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INCOMING
TELEGRAM

(X26)

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ACTION ARA-00

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INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-10 SS-00 CIAE-00 H-01
MSC-01 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 NA-00 L-03 TRSE-00
PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 INM-07 INRE-00 USIE-00 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
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DEARQS WASHDC

CONFIDENTIAL LIMA 10107

DIA FOR IR BRANCH

DIA FOR OA-5/OS-10/1

DEA FOR OF, PS, OC,

USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD JOHN YOUNG

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PTER, PHUN, PGOV, PE
SUBJECT: INDIFFERENT REACTION TO FEBRES MURDER

REF: (A) LIMA 8898

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL REACTION TO THE MURDER OF MANUEL FEBRES FLORES, THE ATTORNEY FOR OSMAN MOROTE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF SENDERO LUMINOSO, HAS BEEN CURIOUSLY LACKING IN INDIGNATION. EDITORIALS AND OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE A PERFUNCTORY, INDIFFERENT QUALITY. THE PRESS, BY AND LARGE, IS GIVING EQUAL WEIGHT TO

POSSIBILITIES THAT FEBRES'S MURDER IS THE RESULT OR WORK OF AN INTRA-SL DISPUTE, APRIL AND/OR POLICE, OR THE EXTREME RIGHT. PRESIDENT GARCIA HAS DESCRIBED THE MURDER AS A PROVOCATION OF THE EXTREME RIGHT OR LEFT AND IS INTENDED TO BACK HIM OFF THE TOUGHER STAND ON TERRORISM HE TOOK IN HIS JULY 28 POLICY ADDRESS. INVESTIGATION, INITIATED BY THE HOMICIDE DIVISION, IS NOW BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTER-TERRORISM DIVISION OF THE PERUVIAN INVESTIGATIVE POLICE. THE INCIDENT IS REVEALING OF UNDERLYING, IN PART RACIAL, ATTITUDES OF THE PERUVIAN ELITE: THAT SENDERO MEMBERS AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VICTIMS ARE "CHOLOS" (LOW-CLASS INDIANS OR MESTIZO) WHOSE DEATHS OR DISAPPEARANCES DO NOT AFFECT THEM.

END SUMMARY.

3. THE FEBRES MURDER HAS BEEN A MAJOR STORY HERE, TO SOME EXTENT ECLIPSING COVERAGE OF THE REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S JULY 28 STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS. CONDEMNATIONS OF THE MURDER AND CALLS FOR A FULL AND HONEST INVESTIGATION HAVE COME FROM VIRTUALLY ALL QUARTERS, INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CONSERVATIVELY-LED LIMA BAR ASSOCIATION, WHICH HAS JUST APPOINTED AN INVESTIGATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE. BUT GENUINE MORAL INDIGNATION IS GENERALLY ABSENT. CARETAS MAGAZINE, FOR EXAMPLE, EXAMINES THREE HYPOTHESES AS TO WHO IS RESPONSIBLE (SENDERO ITSELF,

IN AN INTRA-SL DISPUTE; AN APRIL PARAMILITARY GROUP OR THE POLICE; AND THE "EXTREME RIGHT," UNDERSTOOD HERE TO INCLUDE THE MILITARY, ACTING WITHOUT GOVERNMENT KNOWLEDGE OR SANCTION) AND GIVES THE THREE ABOUT EQUAL WEIGHT. EDITORIALS HAVE MADE A POINT OF NOTING THAT FEBRES DEFENDED KNOWN SENDERISTAS AND THAT HE HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL AT IT. A SIGNED EDITORIAL BY CENTER-LEFT "SI" EDITOR CESAR HILDEBRANT IS TYPICAL. FEBRES'S MURDER IS CONDEMNED BUT HILDEBRANT NOTES THAT FEBRES WAS KILLED WITH THE SAME COLD-BLOODED CALCULATION SHOWN BY THE PEOPLE HE DEFENDED.

