



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

The Influence of U.S. - Soviet Differences on Press
Coverage of Terrorism: a Comparison of
The New York Times and Izvestia

by

Radoslaw Skabas

Research Thesis submitted to Professor John Sigler
in fulfillment of the requirements of M.A. programme in
Political Science, University of Ottawa



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-75093-6

Canada



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Place of this Study in the Research on Mass Media	8
1.2 Place of this Study in the Research on Terrorism	15
2. WHY A CROSS-SYSTEMIC STUDY?	22
3. THE HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY	30
4. THE STANDARDS OF JOURNALISM	35
4.1 Distortion in the Press	44
5. THE TESTING	50
6. THE RESULTS	57
6.1 The TWA Incident	57
6.2 The Hijacking of Soviet Diplomats in Beirut.	68
7. CONCLUSIONS	89
Appendix A	98
Appendix B	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	102
TABLES	
Table 1	67
Table 2	73

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences between the coverage accorded to incidents of transnational terrorism by the press of the United States and the Soviet Union. Two elite daily newspapers are compared: The New York Times and Izvestia. The coverage of two incidents of transnational terrorism is analyzed (1985 TWA airliner hijacking and 1985 kidnapping of four Soviet diplomats; both incidents took place in Beirut) in which nationals of both countries were involved. It is assumed, that "political distance" - the attitude towards the perpetrators and the victims - will influence the coverage. Findings indicate two different patterns in the coverage, which reflect the fundamental differences between the two papers in their perception of the role of the mass media in their respective societies. This raises more general questions of an ethical nature relating to the role and responsibilities of the media towards their audiences and towards the state.

1. INTRODUCTION

As we strive to learn and understand the surrounding world, we rely not only on our own senses and experience, but also in large part on the experience and perception of others. This information is brought to us through various channels: direct contact and conversation with other people, third-hand accounts as well as the organized public channels of information such as newspapers, journals, radio and television, to name just the major ones. As the technology of information advances, the amount and importance of the information we receive from these sources increase. Virtually all information concerning international affairs reaches us through the organized channels. An obvious question arises: is the information we receive through the public channels reliable, objective and fair? Or is it perhaps biased and distorted, and if so, to what extent? By accepting the view of the world it is presented by the mass media, is the public being informed or manipulated?

To complicate things further, the quantity and quality of information disseminated through public channels vary widely throughout the world. This is understandable given the ethnic, cultural, political and

religious diversity throughout the globe. What is news in one corner of the globe, may not be of any importance in another corner. There is, however, a category of news, such as major international events, that are of general interest and as such make the headlines virtually everywhere. Such news as the launching of spacecraft, scientific breakthroughs, important international meetings, large scale organized violence and other similar types of important news fall into this category. It is particularly interesting to investigate, whether this kind of news is presented reliably, objectively and with fairness throughout the globe.

Undoubtedly the political system in place is a major factor influencing the flow of information in all countries. This can be easily noticed by just browsing through newspapers or watching television broadcasts around the world. Are these differences just superficial, due to local customs, culture and general interests, or is there a deeper division reaching into the essence of information? Do some political systems favour objectivity and fairness, and others bias and distortion? This study will attempt to assess the treatment of information in open versus closed political systems, or, in other words, between the commercial and

the state-controlled media. While the commercial mass media have received a considerable amount of scholarly attention, very little has been written on the subject of state-owned, monopolistic media. Yet those media are by definition the exclusive source of information for about a third of the world's population (China and the Soviet Union alone account for about 1.5 billion people). The consistency with which the governments of those countries have suppressed independent dissemination of information over the years indicate the importance which they attribute to the control over the news agenda, and may raise suspicion as to their attitude towards the dissemination of objective news. On the other hand, it is also possible, that state control helps eliminate the excesses present in the commercial mass media, thus providing the population with a more healthy diet of daily news. The efforts of democratic governments to break the information monopoly of the communist states (for example 'Radio Free Europe', 'Radio Svoboda', and the BBC World Service) indicate their full appreciation of the seriousness of the issue.

In relation to commercial mass media it has been suggested that their agenda-setting process depends largely on the commercial (entertainment) value of the

news item.¹ The news with the highest entertainment value are given priority in terms of space allocation, whether that means prime TV time, or space on the first page of a newspaper. Even a cursory review of the media in a closed society will reveal, however, that space allocation is quite different there. While it is rather obvious that state-owned media are able to control the news agenda independently of the requirements of the market place (which in closed societies effectively does not exist), it is an unexplored question as to what are the directing principles of this control and what are the techniques used to exercise the control. It is largely unclear what are the underlying criteria of international news selection in closed political systems. In order to shed more light on this issue this study will analyze and directly compare the contents of two daily newspapers, both largely representative of their corresponding political systems, in their treatment of a highly contentious political issue of international importance.

In order to narrow the scope of analysis to a controllable size, and yet to remain within the realm of recent, urgent and controversial political news, the

1 see discussion of this subject in Chapter 5,
THE STANDARDS OF JOURNALISM

coverage of terrorist events has been selected. This type of event attracts universal attention, usually gets extensive coverage, and often provokes emotional responses. It is also of sufficient international importance to assure that it is not neglected in favour of other news. Two incidents will be taken as examples, and their presentation by the two selected newspapers will be compared. The events, while interesting in themselves, will serve mainly as the background to the real issue addressed in this paper, which is to assess the principles guiding the presentation of the news by the commercial and the state-controlled media.

The reason for selecting terrorist incidents as the subject for analysis of press coverage is primarily its "newsworthiness", but also the fact that terrorism has recently become widespread as a method of political struggle. It is a phenomenon affecting many aspects of political life on the globe and certainly has its place in the struggle of the two leading ideologies and political systems for supremacy. Moreover, the links between terrorism and the media have been emphasized by scholars as the vital element of the terrorist strategy. As the fundamental difference between terrorism and other forms of political violence can be found in that it achieves its

goals not directly through its acts but through the response to its acts², it becomes an urgent necessity to study the vital link between the act and the response of the mass media. It is hoped that this paper will add to this body of knowledge.

2 L. Fields Jr., "A Research Agenda for Combatting Terrorism", in Ronald D. Crelinsten (ed.) Research Strategies for the Study of International Political Terrorism., (Montreal: International Centre for Comparative Criminology, 1977) p. 139.

1.1 Place of this Study in the Research on Mass Media

It has frequently been argued that the generous coverage given by the mass media to violence in general, and to terrorism in particular, has had a negative impact on both the recipients of the news (the general public) and on the media themselves. Since the newspapers, magazines, radio and television are the primary sources of our information about the international reality, any distortion of the coverage can have potentially far-reaching effects. "The media can easily emerge as forces for good, limiting the repercussions of a terrorist attack, or they may incite terror."³ The media are the primary agents responsible for forming the 'mental images' of individuals, and therefore are indirectly responsible for the resulting actions of those individuals.

An example of the potential repercussions of extensive coverage of violence by the media is the case of Ian Davison, a young Englishman who led the Palestinian hit-team which murdered three Israelis aboard

3 R. Kupperman, "Defeating Terrorism: Three Lines of Defense", in Ronald D. Crelinsten (ed.) Research Strategies for the Study of International Political Terrorism., (Montreal: International Centre for Comparative Criminology, 1977), p. 14.

a yacht moored at Larnaca, Cyprus, in 1985. He was happy to boast about killing Israelis. Partly under the influence of revolutionary socialists in his home town of South Shelds, but largely, he explained, because he had been so shocked by a television film about the massacres in Lebanon, (emphasis added R.S.) he joined a PLO hit-team. After being sentenced to life imprisonment in Cyprus he declared that he was content with what he had done.⁴

Terrorists themselves have quickly acknowledged and made practical use of the high potential of media coverage as means of spreading their ideas, causes, and ideologies. This has resulted in the 'theatre of terror' - media oriented terrorism, aimed not at its immediate victims, but at the vast audiences reached by the electronic media and the press. The latter "are always quick to publish and broadcast information about terrorist activities, reinforcing terrorist successes and encouraging other groups to follow in their footsteps. There is also undoubtedly a sense of exhilaration that

4 Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, War Without End, (London, Harap, 1986) p. 18.

the terrorist will sense by capturing world headlines and embarrassing an established government. If this alone can be done, a terrorist group may believe that a major objective has been accomplished."⁵

In relation to commercial mass media, a thesis has been forwarded that there exists a de facto symbiotic relationship between them and the terrorism. At the terrorist end, "media technology has made the media an indispensable device by which an individual or a small group of individuals can magnify their power and influence over society within a short period of time and with relatively little effort... Since the mass media have the capacity to disseminate information concerning occurrences of terror-violence, they have the capability to create the social impact desired by the perpetrators. Thus, the perpetrators depend upon the mass media to

5 R. Kupperman, "Defeating Terrorism: Three Lines of Defense", in Ronald D. Crelinsten (ed.) Research Strategies for the Study of International Political Terrorism., (Montreal: International Centre for Comparative Criminology, 1977), p. 14.

disseminate their sociopolitical message and the terror-inspiring nature of their act.⁶ At the media's end, a terrorist incident provides an extremely newsworthy subject, one that has an element of adventure and some entertainment value - "as the public is entertained by movies of horror, terror and catastrophe, it is entertained by the reports of acts of violence and terror."⁷ Obviously, the relationship is more complex than this. Violence shown too often becomes less shocking as the public grows used to this sort of news.

A very interesting point is raised by Wieviorka and Wolton, who come to the conclusion that: "(own translation) not only the media do not publicize terrorist causes, but, to the contrary, they contribute to the weakening of the terrorists, as they open a door through which the terrorists can abandon the armed

6 M. Cherif Bassiouni, "Problems in Media Coverage of Nonstate-Sponsored Terror-Violence Incidents", in L.Z. Freedman and Y. Alexander (eds.), Perspectives on Terrorism. (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983), pp. 178-181.

7 Bernard Johnpoll, "Terrorism and the Mass Media in the United States", in Y. Alexander and S. M. Finger (eds.), Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. (New York: The John Jay Press, 1977), pp. 158-159.

struggle and enter the political scene, where debates and arguments replace bombs. The media may be the best means of introducing politics into terrorism."⁸ This might indeed be true if not for the fact that there is more involved in the issue than just the media's and the terrorists' interests. As put by Rubenstein⁹ "is terrorism motivated by political grievances, or has it simply become another tool of international relations for some states? Most often, the answer is both." Terrorism has indeed become another element of the international political scene, and as such is being used by the players to their advantage. The same applies to the media. Not only do they (explicitly or implicitly) represent a vast array of sponsors - socio-political orientations, movements and organizations - but there also exist, in some areas of the world, state-owned and controlled media, which obviously, although not always explicitly, represent these states' interests. Precisely the above is going to be the focus of this study: trying to establish some of the ways and techniques in which the media serve the interests of their sponsors.

