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R 062148Z AUG 92  
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA ANALYSIS -- PRESS FREEDOM IN PERU

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THIS MESSAGE IS PART OF MISSION REPORTING PLAN  
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1. SUMMARY. INQ TIE WAKE OF PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S "AUTO-COUP," THERE HAS BEEN MUCH DEBATE ABOUT THE EXTENT OF PRESS FREEDOM IN PERU. DISCUSSIONS WITH LEADING MEDIA FIGURES INDICATE THAT PRESS FREEDOM LIKE MUCH ELSE IN THIS ENIGMATIC NATION, IS A COMPLEX MATTER. ON THE SURFACE, THE PRESS OPERATES FREELY. FUJIMORI IS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J. OLSON  
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REGULARLY DESCRIBED AS A DICTATOR IN THE WRITTEN PRESS. SIMILARLY, OPPOSITION POLITICIANS VOICE SAVAGE CRITICISM OF THE GOP AND PRESIDENT FUJIMORI ON TELEVISION AND RADIO.

2. IN SPITE OF THIS, MANY MEDIA SOURCES EXPRESS APPARENTLY SINCERE CONCERN THAT THE GOP IS VIGILANT AND COULD, AT ANY MOMENT, STRIKE HARD WITH ACTIONS LIKE THOSE THAT LARGELY GAGGED THE MEDIA IN THE FIRST 48 HOURS AFTER APRIL 5. OTHERS REMEMBER THE NEAR TOTAL CONTROL THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES EXERCISED OVER ALL NATIONAL MEDIA THROUGHOUT THE SEVENTIES. NONETHELESS, THE PRESIDENT, INSULATED BY PUBLIC POPULARITY FROM CRITICS WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE MEDIA, HAS NO CURRENT INCENTIVE TO CRACK DOWN. FURTHER, PERCEIVED PRESS FREEDOM SERVES THE GOP'S ENDS INTERNATIONALLY. SAVE FOR A DECLINE IN THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY WHICH GOES FURTHER THAN RECENT DECLINES REPORTED IN SEPTELS, THERE SEEMS LITTLE REASON TO FEAR

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FOR OVERT PRESS CENSORSHIP IN PERU. END SUMMARY.

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IT LOOKS FREE TO ME  
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3. OBSERVERS OF THE PERUVIAN PRESS COULD EASILY CONCLUDE THAT IT IS TOTALLY FREE. A GLANCE AT ALMOST ANY DAILY OR A QUICK FLIP OF THE TV DIAL OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL PERSUASION OR PERSONAL INTEREST. IN ADDITION TO COVERAGE OF THE PRESIDENT AND GOP OFFICIALS, THE MEDIA GIVES AMPLE COVERAGE TO THE STATEMENTS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS. THEY ARE QUOTED IN THE PAGES OF THE WRITTEN PRESS AND OFTEN INTERVIEWED ON TELEVISION AND RADIO. MOREOVER, THERE SEEM TO BE NO LIMITS ON WHAT CAN BE PRINTED OR AIRED IN PERU. ONE RECENTLY LAUNCHED DAILY QUICKLY MADE A NAME FOR ITSELF BY RUNNING PICTURES OF BARE-BREASTED WOMEN ON ITS FRONT PAGE. PHOTOS OF HORRIBLY MUTILATED VICTIMS OF AUTO CRASHES, TERRORIST BOMBS AND COMMON VIOLENCE FREQUENTLY SCREAM OUT AT NEWSPAPER READERS AND TELEVISION VIEWERS. ALL OF THIS ATTESTS TO A LEVEL OF FREEDOM THAT MIGHT BE THE ENVY OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES IN OTHER NATIONS.

