General Sinesio Jarama, complaining that Rey de Castro made his work difficult. Apparently he got additional support, insofar as most mass graves in the area were discovered in July/August. On August 28, Huaman was removed from his command post in Ayacucho for reasons unrelated to human rights.

¹³ According to official figures, the number of deaths until April 1987 is as follows:

- Armed Forces: 106
- Police: 363
- Civilian Authorities: 169
- Civilians: 3852
- Alleged Shining Path and MRTA guerrillas: 4620

That amounts to 9110 violent, insurgency-related deaths. The Shining Path claims that, for the same period, the number was of 30,000. I believe that a better estimate would be of around 15,000. It has to be added, though, that most of the casualties listed as alleged Shining Path, were in fact civilians. Even the most obtuse military agree that if most of them had been Shining Path members, the rebel organization would have, for most practical purposes, ceased to exist.

have been tortured, kidnapped or killed, but on the other, the Shining Path is able (since mid-1986) to control, almost openly, a Lima daily, "El Diario", where not only Senderista propaganda is printed, but where, often, terrorist or guerrilla actions are described in almost a war-communicue style. Gross human rights violations are perpetrated, but often an imprisoned Senderista is set free --if he or she has managed to be brought to court-- by judges or tribunals, on flimsy legal technicalities or loopholes. The Shining Path's semi-legal structure has an organization of committed, full-time lawyers, who represent all their captured cadre. They are fast, well organized and feared by the judges. To put it briefly, in the countryside, an innocent villager may be killed on vague suspicion only, while in Lima an important cadre may be freed through a legal loophole. As there is everything but a common-sensical, pragmatic middle ground, democracy is eroded as much by the unthinking, brutal ways of the military as by the gross ineptness of most civilian authorities.

Covering this war, clear in principle, chaotic in practice was a very difficult task for Peruvian journalism, including the magazine I worked for: the newsweekly "Caretas".

"Caretas" is a liberal magazine, usually centrist in politics, eclectic and irreverent. It has a strong commitment to democracy, and has been closed down several times during military governments, especially during the reformist Velasco regime (1968-75). All of us who worked there knew first-hand what it was to live under a dictatorship, and felt that every effort had to be made in order to nurture democracy and make it endure. Those were not nice feelings, but very real worries.

The need to maintain certain standards of objectivity was very clear, too, even if it would mean harm to the prestige or authority of the government. So we tried in principle, to divide as much as possible, the editorial from the news reporting, never an easy thing for magazines. At the same time, when writing the news about the insurrection, we tried at every possible point to make clear who had the responsibility for beginning the insurrection, for committing the aggression against society as a whole: the Shining Path. Probably in trying to do so, we over-stepped objectivity (especially until late 1982), in the sense that we may have leaned too heavily on adjectives to the detriment of a clear analytical picture.

But even then we reported on human rights abuses, and in such a way as to leave the government no choice but to act (making inquiries, naming investigative commissions) against the perpetrators.

Our pressure stepped up after the military took charge in the Ayacucho region, and it became clear that their counter-insurgency doctrine and practice was incompatible with the rule of law. We did our best to keep the pressure on the human rights issue while at the same time reporting Senderista atrocities. We also tried to help find a way out of the vicious circle of guerrilla and state terrorism.

In order to do so, we researched and wrote at length about those cases (not too many, to be sure) of successful counter-insurgencies where intelligent, democratic-inspired methods prevailed against powerful guerrilla insurrections. We tried to make both the cases of Malaysia and the Philippines (under Magasaysay) well known.

The results were not very good. The military had already its own set of ideas, and the Argentinian experience had influenced them very much. Even when the Argentinian generals lost face in the Malvinas/Falklands war, they still retained influence on counter-insurgency matters.

At any rate, the killings went on, especially in 1984.¹⁴ And, as the numbers of dead piled up, we had no choice but to become much tougher in denouncing the atrocities. It became clear by then that, step by big step, the counter-insurrectionary war had lost most of the elements it had at the beginning, of an embattled democracy striving to defend itself. In the multitude of small clashes, ambushes, persecutions, dragnets, interrogation rooms and killing places that constituted the war, the security forces were almost indistinguishable from those of a military dictatorship. The first Minister of the Interior during the Belaunde Presidency, Jose Maria De La Jara, had said, in 1981 that, no matter how many people advised him to quell the insurrection using "wood pajamas and dynamite suppositories", he'd never do that. By 1984, De La Jara long gone, both the sleeping garb and medicine were the order of the day.