8 Michel Wieviorka and Dominique Wolton, Terrorisme à la une. Media, terrorisme et démocratie. (Gallimard, 1987), p. 215.

9 Richard E. Rubenstein, Alchemists of Revolution. Terrorism in the Modern World. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1987), p. 19.

The assessment of the ways in which the media vary their coverage presents some methodological problems. It is tempting to use quantitative analysis, but in this case it can have only limited usefulness. Other aspects, which are often impossible to quantify, are often of far more importance, such as for example the overall tone of coverage - irony, sarcasm etc. For the coverage of terrorist incidents especially, not only the volume of coverage is important, but also its qualitative aspects: the attitudes (explicit or implicit) toward the groups or individuals committing terrorist acts, background information, presentation of demands or ideological platforms of terrorists, emphasis on conflict or negotiation, to name just a few. Therefore, a combination of events data analysis and a qualitative description will be used.

The most useful source of data for such a comparison is a daily newspaper. It "systematically records a large volume of data in a readily retrievable fashion. ... As far as the agenda-setting process is concerned, there is evidence that the broadcast medium uses the product of the print medium. ... Examinations of the Canadian media have reached the same conclusion: newspapers play a key role in preparing the messages which are disseminated by other

media channels."¹⁰ Therefore, an analysis of the contents of major newspapers should give us a good indication of the overall trends in news reporting in a given society.

10 M.J. Kelly and T.H. Mitchell, "Transnational Terrorism and the Western Elite Press", Political Communication and Persuasion, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 275-276.

1.2 Place of this Study in the Research on Terrorism

Over the most recent twenty or so years terrorism has been occupying front pages of newspapers and prime time on TV. It has had enormous influence on the habits and every-day routines of many people and it continues to be a priority on many governmental agendas. Yet, when looked at realistically, terrorism is far less destructive than it appears to be. Far more people die in aircraft crashes caused by technical malfunctions than in ones caused by terrorist bombs. Many more people die of criminals' than of terrorists' bullets. Examples can be multiplied, the point remains that terrorism is in fact the cause of far less physical damage and is less of a threat to people's lives than most of us believe.

Statistics show that only a small percentage of terrorist incidents result in bodily harm either to the victims, or to the perpetrators. For example, the ITERATE study by the CIA gives a total of 3 329 incidents between January 1, 1968 and December 31, 1977, 12% of which resulted in somebody having been killed, and in 15.7% injuries were reported.¹¹ Another estimate by the

11 Alex Schmid, Political Terrorism: a Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature, (Amsterdam, North Holland Publishing, 1983), p. 259.

CIA, this time using a far more liberal definition of terrorism, gives the number of 10 748 domestic (U.S.) and international operations, with a toll of 9 714 individuals killed, 10 177 wounded and property damage worth \$701 839 542.¹² Even if this relatively high estimate were to be accepted, the average of about 1 000 individuals killed and another 1 000 wounded per year worldwide can hardly be considered a major issue. Some major urban agglomerations, such as New York or Chicago, have higher homicide statistics.

As a method of political struggle, on the other hand, "terrorism is a low-risk, and therefore attractive, activity. The analysis of data from the 1960s revealed that terrorists were themselves casualties in only 14 percent of all cases - a much lower figure than in two alternative forms of violent political activity, rioting and guerrilla warfare, where rioters and guerrillas characteristically sustain more casualties than security forces or noncombatants"¹³. In relation to just one form

12 Foreword to Y. Alexander & J.M. Gleason (eds.) Behavioral and Quantitative Perspectives on Terrorism, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. xi.

13 Chalmers Johnson, "Perspectives on Terrorism", in Laqueur and Alexander (eds.), The Terrorism Reader, p. 270.

of terrorist activity, kidnapping, Brian Jenkins states that

there is almost 80% chance that all members of the kidnapping team will escape death or capture, whether or not they successfully seize hostages. Once they make explicit demands there is a close to even chance that all or some of those demands will be granted and virtually a 100% probability of achieving worldwide or at least national publicity.¹⁴

Consequently, terrorism has become, and remains, an attractive alternative for smaller, more marginal groups with less popular support. They can reasonably expect widespread publicity at a reasonably low cost. If the whole issue of terrorism is to be understood and the threat it poses eventually overcome, the study of media coverage of terrorist incidents must arrive at definite conclusions. Otherwise the world order and peace risks being overcome by the multiplicity of violent groups, each being able to wield influence over political matters unproportional to its real strength.

For the purpose of this study, it is desirable to find a definition which would help in the selection of

14 Brian Jenkins and J. Johnson, International Terrorism: a Chronology, 1968-1974, (Santa Monica, Rand, 1975), p. 3.

incidents which will form the basis for the analysis. It is no easy task to determine whether an incident is indeed terrorist or not. The emotional load contained in the term has resulted in the popular tendency toward labeling as "terrorist" any act of kidnapping, assassination, hostage taking, hijacking etc. However, as clearly not every such act of violence is terrorist, this only increases the already existing confusion, and adds to the misunderstanding of the whole issue.

There are some common elements in all definitions that are fundamental to terrorism and differentiate it from other related concepts such as violent crime, revolution or assassination. These include tyrannicide, (urban) guerrilla warfare, violence, revolution, war, crime, madness, politics¹⁵ in various proportions and combinations. It appears that most are either partial and referring to a particular set of events under analysis, or are too vast in scope and therefore do not reflect the variety of modern terrorism.

15 Alex Schmid, Political Terrorism: a Research Guide..., pp. 8-9.

In his very thorough book "Alchemists of Revolution" Richard E. Rubenstein defines terrorism merely as "politically motivated violence engaged in by small groups claiming to represent the masses."¹⁶ In his view, terrorism is a logical step in the revolutionary continuum in which young and politically active people, predominantly of intelligentsia origin, become frustrated in their attempts to bring about change in a peaceful way as well as in attempts to ignite and organize large-scale mass movement. It is relatively easy and logical for them to turn to small-scale violence. What is most important, however, is that, contrary to the popular sentiment, "most terrorists are not insane fanatics, career criminals, or government hirelings, but normal people driven to extremes by their situation and by mistaken political conceptions."¹⁷ These people will try the best they can to further their cause.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of terrorism is only important as far as it allows us to justify the selection of events to be included into the analysis of press coverage. It is therefore important to

16 Richard E. Rubenstein, Alchemists of Revolution. Terrorism in the Modern World. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1987), p. 16.

17 Ibid., p. 228.

point out those elements which stress the dependence of terrorism upon the mass media as an intermediary.

From this angle, in order of importance, the most fundamental characteristics of terrorism are:

1. it is political in nature.
2. the essence of terrorism lies in its communicating a message to a broader audience. It is not violence for the sole purpose of harming its victims.
3. the ultimate target of a terrorist act is a group larger than the immediate victims, to which group the message is directed. Presumably, the message is directed at individuals and groups of some political importance, so that the goals of the terrorists can be more easily achieved. "Public opinion" is the broadest group to which the message may be directed.
4. the selection of victims is done on a group (class) basis, and not according to their individual position, "guilt", etc. This clearly differentiates an act of terrorism from an act of "revolutionary justice" (e.g. punishing traitors, collaborators, etc.).

These four basic elements grouped together find reflection in the following synthetical definition proposed by Schmid:

Terrorism is a method of combat in which random or symbolic victims serve as instrumental target of violence. Group or class characteristics ... form the basis for their selection for victimization. ... Other members of that group or class are put in a state of chronic fear (terror).¹⁸

18 Schmid, Political Terrorism: a Research Guide..., p. 111.

3. WHY A CROSS-SYSTEMIC STUDY?

The commercial mass media in democratic societies have received a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Their public role as the guardian of the freedom of expression and a critical observer of the political and economic life has been acknowledged and well documented. Also, the media in democratic societies have been criticized for allowing the commercial requirements of the enterprise to take priority over the responsibility to disseminate objective news in a non-partisan, objective and detached fashion. By and large, from the scholarly point of view, the role of the media in open societies has been well researched and documented.

Comparatively very little has been written on the subject of state-owned, monopolistic media in authoritarian societies. Generally, it is acknowledged, that they merely represent the interests and the point of view of their governments, acting rather in the capacity of a guide and a teacher to the society than of a guardian of constitutional freedoms and of a protector from governmental excesses. In relation to communist societies, Marxist ideologues themselves have included

the media (like virtually anything public) into the realm of tools serving the purpose of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet treating all media in authoritarian societies as just faithful servants of the governments is a gross oversimplification. Some journals, for example, enjoy more freedom from censorship than others, some are allowed wider latitude in certain matters, such as news from within a certain professional field. Even among journalists there are those, who seem to get away with unorthodox writing. Finally, "reading between the lines" is another way of defeating the government monopoly on news distribution and censorship. And where there is reading between the lines, there must be writing between the lines, done by journalists supposedly loyal to the regime. All these issues have been generally neglected by scholars, even though it is difficult to overestimate their importance. Media of the authoritarian societies are by definition the exclusive source of information for about a third of the world's population, and even for this one reason deserve significantly more attention than what they have received to date.

As the consequence of the neglect of the state-controlled media in the literature, other important

issues have not been sufficiently researched either. For example, while the victimization of western democracies by terrorism has been widely researched, the fact that the Soviet bloc has escaped almost untouched by terrorism received very little attention. One hypothesis is that while the Soviets, like any other responsible country, have no interest in promoting terrorism, the mechanisms of control developed by the authoritarian/totalitarian regimes are far more effective in controlling and discouraging terrorism, and therefore incidents have been rare.

Another interpretation promoted by another group of scholars is that, for communist regimes, terrorism is a legitimate political tool and therefore the communist bloc countries promote it worldwide and keep it under control. According to this interpretation, the one universal key factor responsible for the growth of terrorism in the West is its toleration, encouragement, and even active support by the Soviet Union.... It is seen as an indispensable tactical tool in the communist struggle for power and influence within and among nations. The ideological justification for this interpretation is found in the works of founders of orthodox Marxism-Leninism and of other prominent

communist authors who, to a greater or lesser extent, advocated the employment of confrontation tactics, including terrorism, for achieving communist aims.¹⁹

A counter-argument has been forwarded that the Marxist-Leninists believe in mass action rather than individual terror and therefore terrorism would be ideologically alien to them. This is about all that can be found on this subject in the scholarly literature. As data are not readily available, the whole issue is a domain of journalistic speculation rather than scholarly research.