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

4. MEDIA INSIDERS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT SO SANGUINE ABOUT THE LEVEL OF PRESS FREEDOM IN THEIR COUNTRY. WHILE MOST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE GOP ALLOWS THEM FREE REIGN OVER THEIR DAILY AFFAIRS, THEY SAY THAT THE TRUE STRIPES OF

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THE GOVERNMENT WERE FULLY EVIDENT IN THE FIRST 48 HOURS AFTER PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S "AUTO-COUP." THOUGH THAT DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION, INCLUDING THE CLOSING OF A RADIO STATION AND THE BRIEF JAILING OF SOME JOURNALISTS, WAS WITHDRAWN QUICKLY WITH AN APOLOGY FROM THE PRESIDENT, NO ONE HAS FORGOTTEN. WHAT OCCURRED ONCE CAN ALWAYS OCCUR AGAIN, THEY SAY. ONE SOURCE SAID THAT THE REAL LESSON FOR THE MEDIA WAS THAT IT NEEDED TO CENSOR ITSELF; IT MUST NOT, HE SAID, GET TOO CARRIED AWAY IN ITS REPORTS AND STORIES. SURPRISINGLY, PERHAPS, THE GOP HAS NOT COMPLAINED ABOUT CRITICISMS OF THE PRESIDENT OR HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY. IT HAS, HOWEVER,

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SHOWN EXTREME SENSITIVITY ABOUT STORIES WHICH IT FEELS  
SERVE THE INTERESTS OF SENDERO LUMINOSO, THE SAVAGE  
TERRORIST ORGANIZATION PLEDGED TO TEAR DOWN EXISTING  
SOCIETY.

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CALLS THAT THREATEN  
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5. ON THE NIGHT OF THE "AUTO-COUP," GUSTAVO GORRITI, A  
WELL KNOWN JOURNALIST AND THE AUTHOR OF A BOOK ON  
SENDERO LUMINOSO, WAS ARRESTED AND TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY  
AGENTS FROM THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. THE  
"SIN," AS IT IS KNOWN LOCALLY, ALSO CONFISCATED  
GORRITI'S COMPUTER AND SOUGHT OTHER RECORDS AND  
INFORMATION HE HAD GATHERED FOR THE SEQUEL TO HIS FIRST  
BOOK. GORRITI WAS RELEASED AFTER A COUPLE OF DAYS,  
MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROTEST -- INCLUDING  
SEVERAL DIRECT APPEALS FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
ARONSON -- ABOUT HIS ARREST. HIS PC WAS LATER RETURNED,  
BUT THE CONTENTS OF HIS HARD DISK REMAIN IN GOVERNMENT  
HANDS. GORRITI'S BELIEF THAT HE CANNOT CONSULT HIS  
ARCHIVES FOR WORK ON TWO MORE VOLUMES HE PLANS ON  
SENDERO LUMINOSO IS ONE OF THE REASONS HE HAS CHOSEN TO  
ACCEPT A GRANT TO WORK FOR A TIME IN THE U.S.

6. ANOTHER ELEMENT IS GORRITI'S LONG-STANDING PUBLIC  
FEUD WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER (AND SIN "ADVISER")  
VLADIMIRO MONTESINOS. GORRITI IS CONVINCED THAT  
MONTESINOS ORDERED HIS ARREST AND THE SEIZURE OF HIS  
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RESEARCH MATERIALS NOT TO GET AT MATERIAL ABOUT SENDERO,  
BUT TO SEE IF GORRITI HAD DEROGATORY MATERIAL ON  
MONTESINOS. MANY OBSERVERS CONSIDER THIS PLAUSIBLE.

7. THIS INCIDENT, AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER, ILLUSTRATES THE  
OBSESSION THAT THE "SIN" AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE GOP  
HAVE WITH SENDERO. A NUMBER OF REPORTERS HAVE RECEIVED  
PHONE CALLS FROM UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES WARNING THEM OFF  
OF STORIES THAT MIGHT REFLECT ADVANCES BY SENDERO OR  
LACK OF PROGRESS BY THE GOP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST  
TERRORISM. SHORTLY AFTER THE APPEARANCE OF AN ARTICLE  
ABOUT SENDERO'S PROGRESS IN PERU, THE GOP'S OFFICIAL  
DAILY, "EL PERUANO," EDITORIALIZED AGAINST THE FOREIGN  
PRESS. A GOP OFFICIAL ALSO VISITED THE OFFICES OF THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION TO COMPLAIN  
ABOUT THE PIECE, ASSERTING THAT THE WIRE SERVICES LIE.

