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Page: 1  
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PAGE 01 LIMA 09952 262217Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	CIAE-00	INL-01	OASY-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	UTED-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00
	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04
	G-00	/020W					

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P 262218Z NOV 97  
 FM AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0606  
 INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
 AMEMBASSY QUITO

COPY FROM  
THE COLLECTION OF THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE

UNCLAS LIMA 009952

E.O. 12958: N/A  
 TAGS: PGOV, PE  
 SUBJECT: IN SMALL-TOWN PERU, DEMOCRACY CAN WORK

REF: LIMA 7429

1. IF LIMA'S BIG-TIME MEDIA HAD IT ALL ITS OWN WAY, THE CASUAL  
 OBSERVER MIGHT BELIEVE THAT PROSPECTS FOR STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY  
 IN PERU ARE BLEAK, AT BEST. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, POLITICAL  
 CORRESPONDENTS AND EDITORS HAVE BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH CHARGES THAT

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PAGE 02 LIMA 09952 262217Z  
 THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIN) HAD MANAGED TO PLANT  
 UNDERCOVER AGENTS INSIDE THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION  
 BUREAUCRACY (RENIEC, BY ITS SPANISH ACRONYM), IN AN EFFORT TO RIG  
 THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE YEAR 2000.

2. JUST AS THE FIRESTORM OVER THE SIN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE VOTER  
 REGISTRATION PROCESS WAS HEATING UP, POPULAR AUTHOR AND FAILED  
 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MARIO VARGAS LLOSA RETURNED HOME FOR A FEW  
 DAYS FROM HIS SELF-EXILE IN SPAIN, AND Poured HIS OWN SPECIAL BRAND

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Page: 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J. OLSON  
 DATE/CASE ID: 7 AUG 2001 200003849

OF VITRIOL ON THE FLAMES. IN A NUMBER OF SPEECHES TO OVERFLOWING UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUMS, VARGAS LLOSA REPEATEDLY CHARACTERIZED THE FUJIMORI ADMINISTRATION AS A DICTATORSHIP, CLAIMED THERE WAS A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED FRAUD WOULD BE USED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2000 TO PRODUCE A THIRD FUJIMORI TERM, AND CALLED UPON THE FRAGMENTED POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO UNITE UNDER SOME NEW LEADER (THOUGH, HE CLAIMED, HE WAS NOT SEEKING THE JOB).

3. WHILE THIS BY-NOW-FAMILIAR DRAMA WAS PLAYING ITSELF OUT ON THE NATIONAL STAGE IN LIMA, A TRULY HISTORIC EXERCISE IN CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION WAS, ALMOST INCONSPICUOUSLY, UNFOLDING IN SMALL-TOWN PERU. ON NOVEMBER 23, IN 61 "DISTRITOS" (OR TOWNS) AND ONE "PROVINCIA" (OR COUNTY) SCATTERED THROUGHOUT 18 "DEPARTAMENTOS" (OR PROVINCES), APPROXIMATELY 120,000 CITIZENS, OR 60 TO 70 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE, WENT TO 835 POLLING STATIONS IN THE COUNTRY'S FIRST-EVER RECALL ELECTIONS, AND, DEMONSTRATING REMARKABLE CIVIC MATURITY AND INFORMED POLITICAL JUDGMENT, VOTED TO THROW OUT OF OFFICE 42 TOWN MAYORS AND ONE COUNTY MAYOR, AS WELL AS 77 TOWN COUNCILORS AND EIGHT COUNTY COUNCILORS. AT THE SAME TIME, THIS LOCAL ELECTORATE VOTED TO RETAIN IN OFFICE 18 MAYORS AND 44 COUNCILORS.