Clearly, the Soviet empire itself is potentially vulnerable to internal civil strife as it comprises many national and religious groups, among them the militant Shiite Moslems. The stance of the Soviet government and mass media is very well summarized in the following quote:

If a resistance movement of Moslems in Soviet Azerbaidjan tried to fight in the cause of liberation from Russian rule, that would be a heinous plot. Hypocrisy is common enough in the assessing of terrorist movements and, it has to be admitted that in the west we are not immune from it. The Soviets get around the problem by

19 Yonah Alexander, "Some Perspectives on Terrorism and the Soviet Union," in W. Laqueur and Y. Alexander (eds.), The Terrorism Reader. A Historical Anthology. (New York, Penguin, 1987), p. 366

making arbitrary realpolitik decisions on which wars of liberation are just wars, and which are unjust. But in this decision-taking they are conscious of the risk that by over-encouraging liberation movements in the outside world they may be setting a bad example to all those discontented ethnic groups within the Soviet empire.²⁰

Despite their very careful policy and ties with many militant groups, the Soviets have not been totally immune from terrorism. In 1985, four of their diplomats in Beirut were seized as hostages (and one killed) and demands were made that the Soviet Union should force their client state, Syria, to stop the battle in Tripoli. Suddenly the Russians were confronted by exactly the same dilemma that embarrassed the United States when the Islamic hijackers of the TWA flight insisted that Washington must force their client state, Israel, to release prisoners in exchange for lives.²¹

Democracies, on the other hand, have been adamant, if not always effective, in their condemnation of terrorism. It is argued that democracies have been attacked by terrorism because, by definition, "they are political systems in which respect for a dissenting

20 Dobson and Payne, pp. 221-222.

21 Ibid., p. 21.

minority and government by consent, not by violence, are fundamental premises. Democracies, conceived as governments of free peoples, never have developed adequate ways of combatting continuous systematic violence, and particularly individual tactical terror and assassination. Free societies view individual political assassination as an exceptional, isolated occurrence; a country in which a citizen enjoys freedom and relative welfare should be free of violence."²²

Recently it has been estimated that two-thirds of all victims of terror are Americans. Since 1973 there have been well over 3,000 terrorist attacks upon Americans and American property. Including casualties caused by the Lebanese suicide bomb attacks, more than 350 have been assassinated.²³ The high proportion of attacks against Americans is accompanied by a very low proportion of attacks against Soviet and other Eastern Bloc targets - people and property. This, and other factors such as the accompanying anti-American propaganda cultivated by the Eastern Bloc mass-media, has led a number of journalists, investigating the issue of

22 Feliks Gross, "Causation of Terror", in Laqueur and Alexander (eds.), The Terrorism Reader, p. 235.

23 Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, War Without End, (London, Harap, 1986), p. 19.

terrorism to advance the thesis of Soviet involvement in master-minding a terrorist campaign to destabilize Western democracies. One of the more famous partisans of this thesis is Claire Sterling, an American journalist living in Rome, whose books have stirred quite a controversy around the issue. Again, as data are not readily available, the whole issue is a domain of journalistic speculation rather than scholarly research.

As far as the Soviet and satellite mass-media are concerned, their position has for a long time been that of encouragement of various guerrilla and resistance groups fighting "reaction, colonialism, imperialism and zionism", even if that meant using terrorist tactics. The principle of terrorism, however, was never openly endorsed. With all the controversy surrounding the issue of Soviet sponsorship of terrorism, it should be interesting and potentially informative to take a close look at the treatment of terrorism by the mass media of the Soviet bloc and to confront it with the treatment given by the commercial media of the open societies. The Soviet mass media, which are state-controlled, will presumably display a tendency to protect the interests of their government and to protect the "friendly" terrorist groups. In doing this, what techniques will they use? Will they apply the

same standards of good journalism as the commercial media are supposed to? Will they be objective in presenting the facts? Will the commercial press be objective? The whole issue certainly is not clear-cut and the scholarly literature, for the time being, does not provide answers to these questions.

4. THE HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to compare the coverage accorded to terrorist incidents by commercial and state-controlled mass media. It will be necessary to establish benchmarks in relation to which the two can be compared. This will necessitate an investigation of rules and standards defining "good journalism," as well as the ethics of the profession. We will then proceed into the discussion of the coverage itself, based on comparative analysis of coverage of two selected incidents by two members of the international "elite press." We will try to assess whether the coverage corresponds to the universally accepted standards, if such indeed exist. On this basis we will try to develop conclusions as to which factors may determine the picture of events that is presented to the public. Literature on the subject (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, Weimann, 1985) suggests that factors such as geographical and political distance, country's prestige, emotional involvement etc. determine the ultimate meaning of the image presented to the public. For example, labels such as "murderers", or "psychopaths", or political connotations such as "right" or "left-wing", "reactionary" or "heretic", all carry with them some form of evaluation which is passed on to

the readers/viewers. This in turn, presumably, results in the reader/viewer developing a "mental image" of the events and adopting certain attitude towards the events covered, the perpetrators, the victims, the political situation in general, etc.

Moreover, sympathetic treatment of some terrorist groups, for example avoiding calling them "terrorists" and using instead the term "guerrillas" or "fighters", tends to imply that terror, in some cases, can be justified. The most often voiced justification are the so called "underlying causes", for example foreign occupation, colonialist exploitation, etc. The rationale is that oppressed people have the right to fight back with whatever means available, including terrorism, when their cause is just.

As indicated before, it is reasonable to expect selective and distorted coverage of terrorist events by the international mass media. The actual content of the coverage, as suggested by Weimann,²⁴ will depend on the political persuasion and the perception of self-interest

24 Gabriel Weimann, "Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Labeling Terrorism in the Israeli Press." Political Communication and Persuasion, vol. 2, No. 4, (1985), pp. 433-445.

by the authors of the message. Moreover, "it is reasonable to expect a purposeful distortion of actual facts, omission or addition of certain facts, all guided by the political interest of the author of the message." The authors may be of multiple types: governments, interest groups, lobbies, or simply editors or individual journalists. Even if no direct interest of the party is involved, the set of personal or ideological convictions, sort of "intellectual glasses" would normally determine the contents of the message. The channel through which terrorist message is filtered can be represented as follows:

THE MESSAGE OF THE TERRORISTS => PASSED AND REINTERPRETED
BY THE MEDIA => RECEIVED AND REINTERPRETED BY THE AUDIENCE.

This study concentrates on the critical, intermediary stage of this process, looking at how the message of the original authors is taken up by the media and passed on to the ultimate audience; whether it is altered, and if so, how the alteration is achieved, whether any facts are retained, altered or withheld from the audience, and how does the interpretive part of coverage stand up to scrutiny. In other words, are the media passing on the original message, or are they creating their own, only loosely based on the original. For practical reasons, only press coverage is considered

and radio and TV are excluded. The guiding hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

The coverage of terrorist events by the international press will be distorted by factors of political nature, which can be called "political distance". The more "remote" the event, the more objective (true to the fact and less emotional) the coverage will be. Factors determining the political distance are such as: the political affiliation of the terrorists, their nationality, their demands, the identity of their victims, etc.

A series of secondary hypotheses can be developed on the above basis. It is therefore expected, for example, that when no national prestige of the country involved is at stake, the coverage will be more objective, in the sense of providing a more complete picture of the events and of their background and withholding less information. Put differently, no-one wants to appear to be a loser, and if there is no such risk, the coverage will be more balanced. Otherwise, it will tend to minimize the losses and maximize the gains in prestige.

Similarly, it is expected that the attitude of the press toward the terrorists will vary depending on the involvement of one's own nationals or friends either as victims or as perpetrators. If nationals of a given

country become victims, it is expected that the coverage will be more conciliatory in tone. Consequently, if no lives of compatriots are to be protected, the attitude will be less conciliatory (emphasizing use of force rather than negotiation).

Another secondary hypothesis pertains to the manner in which the incidents are related to the global ideological and political struggle. It is expected that terrorist deeds by ideological opponents will be pictured as repulsive, inhuman, etc., while similar deeds by one's friends or allies will be pictured in a cooler, more impersonal way. It is also expected that every opportunity will be taken to discredit or inculcate political opponents and to present one's own policy in the most positive perspective.

5. THE STANDARDS OF JOURNALISM

In the technical-juridical sense, journalism is not a profession. "It has no single binding industry-wide code as have medicine and law; and those journalistic codes that do exist lack punitive provisions. Nonetheless, in the past decade or so, journalists have been busy adopting both industry-wide codes and codes within individual news organizations."²⁵ Any assessment of the quality of the press necessitates a set of guidelines, or references as to what should be considered the standard of good journalism. This question only superficially appears to be simple. As put by Nelson A. Crawford:

the papers are urged by some to state all the facts without fear of favour. They are besought by others to omit all news which might suggest crime to the criminal, abnormal acts to the psychopathic, or mischief to the children. One critic points to their duty to editorialize in favour of liberal or radical views, another to take a stand in favour of the Constitution as interpreted by the National Security League and similar organizations. One critic would have the newspaper sell fish, coal, or what not, in order to break local monopolies. Still another would have the newspaper devote its attention primarily to getting good men into office and keeping out the bad.²⁶

25 Tom Goldstein, The News at any Cost, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 165.

26 Nelson Antrim Crawford, The Ethics of Journalism, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), pp. 26-27.

This variety of opinion is due, in large measure, to mental confusion surrounding the issue of media's role in society. It represents, however, to a large degree the status quo in journalism, not only in the United States but worldwide.

Generally, two approaches to the issue of journalistic ethics can be distinguished. "On one end are those who hold that the newspaper is primarily "a molder of public opinion", and this molding, according to their view, is not necessarily to be based on actual facts, investigated and proved true, but on assumed facts, uninvestigated, plus exhortation based on ethical, political, and other dogmas likewise not subjected to any critical examination. On the other end stand those who would make the newspaper exclusively a disseminator of objective facts, even to the extent of omitting all editorial comment, all feature material, and everything else that is not strictly news."²⁷ The actual journalistic practice lies somewhere within the broad spectrum between these two extremes.

Clearly, journalism was always recognized as an activity having a certain public or quasi-public

27 Crawford, pp. 34 and 36.

function, and therefore responsibility. "During the course of the last century, together with the development of the scientific method or arriving at conclusions from definitely ascertained facts and its extension to studies in economics, sociology and politics, with which journalism commonly deals, the standard of journalistic reporting has been evolving toward the dissemination of objective facts as the primary, if not exclusive function of the press. All its other functions should be subordinated to it."²⁸

The first two points of the Oregon Code of Ethics for Journalism state:

- "we will put accuracy above all other considerations in the written word, whether editorial, advertisement, article, or news story.

- we will interpret accuracy not merely as the absence of actual misstatement, but as the presence of whatever is necessary to prevent the reader from making a false deduction."²⁹

The actual implementation of these principles, however, has been far from complete.