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JUDICIAL PROCESS  
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8. GORRITI'S OLD BOSS AND FRIEND "CARETAS" PUBLISHER  
ENRIQUE ZILERI CAME OUT ON THE SHORT END OF A COURT DUEL  
WITH MONTESINOS. ZILERI HAD PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE  
(PROBABLY BASED ON INFORMATION GATHERED BY GORRITI)  
WHICH DEMONSTRATED THAT MONTESINOS HAD, WHEN A LAWYER IN  
PRIVATE PRACTICE, GUARANTEED A LEASE FOR A CLIENT WHO  
TURNED OUT TO BE A COLOMBIAN DRUG DEALER. THIS LED TO A  
RESTRAINING ORDER WHICH PROHIBITED ZILERI AND "CARETAS"  
FROM MENTIONING MONTESINOS'S NAME OR PUBLISHING HIS  
PHOTO. MANY JOURNALISTS FELT THIS ACTION HAD NO REAL  
LEGAL BASIS, SINCE THE BASIC ALLEGATION WAS BACKED UP BY  
OFFICIAL RECORDS AND THERE WAS NOT ARGUMENT THAT THE

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MATERIAL PUBLISHED MET ANY OF THE BASIC STANDARDS FOR  
LIBEL.

9. MEDIA SOURCES CITE THE EXISTENCE OF LEGISLATIVE  
DECREE 25475 AS A NOT-SO-SUBTLE REMINDER THAT THE GOP IS  
WATCHING OVER THEIR SHOULDERS. THAT DECREE HOLDS  
JOURNALISTS WHO ASSIST SEDITIONARY FORCES IN ANY WAY --  
THE INTERPRETATION OF WHAT THAT MIGHT INCLUDE IS NOT  
CLEAR IN THE TEXT OF THE DECREE -- LIABLE TO CRIMINAL  
PROSECUTION. IT WAS FIRST PROMULGATED BY THE GOP BEFORE  
THE PRESIDENTIAL TAKEOVER. CONGRESS BALKED AND  
OVERRULED THE PRESIDENT. AFTER THE COUP, THE ALL

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POWERFUL EXECUTIVE BRANCH REINSTATED THE DECREE. ITS  
EXISTENCE, SAY MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES, HANGS LIKE A SWORD  
OF DAMOCLES OVER JOURNALISTS WHO MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO "GO  
TOO FAR."

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SLIGHTLY MORE DISTANT HISTORY  
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10. NOT LONG AFTER THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE  
ARMED FORCES SEIZED POWER IN OCTOBER 1968, THE  
GOVERNMENT SEIZED ALL SEVEN DAILIES WITH NATIONAL  
CIRCULATION AND TOOK CONTROL OF THE TWO PRIVATE TV

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NETWORKS. SEVERE PRESSURE WAS BROUGHT ON ALL MEDIA OWNERS, ESPECIALLY ELECTRONIC MEDIA WITH WIDE AUDIENCES.

11. THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTED TO IMPOSE NEAR TOTAL CONTROL OF SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION, AS WELL AS SOME ADVERTISING AND ENTERTAINMENT IN MASS MEDIA. DIRECT RETRANSMISSION OF FOREIGN BROADCASTING WAS ALL BUT ELIMINATED. RADIO STATION OWNERS HAD TO GO TO EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS RUN BY COMMUNISTS WHO EXPLAINED HOW THEY SHOULD AVOID BEING DUPED BY CAPITALISTS. FOR A TIME SANTA CLAUS WAS BANNED FROM ADVERTISING AS A "FOREIGN INFLUENCE." AT LEAST HALF OF ALL THE SONGS ON PERUVIAN RADIO WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BY PERUVIAN ARTISTS.

12. DURING THAT TIME AT LEAST 50 JOURNALISTS -- INCLUDING MANY WHO ARE PROMINENT TODAY -- WERE EXILED. THEY NOTE THAT SOME OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN PRESS CONTROL UNDER VELASCO AND MORALES BERMUDEZ ARE TODAY IN THE FUJIMORI CAMP. MEDIA WERE NOT RETURNED TO PRIVATE HANDS UNTIL THE RETURN OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN 1980.

13. FEELINGS ON THIS RUN HIGH. AT THE RECENT GOODBYE PARTY FOR THE USIS PRESS ATTACHE, A MAGAZINE OWNER, A TELEVISION STATION OWNER AND SEVERAL OTHERS GOT INTO A VITRIOLIC SHOUTING MATCH OVER WHO HAD DONE WHAT NOT ONLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AUTO-GOLPE, BUT ALSO UNDER VELASCO.