4. PRIVATE COMMENT, PREDICTABLY, IS LESS CAREFULLY COUCHED. RUNNING THROUGHOUT MORE THAN A DOZEN CONVERSATIONS ON THE SUBJECT WITH POLITICAL ELITES OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS IS A GENERAL INDIFFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT FEBRES WAS MURDERED AND A FEELING THAT HE GOT WHAT HE DESERVED. SOCIOLOGIST JOSE MATOS MAR REMARKED THAT THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF ELITES HERE IS THAT, BECAUSE FEBRES WAS SEEN AS A TWO-BIT JAILHOUSE LAWYER, A "CHOLO," AND A SENDERISTA, HIS DEATH IS UNIMPORTANT AND UNCONNECTED TO THEM. DESCRIBING THIS FRAGMENTED QUALITY OF PERUVIAN SOCIETY AS "EGOTISTICAL," MATOS MAR COMMENTED THAT FORMER MILITARY DICTATOR VELASCO HAD PICKED OFF ONE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROUP AFTER ANOTHER BECAUSE EACH FELT UNAFFECTED BY THE MISFORTUNES OF THE OTHER. OTHERS WHO ALSO HAVE A LITTLE DISTANCE ON THE SUBJECT HAVE OBSERVED THAT, UNLIKE ARGENTINA, WHERE THE CHILDREN OF MIDDLE CLASS ELITES WERE INVOLVED WITH TERRORISM, HERE SL MEMBERS ARE MOSTLY FROM THE LOWER CLASS AND THAT THERE IS UNLIKELY TO BE A STRONG POLITICAL REACTION TO ABUSES OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS.

5. PRESIDENT GARCIA ADDRESSED THE ISSUE IN EXTENSIVE EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS TO THE PRESS

JULY 30:

"I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS AN EXTREME RIGHT GROUP OR SENDERO LUMINOSO ITSELF, BUT IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THIS CRIME TOOK PLACE AT AN HOUR AND DAY DESIGNED TO (FORCE ME) NOT TO SPEAK OF TERRORISM AND TO MAKE (TERRORISM) LAWS TOUGHER . . . IF SOMEONE WANTED TO VICTIMIZE (FEBRES), HE COULD HAVE DONE IT IN SEPTEMBER OR AUGUST. WHY JULY 28 AT 9:20 AM? SO THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE ENTIRE COUNTRY WOULD LEARN THAT THE DEFENDER OF A TERRORIST HAD BEEN VICTIMIZED . . . AND SO THAT THE POLICE . . . WOULD BE . . . BLAMED." GARCIA GOES ON TO SAY THAT IF HE HAD LEARNED OF THE EVENT BEFORE GIVING HIS ADDRESS, HE SIMPLY WOULD HAVE HAD TO DELETE FROM HIS SPEECH ALL THAT HE SAID ON TERRORISM. GARCIA ALSO EXCORIATED THE COMMANDO GROUP FOR THE SACRILEGE OF EXPROPRIATING THE NAME OF RODRIGO FRANCO, "A GOOD CHRISTIAN WHO NEVER WOULD HAVE PERMITTED A CRIME TO BE COMMITTED IN HIS NAME."

6. THE HOMICIDE DIVISION OF THE PERUVIAN INVESTIGATIVE POLICE WAS INITIALLY CHARGED WITH THE FEBRES CASE, BUT THE INVESTIGATION WAS NOW PASSED TO THE COUNTER-TERRORISM DIVISION (DIRCOTE). ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE MURDER WEAPON WAS A SHORT-BARRELED 9MM FIREARM, WHICH THE POLICE ARE POINTING OUT IS NOT IN THEIR INVENTORY.

7. COMMENT: IT WAS PERHAPS TOO MUCH TO EXPECT OUTRAGE OR OTHER STRONG REACTION TO THE MURDER

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OF SOMEONE CONNECTED TO SENDERO LUMINOSO,
RESPONSIBLE FOR SO MUCH BLOODSHED AND DEATH. THE
ABSENCE OF A STRONGER REACTION IS NONETHELESS
DISAPPOINTING. THE INCIDENT POINTS OUT A VERY
CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE MEAN IN SPEAKING
OF THE WEAKNESS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS HERE.
THE PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE ALSO CAUSES US CONCERN
BECAUSE IT IS LIKELY TO ENBOLDEN THE AUTHORS
OF THIS MURDER.

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