28 Crawford, p. 36.

29 In Crawford, The Ethics of Journalism, p. 188.

The journalist's role lies somewhere in between a witness and a participant. It shifts with the situation and with the type of journalism being practiced. "When someone is drowning and no one else is around, a journalist obviously ought to act. But in wartime, with lives constantly at risk, a journalist cannot do his job if he must be responsible for each life around him. Under certain circumstances, journalists are expected to cooperate with the law, just as they would be expected to save a drowning man.... There is consensus among journalists that a journalist has a responsibility to inform the police of an imminent crime."³⁰

Another question is whether the commercial requirements of the enterprise are not assuming priority over the supposed point of the enterprise, which is the delivery of news that makes the world around us more understandable. It is whether the industry as a whole is not so dominated by those acutely sensitive to its business necessities that it will slight the mission for which it was given constitutional protection. If the media behave just like any other businesses, they will be

30 Tom Goldstein, The News at any Cost, pp. 32-33 and 47.

treated like other businesses, and soon they will be regulated like them.³¹

While the ethics of the press in open societies has been frequently discussed and it appears that both its theory and practice evolve toward the interpretation of "objective facts", the press in closed or totalitarian societies seems to serve a different purpose. Being subordinated to, or actually owned and operated by, the State, the mass media undoubtedly serve the primary purpose of presenting the State's point of view to the citizens and foreigners. To what extent, however, is this practice in contradiction to the ideal of disseminating true facts?

As put by Nelson A. Crawford, "the government-owned newspaper is primarily open to the objection that it would certainly be used for propaganda. Indeed, it seems astonishing that government newspapers should be seriously advocated by those who are familiar with the politician's attitude toward facts, and particularly by those who complain of current political conditions. The unreliability of purported facts furnished to newspapers by government officials has been emphasized again and

31 Tom Goldstein, p. 104.

again. The inability to reason from facts to conclusions and the practice of basing opinions purely on preconceived notions are apparent to any one who will read The Congressional Record or listen, as a newspaper reporter, to the press statements made by executive officials."³²

Propaganda is a serious problem indeed. "It is practiced by every type of institution, from the patent medicine trade to the governments of important nations. Stimulated tremendously by the war, where its effectiveness was made manifest to the most skeptical, propaganda has obtained, by payment of large salaries, the services of exceedingly skillful thinkers and writers, commonly ex-journalists. Several years ago, there were 1,200 professional press agents and publicity experts in New York City alone. Today the number is doubtless much greater."³³

A phenomenon worth noticing in the development of the world media is the appearance of so called "elite press". It appears in both the liberal and the authoritarian/totalitarian parts of the world and is

32 Crawford, p. 158.

33 Crawford, p. 160.

concerned mainly with the practice of responsible, serious journalism. As put by John C. Merrill, "through the elite press is disseminated either the thoughtful, pluralistic, and sophisticated dialogue of a free society, or the necessary social and political guidance of the closed society. The free man reads the elite press heuristically; the person in an authoritarian society reads it pragmatically. In the first case, the elite paper offers ideas which the reader wants to consider; in the other, it gives the reader what he must know to be a well-integrated member of this society. In one case, the reader of the elite newspaper is stimulated to free individual thought and action; in the other, he is indoctrinated for concerted activity. In one case the paper is a catalyst to democratic self-determination; in the other it is an instrument with which to control the social system."³⁴

"Papers like Pravda and Izvestia are read seriously by persons in the free world who consider these journals as accurately reflecting official viewpoints of the Soviet Union. And, no doubt, Soviet officials, regardless of their feelings about Western journalistic

34 John C. Merrill, The Elite Press, (New Ycrk: Pitman Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 11-12.

bias and capitalistic exploitation of the press, peruse The New York Times and the (London) Times regularly for their picture of the United States and Britain."³⁵

Within the concept of elite press Merrill makes the largely technical distinction between:

QUALITY PAPER: a courageous, independent, news-views-oriented journal, published in an open society.

PRESTIGE PAPER: a serious journal of some power elite, concerned with dogma or policy dissemination, spokesman or propagandist for some person or group, and published in a closed society.

A prestige paper, then, is well known primarily (or solely) because it is the voice of some authoritarian institution and as such wields influence among the audience submissive to that institution. It is more concerned with being a "bulletin board" for the power elite than with reporting and discussing current events. In spite of its influence, it is closed to but one viewpoint - usually the government's - and is wary of those persons or groups with deviant ideologies. These papers, without a doubt, are tremendously important today

35 Merrill, pp. 12-13.

as instruments of agitation, indoctrination, and social control³⁶.

36 Merrill, pp. 15-16.

5.1 Distortion in the Press

As put by A. Cooper, "the power of the media is by no means confined to the simple reporting of newsworthy events. The media play a most influential part in the formation of public opinion through analysis and comment upon news and other matters of interest. Raw news forms, indeed, but a minor part of its copious production ... Objectivity is not a characteristic of this process. Indeed, the very interest in this, for the public, lies in the subjectivity of the presentation, the colour or patina which these events take on as seen and interpreted by the more influential media figures. Here is the true power of the media: the ability to convey not news, but the true sense of our life and times through the eyes of those who have the ability to see and report on events after their own distinctive fashion."³⁷

In their social role, the media act as mediator between man and his environment. "As society increases in complexity and events affecting one's welfare occur increasingly outside one's immediate experience, the

37 H.H.A. Cooper, "Terrorism and the Media", in Y. Alexander and S.M. Finger (eds.) Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. (New York: the John Jay Press, 1977), p. 148..

objective world retreats ever farther out or reach, out of sight, and out of mind. Man's reliance on the mass media increases correspondingly as he attempts to construct for himself a trustworthy picture of his surroundings. By providing messages from the outside world, the media influence the way people view the world and, consequently, their behaviour in response to it."³⁸

As presented in the previous chapter, the basis for the media's role as a mediator between man and his environment is the dissemination of objective, empirically verifiable information. Only on such basis can the editorial comment and interpretation be properly built. The most often voiced charges in connection with the newspapers' role in disseminating objective facts can be summarized as follows:

- the manufacture of news;
- misrepresenting the news in the headlines (although the stories themselves may be reasonably accurate);
- putting "hokum" into the news (adding to news stories invented matter in order to make the facts appear to conform to the public ideas);
- suppression of certain news;

38 Bassiouni, p. 186.

- coloring of the news according to the policy of the paper or to the convictions of the editor/publisher.

Another form of distortion is sensationalism. It means emphasizing certain kind of news, called "human interest", at the expense of other types of news. "There is also involved in sensationalism the ethical question as to the desirability of "playing up" criminal, vicious, or sordid sides of life."³⁹ There are other, more significant relationships that shape the news. "Most news organizations have a point of view on any number of topics, though most of the time this viewpoint is left unstated. For example, most media in Florida are boosters of a state that is booming."⁴⁰

It would be utopian to expect any newspaper to present a full picture of events. As suggested by Galtung and Ruge, the media may vary in the degree to which they present many aspects of the situation or, "rather, like the partners in a court case, try to present only the material that is easily compatible with their own political views." In the latter case selection and distortion will probably be accentuated and certainly

39 Crawford, p. 107.

40 Goldstein, p. 191.

not decrease. They further suggest the decisive factor determining the degree of distortion being the number of intermediary steps (e.g. foreign correspondents, news agencies) through which the news pass before being transmitted to the recipients.⁴¹

Prestige or quality press tends to be free of the more blatant kinds of distortion. "A class of details commonly omitted are such matters as the names of poisons used in committing suicide, the specific methods employed by burglars in executing their crimes, and the salacious details of abnormal crimes. The reason for the suppression of these facts is simply that they are likely to be suggestive to the psychopathic or the criminal. It has been found that the publication of stories of the use of a certain poison for committing suicide is followed by a large number of suicides in the same manner. The evidence as to criminal acts is less definite."⁴²

Even the noble principles and serious approach to journalism of the elite press do not guarantee, however, perfect coverage. "As an institution, such as the press,

41 Johann Galtung and M.H. Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News", Journal of Peace Research 2 (1965), p. 68.

42 Crawford, p. 105.

(...) embarks on a campaign for what is conceived to be for human betterment, there appears the tendency to emphasize facts that support the desired end, to minimize facts that seem to oppose it, and even to falsify the actual situation altogether."⁴³ No wonder, then, that the elite press, too, is not free of certain kinds of distortion, although to a far lesser extent than the mass of less ethically minded journals. In a perverse manner this makes distortions in the elite press the more dangerous, as these papers are valued for their serious approach and the information contained in them is taken much more literally.

Another serious problem with media coverage is the abstract and impersonal portrayal of the act of terror-violence and its harmful effects. An example of this is the coverage of the Iranian seizure of the American hostages in 1979 - 80, "when the sixty-three, later fifty, persons held were almost never described as individuals. No longer was it a matter of a person with a face, a name, a family, a life, but the concept of "hostage" that acquired the connotation of a pawn on the chessboard of world politics. The public's outraged reaction was directed more at the political significance

43 Ibid., p. 128.

of the act than its harmful effects on the individuals involved. In time, the public's perception of the problem focused almost exclusively on the political dimensions of the incident, while becoming immune to its human dimensions."⁴⁴

44 Bassiouni, p. 188.

6. THE TESTING

As presented before, the coverage of terrorist events by the international press is expected to be distorted by factors of political nature, which can be called "political distance". The more "remote" the event, the more objective (true to the fact and less emotional) the coverage should be. In order to test this proposition the coverage of two terrorist events in two "elite" national newspapers was analyzed, of which one was representative of an open, another of an authoritarian society. These were: The New York Times (United States), and Izvestia (Soviet Union). In order to further control the environment of the analysis, the study analyzed the coverage of two selected terrorist incidents that occurred during the recent years:

- TWA airliner hijacking, 14 - 30 June 1985,
- kidnapping of four Soviet diplomats in Beirut, 30 Sept. - 30 Oct. 1985.

Both incidents fall into the category of "terrorism" according to the definition presented on p. 21: the victims were randomly chosen individuals, acting as the instrumental target of violence. For the perpetrators they represented another entity: the enemy. While the life or death of the individuals themselves was largely

irrelevant to the terrorists' cause, the violence exerted over them served as an amplifier for the terrorist groups' revindications. The mass media all over the globe gave the incidents generous coverage.

Another reason for the choice of incidents was the involvement of the nationals of each country whose elite press was being analyzed, as hostages in each of the incidents. Both incidents were highly publicized, and put the prestige of the countries involved at stake. Moreover, the perpetrators in both cases were Lebanese Muslim groups, although different factions in each case. It was attempted to clarify a number of questions and issues which directly affect the quality of coverage, among others:

- was there an attempt on the part of the newspaper to consistently suppress some specific type of news?
- were the incidents presented upon a broader, meaningful background, and if so, was it done in a manner to influence the attitudes of the reader?
- was justification sought for certain types of terrorist acts?
- was justification sought for certain types of perpetrators?

- was there an attempt to manipulate the reader by presenting him second-hand opinions which reinforced only one view of the conflict?

- how much human element was present? Were the hostages presented as suffering people, thus evoking sympathetic emotions, or were they presented in an impersonal manner?