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WHO CONTROLS THE PERUVIAN MEDIA?  
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14. PERHAPS THE MAIN REASON FOR CONCERN WITHIN THE PERUVIAN MEDIA ABOUT GOP REPRISALS ARISES FROM THE MAKE-UP OF THE MEDIA ITSELF. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW PUBLICATIONS RUN BY PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS, THE MEDIA ARE RUN AS A BUSINESS OR BY WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN WHO HAVE

PURCHASED OR STARTED A NEWSPAPER OR TELEVISION STATION AS A SECONDARY INTEREST. WHILE THERE IS OFTEN AN IDENTIFIABLE POLITICAL SLANT ASSOCIATED WITH EACH MEDIA OUTLET, THERE IS ALSO STRONG PRESSURE ON THE BOTTOM LINE. NONE ARE IN BUSINESS TO MAKE THEIR POLITICAL POINT REGARDLESS OF THE COST. MOREOVER, THOSE OWNERS WHO HAVE PURCHASED OR ESTABLISHED PUBLICATIONS OR STATIONS AS VEHICLES FOR THEIR POLITICAL OR CIVIC INTERESTS ARE INVARIABLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF THE BUSINESSES THAT HAVE MADE THEIR MEDIA INVOLVEMENT POSSIBLE. IN PERU, AS IN MOST NATIONS, GOVERNMENT HAS A MAJOR ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OR LACK THEREOF OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS. GOVERNMENT DECISIONS AND REGULATIONS ARE MAJOR FACTORS IN THE WAY BUSINESS GETS DONE.

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WHAT THE GOP GIVES, IT CAN ALSO TAKE AWAY  
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15. THE GOP CAN AND HAS SHUT DOWN MEDIA OPERATIONS, BUT GIVEN THE NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT, IT WOULD PREFER NOT TO SHOW TOO HEAVY A HAND. THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MANY OTHER TOOLS AT ITS DISPOSAL TO PRESSURE UNRULY

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MEMBERS OF THE PRESS. THE MOST VISIBLE TOOL IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN THE GOP'S AGGRESSIVE TAX AGENCY, "C////AT." WITH ALMOST RELIGIOUS ZEAL, TAX INSPECTORS

///  
HAVE BEEN RAIDING -- AND SHUTTING DOWN -- VIOLATORS REPRESENTING EVERY KIND OF BUSINESS. SOURCES FROM MEDIA OUTLETS CRITICAL OF THE GOP INDICATED THAT "SUNAT" OFFICIALS HAD VISITED THEM ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIALS DID NOT SUGGEST ANY LINKS BETWEEN THEIR PRESENCE AND ISSUES RELATED TO PRESS FREEDOM, THE IMPLICATION, THE SOURCES SAID, WAS CLEAR. OTHER DIRECT FORMS OF COERCION ARE THE GOP'S ABILITY TO WITHHOLD OR GRANT CREDIT THROUGH GOVERNMENT-OWNED BANKS TO MEDIA IN NEED OF LOANS TO COVER PAYROLL COSTS, FOR PURCHASING LARGE STOCKS OF PAPER OR TO BUY NEW EQUIPMENT.

16. BUT THE GOP ALSO HAS LESS DIRECT MEANS TO COW THE MEDIA, OR AT LEAST ITS OWNERSHIP. ITS ABILITY TO GRANT, OR WITHHOLD LICENSES, TO IMPORT PAPER AND EQUIPMENT WITHOUT PAYING EXCESSIVE DUTIES, TO EXPORT, TO OPERATE CELLULAR PHONE SYSTEMS, CABLE TV SYSTEMS AND MUCH MORE



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CAN BE A VERY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION TO AN OWNER WITH  
DIVERSE BUSINESS INTERESTS.