¹⁴ The number of "disappearances" (usually abductions followed by assassination) that are denounced and registered in the General Attorney's Office for Human Rights adds up to 2,195 until October 1986. Most of the cases occurred in 1983 and 1984.

At any rate, the campaign against tortures, disappearances and assassinations yielded some results. From the peak of 1984, human rights abuses fell down considerably by 1985. 15

I believe that the main extent of our influence was in that field. It was, as it is, a restraining influence rather than a positive one. Experience taught us to take strong and uncompromising positions towards the military on human rights and the way they discharged their duties. We didn't subscribe to their assertion that they had a specialized wisdom, with only one possible way of doing things. On the contrary, we came to the conclusion that, with few exceptions, their professional handling of the insurgency was rather inept.

In retrospect, I think that we should probably have been more critical from the beginning, not letting some bluffly tough talk and posturing pass off as convincing strategy, as a good and legal overall direction of the war effort-- if we had only been better prepared at that time. Then, as a matter of principle, we probably should have made more clear the separation of our reporting from our editorial point of view and both from our preaching efforts. But then remembering how fragile we felt our fledgling democracy to be --and the great need to make it endure long enough so as to make it an essential part of the nation's life-- I can hardly see a different approach.

And, of course, suggestions, preaching, whatever, were done openly, in our magazine's pages. As was the reporting and research, with every effort being made to gather and use it strictly on a journalistic basis. Which is, I think, as it should be.

What would have happened if the government had been able to put together a counterinsurgency strategy that was both efficient and remained within the bounds of democratic legality? I think that in that case, the government would have deserved editorial praise but objective, independent reporting. Not even in that circumstance should the specific quality of journalism be adulterated by non-journalistic cooperation with the government's policies. Briefing government authorities, giving them the identity of sources or sensitive information which has not yet been published.

15 For an overall appraisal of human rights in Peru, see "Abdicating Democratic Authority", *Americas Watch Report*; October 1984. Also, "Peru . . .", Amnesty International Document, 1984; "Una Nueva Oportunidad para la Autoridad Democrática", *Americas Watch Report*; September 1985; and "Informe del Grupo de Trabajo Sobre Desapariciones Forzadas o Involuntarias", U.N. Human Rights Commission, December 1986.

disguising propaganda as news, or using the appearance of coverage for disinformation campaigns: all of that, no matter how well intentioned, goes against the very essence of what a free press is and should be, and pays therefore a disservice to democracy on the long run.

There are, of course, several cases in which a degree of cooperation between government and journalism in terrorism-related cases is necessary. It generally has to do with withholding information from publication for a period of time (usually short) because of life-threatening considerations. This holds especially true in hostage-taking situations. Moreover, I believe that a government has a limited but real right to ask journalism not to disseminate specific information which may endanger the security or the life of its forces or of individual employees. The same considerations that apply for the protection of individual sources, are relevant in this case. The problem is, of course, to have clear guidelines, which in several cases - like in Israel until December 1987 - were worked out on a fairly rational and just basis.

III

As a sort of conclusion, I would say that the perceived disadvantages of maintaining a clear distance between independent (academic, journalistic) research on terrorism and governmental concerns, are the same disadvantages that, on a wider scenario, are thought to be the ones that democracy has in relation to authoritarian or totalitarian regimes in terms of better social control and discipline. But the distinct advantages of a democratic approach: an independent plurality of views, a fresh look from different perspectives, the freedom of inquiry and criticism that isn't marred by extra-disciplinary considerations: all add up to greater creativity and original thought, that ultimately benefits the whole of society, including its governmental organizations - who, I believe, should prize original intelligent thought, insofar as the bureaucratic milieu is not the ideal one to produce it.

Open communication with independent research —through the accepted vehicles of publications, seminars, conferences— are bound to produce much richer overall results than the repetitive and —to borrow the expression one government bureaucrat used in Santa Fe— slightly incestuous echo-talk with trusty in-house academics. Fresh perspective, critical distance is also crucial for not harming the prospects for future independent research; and both, in my belief, do not mix well with old boys' networks or with revolving doors