In order to be able to quantify the contents of the coverage, eight thematic units were distinguished:

1. Demands of hijackers
2. Background information - information that should help the reader to understand better the origin of the conflict, origin, structure and political profile of the parties to the conflict, etc.
3. Human element - items emphasizing the suffering of victims, their families, etc.
4. Authorities' position - statements made by the officials of nations involved.
5. Experts/observers' position - statements made by others, not directly involved in the conflict (scholars, analysts, officials of third countries, etc.)
6. Use of force/conflict
7. Negotiations/peaceful resolution
8. Other relevant information.

Within each unit, the appearance of each distinct news item was counted (repetitions not taken into account) and given the value of 1. Totals for each category were summed up for each of the two newspapers, on a daily basis, for the time period of the incidents' duration. A direct comparison would then reveal the trends in reporting shown by the two newspapers. Not only news about the incident itself, but also related items such as negotiations behind the scene, historical background information, etc. were taken into account. This should give a more reliable indication of the tendencies the two newspapers show in reporting and informing their audiences.

Both newspapers that were analyzed hold important places in the world of serious journalism. Izvestia (News) stands out as one of the two most influential Soviet dailies. It not only wields tremendous power with the nation's leaders, but it claims the largest circulation in the world - more than eight million copies. It is the official organ of the government, specifically of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and is printed in twenty-two cities scattered across the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ The paper contains few hard, last-minute

48 John C. Merrill, The Elite Press, p. 95.

news items, although Izvestia means "News". Most of its pieces educate or agitate, which is considered the prime function of a newspaper.⁴⁹

Izvestia tries to raise the cultural level of the Soviet people, an objective in common with the other big, national or "All-Union" dailies. "Whatever is considered harmful, degrading or purely entertaining is not printed. Such subjects as crime, romance, social items, and human interest features do not find a place in the pages of Izvestia. The paper publishes a steady diet of cultural and political items, readers' letters, serious essays and special announcements, all designed to keep the readers' minds on serious things. Izvestia typifies the best of the Communist elite newspapers and, without a doubt, has as much prestige and influence as any other daily of the world. In the context of the Soviet Union, it is a very important serious daily journal and from the Communist viewpoint is an outstanding contribution to "reasonable" world journalism."⁵⁰

The New York Times is the nearest thing in the United States to a national newspaper. "[It] manages to

49 Ibid., p. 96.

50 Ibid., p. 98.

have readers in every state and in nearly 85% of all counties of the fifty States. One can always expect to find a copy of The New York Times in leading libraries and governmental offices throughout the world. It is not only a national organ in one sense, but goes a long way as do most elite newspapers published in a major language toward being an international newspaper."⁵¹

It has, among all papers of the world, the most widespread collection and publication of news and views. "It is best known as a "newspaper of record" and, while most commentators speak of its quantity, there is no doubt that the general quality of its journalism ranks with the best of the world. Most anything any reader might want in a newspaper, with the exception of journalistic froth, can be found in The Times."⁵²

The influence of The New York Times on United States national politics and its large readership in Washington has been well-documented. A Times associate editor and long-time Washington correspondent, James B. Reston, has often spoken of the paper's concern with thoroughness and accuracy, especially in its political reporting, and has

51 Ibid., p. 263.

52 Ibid., p. 264.

pointed to its responsibility to the serious, intelligent reader. "Our primary responsibility," Reston once said, "is not ... to the commuter reading the paper on the train. Our primary responsibility is to the historian of fifty years from now. Unique among newspapers, The New York Times is prime source material and we must never poison the stream of history."⁵³

53 Ibid., p. 268.

7. THE RESULTS

7.1 The TWA Incident

The coverage accorded to the TWA hijacking (see Appendix "A") by The New York Times was extensive. All the facts pertinent to the event were accounted for. News of the hijacking were always on the first page, and entire pages inside were consecrated specifically to this subject. The tone was generally calm, only accounts of the victim's relatives were somewhat emotional. Relatively little was written on the killing of R. Stethem, the Navy diver. The choice of wording was very careful, with virtually no derogatory labeling. The hijackers were mostly referred to as "hijackers", seldom as "terrorists" and their affiliation was described as "Shiite". The effort of The New York Times made it possible to develop a clear picture of events on the basis of its extensive, sometimes it could be said, overly extensive, coverage. Useful, well-balanced background information was offered.

DEMANDS OF HIJACKERS:

June 15 - terrorist demands are quoted, the statement read by the hijackers is printed in full;

- June 16 - demand to release 700 prisoners repeated; long quotes from Jihad's statement printed.
- June 17 - terrorists quoted, showing resolve to proceed; mention of demands to release 2 Lebanese from Spain.
- June 19 - Spain reported not to comply with the demands.
- June 21- Israel reported disturbed by the American public blaming it for not giving in to hijackers' demands.
- June 24 - Israel would release 766 prisoners; frequent reminders of Geneva Convention violation re: holding the prisoners on Israeli soil.
- June 26 - U.N. reported urging Israel to free the prisoners.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- June 15 - background article on Jihad, held responsible for the hijacking.
- June 18 - long article on Nabih Berri; long article on Shiites in Lebanon.
- June 19 - background on the explosion in Bir-al-Abed, supposedly an attempt on Sheik Fadlallah, head of Hizbollah. CIA links suspected; long article on Shiites.

- June 20 - discussion of airport security; similarities to Iran crisis pointed out.
- June 21 - long article on the American University in Beirut security.
- June 22 - summary of events; anti-American gathering by Hizbollah reported chanting "death to America"; long article on the strain in American Israeli relations.
- June 23 - survey of airport security; article on South Lebanon.
- June 24 - statistics on terrorism; Lebanese government reported out of control in the airport.
- June 26 - background feature on Berri vs. Hizbollah; article on Soviet influence in Syria.

HUMAN ELEMENT:

- June 15 - passengers reported beaten; details on some passengers; interviews with families; personal accounts of released passengers.
- June 16 - details on the pilot; list of passengers; released passengers report beatings, cruelty and fear.
- June 17 - more personal accounts; passengers reported stripped of jewelry, watches and cash.

- June 21 - hostages suspected of "Zionist connections" reported separated; broad quotes from the interview with the hostages.
- June 22 - speculation on the fate of the group with Jewish sounding names; article with details on Conwell (one of hostages).
- June 23 - Americans show support for the hostages.
- June 24 - reports from hostages' home towns.
- June 25 - hostages' families express frustration with Reagan's inaction; long, emotional quotes.
- June 28 - interview with 3 hostages.
- June 29 - hostages attend a farewell banquet given by their captors (Amal); reports from hometowns.
- June 30 - more interviews with hostages speaking of Amal as "kind people".

AUTHORITIES' POSITION:

- June 15 - Pres. Reagan quoted; US government official quoted.
- June 16 - US government officials quoted.
- June 17 - Pres. Reagan: no negotiation with terrorists; report from the crisis centre in the State Dept.
- June 19 - Reagan quoted questioning the Greek position; Pentagon bars reports on US deployments.

June 20 - US warns Shiites not to become "outcasts"; Reagan's views on hostage situations; Pentagon quoted: press and TV give damaging information to the terrorists.

June 21 - calls from Reagan to stop terrorism.

June 22 - Shultz and Peres talk on telephone in an effort to ease tense relations; meeting with Soviet representatives.

June 23 - US warning to Shiites.

June 25 - Shultz urges global action to fight terrorism.

June 26 - US gives warning of reprisals aimed at Lebanon.

June 28 - US demands that 7 Americans missing in Beirut be included and freed with the TWA hostages.

June 29 - Reagan reported firm in his refusal to ask Israel for release of prisoners.

June 30 - US officials deny involvement in any negotiations with Israel over the release of prisoners.

EXPERTS/OBSERVERS' POSITION:

June 17 - experts quoted on "mistake" of earlier prisoner exchange by Israel.

June 20 - Israel praises US for a "tough stance"; King Hussein of Jordan denounces terrorism.

- June 24 - Saudi Arabia and Bahrain denounce hijacking; Soviet press quoted blaming the US.
- June 27 - baggage handlers at Kennedy airport refuse to service a Lebanese airliner in protest.
- June 28 - Muhammad Ali (ex-boxer) goes to Israel to seek the release of his "Moslem brothers"; Senator Helms blames Iran.

USE OF FORCE/CONFLICT:

- June 15 - speculation on use of force.
- June 16 - US reported to send commando squad.
- June 18 - American ships reported to move close to Lebanon; detailed reports on Navy movements.
- June 21 - article on Delta Force and speculation "how to".
- June 25- Shiites demand US ships pull back from Lebanese coast; US fleet discussed in detail.
- June 27 - reports that Reagan is considering punitive action.
- June 30 - Shiites demand a guarantee that US will not retaliate militarily.

NEGOTIATION/PEACEFUL RESOLUTION:

- June 17 - appeal of released hostages to Reagan to avoid military action.
- June 18 - more appeals to Reagan.
- June 20 - the pilot warns not to try military option.

June 21 - hostage news conference: "not to try a rescue"; offers of assistance from Sweden, Switzerland, and Austria.

June 22 - UN and Red Cross offer help in negotiations.

June 23 - Berri: "any kind of military action could endanger hostages' lives".

June 26 - Mubarak urges US not to use force; Bush and Kohl discuss the issue; Michigan shiites offer help.

June 27 - Soviets reported willing to help, but blame the US.

June 28 - French and Swiss willing to accept hostages.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

June 20 - Soviet - Syrian talks reported.

June 29 - Israel offers to free the prisoners, but says "no direct linkage" with the hijacking.

The coverage of the incident by Izvestia was much less extensive. The incident was first mentioned on June 18, three days after it started. Large amounts of data were withheld from readers, including facts necessary for the proper understanding of statements made by the paper. For example, no mention was made of the killing of US Navy diver by the hijackers. Neither was mentioned the fact of Greece delivering the third

potential hijacker to join his colleagues in Algiers in return for Greek hostages. Instead, much space was consecrated to the presentation of the subsequent American - Greek diplomatic crisis. It was presented in the manner clearly suggesting an aggressive stance of the American government vis-a-vis Greece. Wording was generally careful, with term "terrorism" usually avoided. The hijackers were called a "group". The tone was generally calm. The exception was very vivid language used to describe US military buildup in the region, giving an impression of an enormous military concentration and an imminent aggression. Much space was used to emphasize the controversy over the US government's criticism of security at Athens airport and to praise the independent stance of the Greek government. Again, impression was given that the charges were groundless. Generally, high selectivity in the presentation of facts was observed so that a complete image of events could not be constructed by the reader on the basis of reading Izvestia.

DEMANDS OF HIJACKERS:

June 18 - demands to release 700 prisoners from Israel.
presented.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

June 19 - bombardment of Beirut by "New Jersey" reminded.

HUMAN ELEMENT:

none

AUTHORITIES' POSITION:

June 20 - Feagan warns Americans that Athens airport is not safe.

June 22 - Washington reported to prepare a law that would allow the administration to enforce Athens boycott.