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PAGE 03 LIMA 09952 262217Z

4. ACCORDING TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONTROL LAW IMPLEMENTING THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION ON RECALL ELECTIONS, IF MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE MEMBERS OF A PARTICULAR TOWN OR COUNTY COUNCIL ARE RECALLED, A SPECIAL ELECTION MUST BE CALLED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO VOTE IN A NEW COUNCIL THAT WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MUNICIPAL ELECTION. AS A RESULT OF THE NOVEMBER 23 POLL, SPECIAL ELECTIONS SHOULD BE CALLED IN NO FEWER THAN 17 OF THE 62 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES. HOWEVER, THE "JURADO NACIONAL DE ELECCIONES" (OR NATIONAL BOARD OF ELECTIONS) HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT, BECAUSE OF THE COSTS INVOLVED IN HOLDING SPECIAL ELECTIONS, IT IS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF LEGISLATION THAT WOULD REPLACE SUCH SPECIAL ELECTIONS WITH A MECHANISM WHEREBY THE AFFAIRS OF ANY TOWN COUNCIL WHICH HAS BEEN RECALLED MAY BE ASSUMED BY THE CORRESPONDING COUNTY ADMINISTRATION UNTIL THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 1998.

5. RECALL ELECTIONS ARE PROVIDED FOR IN PERU'S 1993 CONSTITUTION AND ARE SET IN MOTION BY GRASSROOTS CITIZEN PETITION DRIVES WHICH TARGET LOCAL MAYORS AND COUNCILORS WHO MAY BE ACCUSED OF ONE OR MORE MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT MISDEEDS, RANGING FROM NEPOTISM TO ABUSE OF AUTHORITY TO FISCAL FRAUD TO STRAIGHTFORWARD INCOMPETENCE OR

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Page: 2

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UNRESPONSIVENESS TO CITIZEN NEEDS. A RECALL ELECTION IS ORDERED ONCE A PETITION DRIVE HAS COLLECTED THE SIGNATURES OF AT LEAST 25 PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS IN AN AFFECTED LOCALITY. THE SUCCESSFUL PETITION DRIVES WHICH RESULTED IN THE NOVEMBER 23 RECALL ELECTIONS HAD PRIMARILY BEEN CONDUCTED BY SUCH SMALL-TOWN GROUPS AS MOTHERS' CLUBS OR THE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH MANAGE THE "VASO DE LECHE" (OR "GLASS OF MILK") FEEDING PROGRAMS.

6. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE NOVEMBER 23 RECALL ELECTIONS WERE HISTORIC, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY WERE THE FIRST OF THEIR KIND BUT

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 LIMA 09952 262217Z

BECAUSE, AT EVERY STAGE OF THE PROCESS, THEY WERE CARRIED OUT EFFICIENTLY AND CLEANLY BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF ELECTION PROCESSES. THIS STANDS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THE ALLEGED "DIRTY TRICKS" WHICH CONSTITUTE ONE ASPECT OF OPPOSITION CONGRESSWOMAN ANEL TOWNSEND'S CHARGES THAT SIN AGENTS HAD INFILTRATED RENIEC. MORE THAN A MONTH AFTER A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE TOWNSEND'S CHARGES, THE SUBCOMMITTEE HAS STILL NOT QUESTIONED RENIEC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JULIO VARGAS PRADA. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 2000 ELECTIONS OF TOWNSEND'S CHARGES (SOME OF WHICH APPEAR CREDIBLE) ARE SERIOUS; OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN SUPERFICIAL.

7. COMMENT: THE SUCCESS OF THE NOVEMBER 23 RECALL ELECTIONS CERTAINLY INDICATES THAT AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL THE PERUVIAN PEOPLE ARE PSYCHOLOGICALLY READY FOR AN EXPANDED ROLE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE COUNTRY. IF IT IS TRUE, AS SOME COMMENTATORS BELIEVE, THAT THE POOR PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL MAYORS AND COUNCILORS IS, AT LEAST IN PART, DUE TO THE EXCESSIVELY SMALL BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS MADE TO THEM BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, THAT PROBLEM IS NOT LIKELY TO DISSIPATE, AS LONG AS THE CAPITAL INSISTS ON RETAINING MAXIMUM CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY'S REVENUES AND DISPENSING THEM AS A MEANS OF DEMONSTRATING TO THE PEOPLE WHICH ENTITY OF GOVERNMENT (AND WHICH POLITICAL PARTY) CAN DELIVER THE GOODS.

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