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17. THE ADVERTISING BUDGETS OF THE GOP'S STATE RELATED  
ENTERPRISES OFFER THE GOVERNMENT ANOTHER TOOL FOR ITS  
BAG OF COERCIVE TRICKS, PARTICULARLY THE THREAT TO STOP

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PLACING ADS WITH ANY MEDIA OUTLET THAT OFFENDS THE REGIME. WERE THE CUTOFF AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD DECISION, IT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE A PLUS FOR A FREE PRESS, SINCE IT WOULD CUT OFF AN OBVIOUS SOURCE FOR GOVERNMENT FAVORITISM. BUT SUCH IS NOT THE CASE, AND ADVERTISING BLACK LISTS ARE ISSUED ONLY FOR A FEW HARSH CRITICS. FOR THEM, THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO FORBID STATE-RELATED ADVERTISING HAS BEEN A MAJOR BLOW, WHILE SERVING AS A WARNING TO OTHERS TEMPTED TO FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS. ESTIMATES PLACE THE VALUE OF STATE ADVERTISING AT FIVE TO SIX MILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR. WHILE NOT A HUGE SUM BY U.S. STANDARDS, IT IS ENOUGH TO GET THE ATTENTION OF THE PERUVIAN MEDIA.

18. A FEW GOVERNMENT CRITICS HAVE FELT THE GOP'S WRATH DIRECTLY. THEIR REPRESENTATIVES HAVE NOT BEEN INVITED TO, OR PERMITTED TO ENTER PRESS CONFERENCES OFFERED BY THE PRESIDENT OR OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. SIMILARLY, INVITATIONS TO TRAVEL WITH THE PRESIDENT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PLANE ARE ISSUED ONLY TO THOSE WHO CAN BE COUNTED ON TO PREPARE FAVORABLE STORIES.

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AS LONG AS THE POLLS ARE FAVORABLE  
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19. SEVERAL SOURCES FELT THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE  
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DANGER OF DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE WITH THE PRESS AS LONG AS PRESIDENT FUJIMORI'S POPULARITY -- AS REFLECTED IN THE OPINION POLLS HE SO OFTEN REFERS TO -- REMAINS HIGH. MOST OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE PRESIDENT IS PLAYING TO THE MASSES, NOT THE ELITE. BY THIS REASONING, HE IS THEREFORE NOT WORRIED ABOUT THOSE WHO READ CRITICAL POLITICAL WEEKLIES OR LEFTIST OR PRO-APRA DAILIES. THOSE PEOPLE DID NOT ELECT HIM AND RARELY SUPPORTED HIM, EVEN BEFORE THE COUP. MOREOVER, NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE PRICES ARE SO HIGH -- A DIRECT RESULT OF AN END TO SUBSIDIES FOR NEWSPRINT INSTITUTED BY THE FUJIMORI GOVERNMENT -- THAT FEW PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO BUY THEM. A USIA-COMMISSIONED SURVEY IN MID-1991 SHOWED THAT ONLY ABOUT ONE IN THREE PEOPLE READ ANY PUBLICATIONS AT ALL ON A REGULAR BASIS. TELEVISION AND RADIO, THOUGH POPULAR, OFFER LESS OPINION AND, IN ANY EVENT, ARE CONTROLLED BY BUSINESSMEN WHO EARN THE BULK OF THEIR INCOME FROM OTHER ACTIVITIES WHERE GOVERNMENT

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DECISIONS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE.

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/ND IN CONCLUSION, A COMMENT  
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20. GIVEN WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF MEDIA CRITICISM IN TURNING PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST THE PRESIDENT, THE GOP HAS LITTLE INCENTIVE TO OVERTLY INFRINGE ON THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. INTERNATIONAL OPINION THAT PERU OPERATES WITH IMPLETE PRESS LIBERTY IS OF OBVIOUS BENEFIT WITH POTENTIAL DONORS. THE USG IN PARTICULAR AND OTHERS IN GENERAL SEE FREE MEDIA AS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL PILLARS OF A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF

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GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT FUJIMORI MAY BELIEVE THAT AS LONG AS OUTSIDE OBSERVERS CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS PRESS FREEDOM, OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WILL BE LESS LIKELY TO TAKE ACTIONS THAT COULD HARM PERU. HE CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT HE IS THE MASTER OF HIS OWN DESTINY, A MAN WHO CAN READ AND RESPOND TO POPULAR OPINION IN WAYS THAT PROTECT HIM FROM MEDIA CRITICS. IF THAT REMAINS TRUE, WE CAN EXPECT PRESS FREEDOM, AT LEAST OVER PRESS FREEDOM, TO CONTINUE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. ON A LESS VISIBLE LEVEL, THE GOP IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE ITS SUBTLE -- AND, AT TIMES, NOT SO SUBTLE -- PRESSURE. HAMILTON

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