EXPERTS/OBSERVERS' POSITION:

June 20 - Greek authorities protest the US position of Athens airport safety, say airport is as safe as any other.

June 21 - Greeks outraged, charges are without ground.

June 22 - more of the same.

June 25 - Mufti of Lebanon blames US for using the hijacking to increase its military presence in the region.

June 28 - Lebanese mass-media reported to qualify the presence of the 6th Fleet as black-mail; As-Saura, Syria: US and Israel prepare an aggression; Beirut population is frightened by

the possibility of US military action against Lebanon.

USE OF FORCE/CONFLICT:

June 18 - US commando team reported dispatched to Cyprus; "Nimitz" and missile ship "Kidd" directed to the region.

June 19 - "Kidd" can be seen from the Beirut harbour; vessels with 1800 marines move from Gibraltar.

June 28 - Reagan threatens to close Beirut airport; unidentified warships approached Beirut harbour, were fired at by Lebanese militia; US airplanes based on "Nimitz" flew over Beirut and Beka'a Valley.

NEGOTIATION/PEACEFUL RESOLUTION:

June 18 - talks by US, France, Great Britain, Italy and Red Cross with Berri.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

June 20 - US itself hides until today "sky bandits", Barazinskas brothers, who "at certain time" hijacked a Soviet plane and killed a stewardess.

Table 1: The distribution of news items in the TWA hijacking incident, Beirut 1985.

	NYT	Izv.
Demands of hijackers:	11	1
Background information:	17	1
Human element:	20	0
Authorities' position:	19	2
Experts/observers' position:	8	7
Use of force/conflict:	9	7
Negotiation/peaceful resolution:	12	1
Other relevant information:	2	1

7.2 The Hijacking of Soviet Diplomats in Beirut.

As for the coverage of the hijacking of four Soviet nationals in Beirut in October 1985 (see appendix B for details), The New York Times consecrated to it more space than Izvestia. The coverage was also more extensive in terms of factual information, and, even more clearly, in terms of background information. The tone was calm and businesslike, with the exception of a number of quotes from Soviet press, which gave the impression of slight irony on the part of The New York Times. Generally, the coverage was well-balanced between the facts and the background, and quite thorough. It had been relegated to second-range news by the concurrent hijacking of the Achille Lauro passenger ship, in which American nationals were involved. It also was rather impersonal in relation to both the victims, and the perpetrators. The names of the organizations and players involved were always given and, if necessary, background information provided. Several pictures were included.

DEMANDS OF HIJACKERS:

Oct. 2 - Islamic Liberation Organization's communique and demands quoted.

Oct. 15 - call to a Lebanese radio station reported, demanding that Soviet embassy be closed, or the hostages would be shot.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Oct. 1 - abduction related (supposedly) to the fighting in the northern part of Tripoli.

Soviets said to have the largest of any foreign missions in West Beirut (27), and to have been hit by rocket fire a year earlier.

HUMAN ELEMENT:

practically nonexistent

AUTHORITIES' POSITION:

Oct. 2 - the official Soviet communique quoted.

Oct. 3 - Soviet statement quoted, with commentary on what it did not mention.

EXPERTS/OBSERVERS' POSITION:

Oct. 3 - TASS quoted, holding Israel indirectly responsible; Israeli Prime Minister Peres quoted, condemning "any form of terrorism".

The statement by the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party's statement quoted, strongly condemning the hijacking.

Pro-Syrian Palestinians point to Arafat as responsible for the kidnapping.

Nov. 1 - Syrian paper quoted, praising the release.

USE OF FORCE/CONFLICT:

Oct. 3 - Moscow reported to have no military bases within striking distance from Beirut.

Oct. 8 - Syrian forces disarm Palestinians in Tripoli.

Oct. 15 - four senior KGB members reported to have arrived in Beirut.

Oct. 25 - Druze militia reported to conduct house-to-house searches.

NEGOTIATION/PEACEFUL RESOLUTION:

Oct. 15 - Gorbachev reported to have raised the issue with Qaddafi, who was visiting Moscow.

Oct. 28 - Syrian-Lebanese committee for the release of the hostages has been formed.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Oct. 3 - Druze protection for the Soviet embassy.

Oct. 5 - Soviets send 60 of their personnel home, but the embassy stays open; Aeroflot flight cancelled without explanation.

The coverage of the incident by Izvestia was very different from that of The New York Times. The first mention of the incident was only three days after it occurred. Not a single photo was shown, and the names of the hostages were released only after the three survivors were set free. By contrast, plenty of third-party opinions and declarations had been provided; these accounted for the bulk of the coverage, and amounted to repeated condemnations of forces of international reaction, imperialism, and zionism. The word "terrorists" was used sparingly, on a few occasions only. The victims were always referred to as "people", or as "Soviet people", which has a warm, personal connotation. The hijacking was consistently referred to as "heinous crime".

DEMANDS OF HIJACKERS:

Oct. 4 - "the perpetrators issued demands relating to fighting Lebanese factions, to which Soviet Union has no relation whatsoever."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

none

HUMAN ELEMENT:

none

AUTHORITIES' POSITION:

Oct. 4 - official declaration, condemning the hijacking and inculpating Israel.

Multiple declarations condemning the perpetrators and forces behind them, described consistently as "imperialist" and "Zionist"

EXPERTS/OBSERVERS' POSITION:

large number of opinions and reactions, from sources as varied as:

- journal "Orient-jour", ("Soviet Union has always worked for peace in the Middle East");
- M. Meierson, director of the U.S. Peace Council ("responsible for the hijacking are the forces of imperialism and zionism");
- Sheik Al-Masri (Amal), praising Soviet Union as "our best friend. We will not allow that it be treated the way Israel and its ally United States are";
- Sheik Fadlallah
- Kuwaiti newspaper "Al-Watan";
- PLO spokesman Abd Rabbu;
- and many quotes from Delhi, Tokyo, Managua, Hanoi, Tunis, Aden, Paris, Budapest, Buenos-Aires, Phenyang, Kuwait, and also from the Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent.

USE OF FORCE/CONFLICT:

none

NEGOTIATION/PEACEFUL RESOLUTION:

none

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Oct. 11 - Soviet embassy requested extra protection -
Lebanese army encircled the buildings.

Table 2: The distribution of news items in the kidnapping
of Soviet diplomats incident, Beirut, 1985.

	NYT	Izv.
Demands of hijackers:	2	1
Background information:	2	0
Human element:	0	0
Authorities' position:	2	2
Experts/observers' position:	4	ca. 30
Use of force/conflict:	4	0
Negotiation/peaceful resolution:	2	0
Other relevant information:	2	1



As the tables demonstrate, the differences in both quantity and quality of information passed on to the readers by the two analyzed newspapers are significant. Compared to a "pure" or "factual" version, both newspapers depart to a higher or lesser degree towards interpreting rather than strictly reporting. What is striking, is the fact that Izvestia's interpretation was based on a very limited selection of facts. It could be compared to building a construction of Lego blocks. The New York Times' construction would be made in a certain way of all available blocks. Izvestia, on the other hand, would build the structure only from blocks of certain colour, and discard all the others. The question to be answered, therefore, is whether the picture the reader gets can be judged acceptable according to commonly accepted standards of good journalism (presented earlier in the study).

The New York Times, known as the "newspaper of record", was extremely thorough in its presentation of facts. It can be concluded that all facts available to the editors at the time were published - it was impossible to detect any omissions. As far as the structure of the presentation is concerned, however, a number of patterns could be discerned, which will be

discussed further later. The coverage of The New York Times can be considered reasonably complete, in contrast to the coverage of Izvestia, which lacked too many important items and played up certain peripheral elements of the story, such as the American - Greek diplomatic rift or the U.S. military presence in the region. The fundamental difference lies in the treatment of facts by the two papers. While The New York Times provided virtually all the facts available, and varied the emphasis placed on certain kinds of them, Izvestia customarily withheld certain categories of news items entirely from its readers, therefore presenting a highly deformed picture of reality.

The "political distance" hypothesis seems to be confirmed in the case of The New York Times, which, in the case of the TWA hijacking presented a much more emotional and imbalanced picture of events, but in the case of the kidnapping of the Soviet diplomats was perfectly balanced, objective and impartial. In the case of Izvestia, the hypothesis is impossible to confirm, as the paper presented both events in such an imbalanced fashion, that it is practically impossible to assess in which case the coverage was more "balanced" or "objective". It was neither balanced nor objective in

either case. The only possible explanation for this is that the policy of the Soviet state was at that time to keep the readers in the dark on everything relating to terrorism. Only the parts of the story that could be used as political tools to discredit the forces of "imperialism, zionism and reaction" were allowed to be printed. This becomes more understandable when two facts are taken into account:

1. detailed reporting on Muslim terrorist activity could be potentially suggestive to the militant groups of Soviet Muslims in the southern republics, especially to the Shiites;
2. being the organ of the Soviet government, Izvestia's main role is to promote its policy. In international affairs, the long-standing policy of the Soviet government has been to undermine the position of the United States and its allies. Being, as it is, part of the governmental monopoly on news distribution, Izvestia could very well use the technique of omission of facts incompatible with its interests, and construct an image of the events based on an arbitrary selection of news. This is probably what Merrill called the "political guidance" function of prestige press in closed societies.

Apart from the fact of not publishing large amounts of data, Izvestia also displayed the disturbing habit of exaggerating certain types of news to the point of their supplanting the main item and becoming the actual focus and purpose of articles. For example, the news of the US naval concentration near the coast of Lebanon were de facto the main focus of a number of articles on TWA hijacking in Izvestia. Here is an example (Izvestia, 19 June 1985, p. 5, own translation):

THE PENTAGON FLEXES ITS MUSCLES. New York, 18 June. (TASS). Following the incident with the hijacking of a Boeing 727 airliner, the United States are concentrating its armed forces in the Middle East, increasing tension in the region.

According to the CBC correspondent, the nuclear aircraft carrier "Nimitz" and minesweeper "Kidd", armed with guided missiles, took positions close to the Lebanese coast. "Kidd" approached Beirut so closely, that it could be seen from the port's guidance tower.

Observers notice the "intelligence value" of this ship: it is equipped with an electronic espionage system, which permits listening to the communication lines at the airport and around it. As underlines the news agency, the goal is to demonstrate the military and air might of the American Sixth Fleet, whose ships, in the experts' opinion, may serve as the platform for an operation to free the hostages.

From the region of Gibraltar move towards the Lebanese shore the landing vessels of the WMS USA with 1,800 marines on board. As the representatives of the Marine Forces admitted, this commando strike force may be used for establishing control over the Lebanese coast, in case of a military operation.

According to some data, the commando strike group known under the code name "Delta" will be used for such operation. As such an operation would be secret, Pentagon does not make public the number of men in the Delta force, or where it presently is being dispatched.

As is known, in the time of bloody unrest in Lebanon and in the period of Israeli aggression against this Arab country, the ships of the Sixth American Fleet many times covered the Lebanese towns and villages with barbarian artillery shelling. In the result, among the peaceful population there were numerous casualties.

At this time, according to news agencies, the American airliner is still at the Beirut airport. There is contradicting information about the location of the hostages.

Tokyo, 18 June. (TASS). According to the Japanese news agency ZKK, international observers do not exclude the possibility that Washington may use force to free the hostages. The agency also underlines, that the size of this incident does not justify the scale of the military preparation of the U.S. at the Lebanese coast.

It may be added, that this article is the only one on the hijacking for the day. The information it provides can hardly be called complete.

As far as the interest of terrorists is concerned, Izvestia's stance could be considered an effective tool for denying the terrorists access to their intended audiences, but an empirical study would be necessary to

confirm that. On the other hand, distortion of events beyond recognition seems to be used for some political purpose. The most striking example of this is the treatment of the TWA hijacking by Izvestia. The hijacking itself, executed by the generally indifferent towards the Soviet Union Lebanese Shiites, was barely mentioned. The whole impact of the coverage went towards emphasizing the strong, aggressive stance of the U.S. government, its military concentration in the region, and its difficulties with its Greek ally. This point is especially striking, as the issue was given such a selective treatment that the actions of the U.S. government appeared totally unfounded and even ridiculous. The key information about the capture of the third terrorist, and his subsequent delivery to his colleagues in return for Greek hostages was totally omitted, thus significantly distorting the image of the diplomatic rift received by Izvestia's readership (Izvestia, 20 June 1985, p. 4, own translation):

ANTI-GREEK CAMPAIGN. Washington, 19 June. (TASS). Following the incident with the American Boeing 727, which was hijacked by a group of Shiite Moslems during flight from Athens to Rome, the Reagan administration started a vicious, anti-Greek campaign.

At the White House press conference President Reagan privately announced that his administration gave warning, through the State

Department, to all the American citizens about the "non-safety of travel through the Athens International Airport". Through the Department of Transport the President asked the air carrier companies to consider "whether it is reasonable to continue the flights to Athens".

Washington has been looking for a long time for a pretext to express its discontent with the independent political course followed by the Papandreu government. The White House did not hide its irritation with the fact that the Greek government distanced itself from Washington's dangerous plans to deploy Pershing-2 missiles and winged missiles throughout Western Europe; that it decided to free the country from American military bases; that it upheld the proposition about the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans; and that it denounced Washington's politics of dictate and blackmail in Central America, South-West Asia and in other regions.

Athens, 19 June. (TASS). The Greek government issued a strong protest against the tendentious accusations of the United States about the "non-observance of flight safety rules" at the Athens airport. In Greece, as in other Western European countries, all necessary measures are taken to assure safety, said Greek minister of Foreign Affairs I. Charalambopoulos at a meeting with the United States' ambassador. Greece, he added, will lead a constant battle against terrorism. The American administration, says the statement, tries to shift the responsibility for the incident to Greece, but it is Washington itself which bears responsibility, because it does not take the necessary measures to regulate the conflict.

To the fictitious nature of the anti-Greek campaign points the fact of extreme inconsistency of the Washington's position. The White House inculcates Greece that it, supposedly, does not fulfill the obligations resulting from the international convention on counter-terrorism. The United States themselves grossly violate international conventions. It is sufficient to remind that the American authorities themselves hide until today air

pirates such as the Barazinskis brothers, who at certain time hijacked a Soviet plane and killed a stewardess.

The above article is one of the three that appeared in Izvestia on the subject; the other two, appearing on June 21 and 22, were kept in very much the same spirit. By contrast, a sample article in the New York Times on the same date states:

U.S. TELLS TOURISTS ATHENS AIRPORT HAS HIGH RISK. By Richard Witkin. The State Department, on direct orders from President Reagan, warned American travelers yesterday that there was a high risk of exposure to terrorism on flights using Athens International Airport. Athens was the boarding point of the men who hijacked a Trans World Airlines jet last Friday.

In Athens, the Greek Government immediately summoned the United States Ambassador to protest what it called an "unjustified and unfriendly" American action.

The Reagan Administration's warning was in reaction not only to the T.W.A. hijacking but also to what it regards as extensive evidence of inadequate security at the Athens terminal. The State Department said there was "above-average potential for terrorist activities" there.

The travelers' warning was initially announced early in the day by Bernard Kalb, the State Department spokesman, and underscored when the President said in his speech that he had personally directed Secretary of State George P. Shultz to take the action.

Mr. Reagan said the warning would remain in effect until the Greek Government had "improved the security situation" at the airport and had

shown a willingness to comply with international treaty provisions on the "punishment of air pirates."

Mr. Kalb said that the United States had repeatedly made its concerns known to the Greek Government and that a United States "airport security team visited Athens in February."

"Although the Greek Government has expressed its willingness to improve conditions at the Athens airport," Mr. Kalb said, "specific steps have not been taken yet and security there is still inadequate."

2d SURVEY JUST MADE.

It was learned, meanwhile, that an airport security survey of the Athens airport was made just two to three weeks ago by a team of airline experts formed by the International Air Transport Association, the industry organization of the world's airlines. It has 137 members.

Thomas Pyle, an I.A.T.A. spokesman, said of the survey: "They found shortcomings. These were brought to the attention of Greek authorities. But unfortunately they have not totally accepted all our suggestions."

The Athens airport has long been notorious among airline workers, who view its security system as one of the most porous among major international terminal.

On April 4 this year, a terrorist fired a bazooka through an opening in the airport fence, grazing the fuselage of a Jordanian airliner as it prepared to take off. And Athens was the takeoff point for the 1976 hijacking that ended with an extraordinary Israeli rescue of 103 Israelis at Entebbe airport in Uganda, where an Air France airbus had been taken by four pro-Palestinian guerrillas.

The State Department spokesman said at his briefing that the Government was not necessarily advising Americans to cancel plans for travel to Greece. It was simply advising them to use the airport at their discretion, he said.

U.S. ENVOY GIVEN PROTEST.

Athens, June 18 - Greece lodged a strong protest today over a State Department announcement earlier in the day warning American citizens of the dangers "of air travel to, through or from Athens."

Foreign Minister Ioannis Haralambopoulos summoned the American Ambassador, Monteagle Stearns, to protest what he called an unjustified and unfriendly American action. Announcing this, the ministry said Mr. Haralambopoulos told the Ambassador that the American travel warning would have "repercussions and consequences for which the American side will be exclusively responsible."

No hint of the consequences was given. Earlier today, the Foreign Minister accused the United States in a statement of being the source of a "defamatory campaign" against Greece. "If these polemics continue, the consequences can only be negative," Mr. Haralambopoulos declared.

The statement was issued before Mr. Kalb's warning, possibly to forestall such advice. Greece depends heavily on tourism for foreign exchange.

From the point of view of passing the message of the terrorists to the audiences, the New York Times did a much more effective job (from the terrorists' point), as the demands were passed automatically as part of the news (they were not, however, given any special emphasis). Izvestia tended not only to minimize the transmission of the demands, but to omit them entirely, whenever it was judged appropriate.

In terms of quantity, the difference between The New York Times and Izvestia was generally in proportion to the respective size of the papers. The New York Times customarily had several dozen, often more than a hundred pages (many of them commercials, advertisements, etc.), while Izvestia was limited to between 8 and 12. In terms of content, however, the differences were much more striking.

Demands of hijackers:

In this category the ratios are 11:1 and 2:1 in favour of The New York Times. Surprisingly, it presented many more terrorist demands in relation to the hijacking of the Americans, which was not predicted. What appears to be the pattern in this category is the consistent behaviour of Izvestia, which in both cases limited the presentation of demands to the bare minimum, just mentioning them and not elaborating on them at all.

Background information:

In this category The New York Times leads overwhelmingly, by 17:1 and 2:0. The kind of information focused mainly on the broader causes of conflicts, often presented from a historical perspective. The only case of Izvestia presenting background information was very politically oriented, focusing on the bombardments of

Beirut by the battleship "New Jersey", and clearly suggesting a hostile attitude of the U.S. towards Lebanon.

Human element:

As predicted, the presence of the human element was substantially higher in the cases involving nationals. Although it was not numerically recorded in Izvestia in relation to the incident involving Soviet nationals, the overall tone and the choice of wording was consistently such as to convey a sense of human, innocent suffering. For example, the hostages were always referred to as "lyudi" (people), or as "Soviet people", which has an emotional and proud meaning to it. This stands in contrast to the generally dry and impersonal style of reporting in Izvestia.

Authorities' position:

As predicted, high imbalance was present in the New York Times. Izvestia, on the other hand, showed little favour for this type of news, probably for the purpose of keeping a low-key image. The declarations were strongly worded, but concise and giving little clue as to what the authorities' plans and intentions were. The New York Times, on the other hand, published long reports from the White House giving details on the government's plans,

problems and internal differences of opinion in as detailed manner as possible.

Experts'/observers' position:

The pattern in this category is the reverse of the one above. The New York Times showed little interest in the use of external opinion for strengthening the authorities' position, while Izvestia used it to the extreme. It quoted sources from various countries and circles, often irrelevant to the event itself, creating the impression of overwhelming support for the Soviet government in its quest to free the hostages. Similarly, it created the impression of widespread condemnation of the hostage-takers, and of all those who supported them. One should note that Izvestia is directed mainly at Soviet readers, who have very limited capability of verifying the information from sources other than official. The impact of this kind of presentation on the reader must have been very strong. Another interesting aspect of this is that subtle (and often not so subtle) references were made to ideological and political opponents of the Soviet Union, such as Israel and the U.S., either associating them directly with the hijackers, or at least presenting these countries as the underlying causes of the conflict in the Middle East, and

therefore suggesting they are responsible for the incident itself.

Use of force/conflict - negotiation/peaceful resolution:

The results in this category support the hypothesis that in the case of own nationals involved there will be much less emphasis on conflict, and more emphasis on negotiation (and vice-versa). Both papers were rather restrained in touching the subject of use of force when their hostages' lives were at stake, but took full liberty when reverse was the case. This shows especially clearly in the tone of the articles, although may not always find full numerical reflection.

Other relevant information:

The New York Times provided more, scoring 2:1 in both cases.

Some additional comments are necessary on the subject of common journalistic distortions. Both papers were practically free from them; there was no manufacture of news in either case, the headlines were accurate, and no "hokum" was added, even in the more touching reports falling into the human element category. The issue which clearly stands out throughout the whole analysis is the suppression of news by Izvestia. In fact, that newspaper

provided so little information and in such a dull manner, that it may be a case in point for the contagion hypothesis. Indeed, the fact that there have been so little terrorist events in the Soviet Union may be attributed in part to the manner in which the press of this country covers the incidents. It is certainly not stimulating to the potential terrorist, nor informative to the reader.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The above study, being a direct comparison between commercial and state-operated press, emphasizes the differences inherent in these two. Furthermore, there is little doubt in my mind that these differences are due to systemic factors. The two opposing political systems, liberal capitalism and communism, both have developed their own schools of "good" journalism. The commercial press aims at the preservation of business, even at the risk of going against its government's will and interest (see the Watergate affair as example), the state-controlled press aims at serving the government of which it is part. Clearly, for governments the standards of good journalism are not binding. The main form of distortion found in the study was the withholding of news from the readers by Izvestia.

It could be argued that both papers seek the same end by the use of different techniques. Both may be trying to stimulate the reader to respond to the terrorist event in a negative manner, one by providing extensive background information and commentary designed to influence the independent judgement of the reader, the other by a priori determining the reader's judgement

through manipulation and a selective diet of factual information.

The state-owned press, on the basis of Izvestia's example, seems to treat news items as a material which can be almost infinitely molded and shaped, according to, presumably, political directives. Not being constrained by the requirements of the marketplace and competition, it can afford to treat the news selectively, according to the current political need. In countries such as the Soviet Union, where the entire press is state-operated, the publishing market is tightly controlled. All printed matter, with the relatively minor exception of samizdat, is produced by government employees, on government equipment. All newspapers print essentially the same information, all received from the same source news agency. In consequence the reader, wherever he turns, gets the same picture, the same interpretation, the same selection of news. The recent phenomenon of "glasnost", while providing the reader with much more information and much more variety, does not change this principle. "Glasnost" enlarges the limits of the acceptable, printable information; it still, however, remains a governmental policy and the Soviet press still represents directly the interests of the Soviet government. The

potential for distortion remains the same as before, as has been illustrated by the blackout of the news from rebellious Armenia lately.

This raises ethical questions concerning the role of the media in a modern society. Effectively, the mass media of closed societies remain little more than tools of international relations vis-à-vis foreign readers, and "bulletin boards" for domestic use. The conclusion of Galtung and Ruge that the media will act like partners in a court case, trying to present only the material that is easily compatible with their own political views,⁵⁴ is carried to the extreme. In view of the Oregon Code of Ethics - "we will interpret accuracy not merely as the absence of actual misstatement, but as the presence of whatever is necessary to prevent the reader from making a false deduction"⁵⁵ - Izvestia's efforts seem outright unethical. But, the Oregon Code of Ethics is a product of a Western, pluralistic society and of a commercially minded press. Communist authorities and ideologues have not once argued that in their countries the outdated capitalistic ethics have been replaced by what they call "socialist ethics." Without getting into much detail,

54 Galtung and Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News",
p. 68

55 In Crawford, The Ethics of Journalism, p. 188.

these can be summarized as unconditional loyalty and submission of an individual to the group, of the group to the society, of the society to the State. The State emerges as the ultimate good and *raison d'être* for all its citizens. The extraordinary events of 1989 in which the citizens of Eastern Europe have spoken out against the tyranny of the state in all its forms point to the rejection of this ideology by the population at large. What was exposed on the occasion was the nearly unanimous view of state-controlled mass media as "not telling the truth."

What remains is to address the question how The New York Times stands to scrutiny against the Code of Ethics of its own society. The short answer is: surprisingly well. This is not to say that its coverage was perfect and ideally balanced. However, there were no instances of withholding news. The explanation is that for the commercial press, any withholding of news would immediately find reflection in the paper's reputation and consequently marketability. (I have in mind primarily the prestige press, whose business is information. Boulevard press, whose business is entertainment, may be governed by somewhat different principles). Competition among news agencies and individual papers determines that

most newsworthy items, within the paper's scope of interest, must be published. Where distortion starts to appear is in the prominence given to particular news items, as illustrated by the case of hijacking of Soviet diplomats being overshadowed by the simultaneous hijacking of Achille Lauro. Both incidents had certain political importance on the international level which should have put them on par in the treatment by a prestige paper such as The New York Times. In fact, however, "political distance" determined that news in which American nationals were directly involved largely overshadowed other news from the same category, including the news on the hijacking of the Soviet diplomats.

Variation in the commercial press also occurs in the treatment of the information - high-key or low-key, emotional or cool, ironic or serious, etc. The latitude is actually quite wide, which is especially clearly illustrated by the category of background information in the New York Times. In the case of TWA hijacking, its background information was exhaustive and ranged from articles on Amal, Jihad and Hizbollah, through articles on airport security and statistics on terrorism, to ones concentrating on the Soviet - Syrian relations. On the other hand, in the case of the hijacking of Soviet

diplomats, it just briefly mentioned the background of the fighting in Tripoli, and the relation of the Soviet Union to the parties involved in the conflict.

The availability of publicity through news media is often seen as a fundamental permissive cause of terrorism, "one that makes it possible, even easy, and therefore recommends it as a tactic for extremists."⁵⁶ The argument of a "symbiotic relationship" between the media and terrorism finds, in my view, little support. It rather seems that it is the media who use terrorism to promote their own causes (The New York Times - marketability, Izvestia - fighting the ideological battle against capitalism). Izvestia did its best to present its government's view of the conflict in the Middle East as caused by the American and Israeli policy, and found sufficient material in both terrorist incidents to support that. The New York Times, on the other hand, played up certain more touching aspects of the issue to maintain the interest of its readers. To do it justice I must affirm that a determined and patient reader would eventually be able to find all the important elements of

56 Chalmers Johnson, "Perspectives on Terrorism", in Laqueur and Alexander, The Terrorism Reader, p. 277.

the story and develop an accurate image of the events based on facts, including the demands of the hijackers.

The example of Izvestia demonstrates that by manipulating the facts one can create a totally different image of the events than what had actually happened. For the purpose of keeping the suggestive news out of the reach of militant Soviet Shiite Muslims, this may or may not be an effective way of controlling the spread of terrorism. In liberal, open societies this is a priori ruled out as too much an infringement on the basic freedoms and liberties of the media. Besides, the argument of Wieviorka and Wolton that generous coverage of terrorism actually weakens it by channelling grievances towards legitimate channels may ultimately be valid. I have to agree with their statement that "(own translation) ...the existence of a pluralistic and competitive press is an opportunity and not a limitation. We have insisted enough on the weaknesses and insufficiencies of the media to reiterate once more that they play a fundamental role in a democracy." ⁵⁷ The media in open societies are as a rule commercial, competitive enterprises and that determines their treatment of the news. Acts of terrorism cannot be

57 Wieviorka and Wolton, p. 247.

ignored and are newsworthy because they deviate from the norm, they affect the lives of large segments of the population, and they have considerable value as entertainment - this has to be accepted. As for the Soviet Union, it remains to be seen whether the restriction of news of terrorism prevents its spread to the empire.

While there may be good arguments for selection, or screening of the news about terrorism, it is my view that any distortion is potentially more harmful than beneficial. It is extremely difficult to draw the line of distinction between a selection that will benefit the readers (e.g. not giving them details intended by the terrorists) and a selection that will deprive them of valid, factual information (details relevant to the development of a valid judgement by the reader). Also, once applied, distortion of news for political purpose would be difficult to control and keep within reasonable limits. An enormous machinery would have to be put into place to make constant decisions as to what to include and what to leave out; what will benefit the readers, what will not. Indeed, censorship control has grown to enormous proportions in the Soviet union and other Communist countries, utilizing human and intellectual

resources in a way far from beneficial to the local economies. The case of Izvestia illustrates another problem very clearly: its coverage of both incidents was undoubtedly dictated by the Soviet government's perception of national interest and policy and as such could be classified as propaganda rather than journalism. The policy dictated that events be twisted beyond recognition in order to reinforce in the eyes of the readers the overriding objective of opposing the forays of American and Israeli policy in the Middle East. While this may be acceptable from the point of view of "socialist ethics" for internal use, it is incompatible with the image of a country pretending internationally to be at the forefront of progress, the true democracy of the future.

Appendix A

The course of events in the TWA hijacking incident:⁵⁸

Shortly after take-off of TWA Flight 847 from Athens on June 14, 1985 the plane was hijacked by two Shiite Moslems: Ali Younis and Ahmed Ghorbieh, armed with pistols and hand-grenades. On board there were 145 passengers, among them 120 Americans. The passengers were beaten and made to spend long periods of time in an uncomfortable position; they had to surrender their passports to the hijackers. The plane first landed in Beirut, refueled, and took off to Algiers. Seventeen women and two children were allowed to leave the plane in Beirut, twenty-two more in Algiers. The plane took off again to Beirut. Just after landing, a US Navy diver Robert Stethem was killed. The hijackers made known their demands, the most important one being the release of over 700 Shiite prisoners from Israel. Later the plane flew back to Algiers, where third terrorist, Ali Atweh, originally not allowed to board the plane for lack of room and later arrested in Athens, was brought by the Greek authorities to join his fellow

58 source: Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, War Without End, (London: Harap, 1986).

hijackers in return for the release of all but one Greek passengers and a stewardess. On 16 June the plane took off again for Beirut, where the passengers were removed from the plane and dispersed in safe houses under the control of "Amal", a Shiite Lebanese militia. Its boss, Nabih Berri, took the role of chief negotiator. Only the crew and the hijackers remained on the plane. After almost two weeks of negotiation, on 30 June 1985, the passengers and the crew were released through Syria, whose president Assad was involved into the negotiation process. The hijackers' demands were effectively met as Israel released the 766 prisoners held on its territory in three successive stages spread over time.

Appendix B

The course of events in the hijacking of four Soviet diplomats in Beirut:⁵⁹

Three Soviet diplomats and a doctor were kidnapped September 30, 1985 in West Beirut by a Lebanese Moslem group. A caller claiming to represent the previously unknown Islamic Liberation Organization said that all the Soviet hostages would be slain unless the USSR pressured Syria to cease an offensive against the Islamic fundamentalist Tawheed militia in northern Lebanese town of Tripoli. The kidnappings of the Soviets at gunpoint out of their cars were carried out in two separate but apparently coordinated actions. Abducted were Oleg Spirin and Valery Mirkov, both attachés; Arkady Katkov, a consular secretary; and Dr. Nikolai Svirsky, the embassy physician. The ILO October 1 issued a communiqué and photographs of the four Soviets with pistols held to their heads. The next day, the body of Katkov, shot in the head at close range, was found in an empty Beirut lot after a caller told a news agency where to look for it. He also

59 Source: Facts on File, weekly world news digest with cumulative index. New York: Facts on File, 1985.

warned that the Soviets should evacuate their embassy in West Beirut within 48 hours or else it would be "demolished". The Soviet Union evacuated up to 100 non-essential staff members and dependents October 4, but said the embassy itself would not be closed. It was heavily guarded by Druse militiamen. October 6 Syrian troops entered into the town of Tripoli to enforce a cease fire after almost three weeks of fighting. The Iranian-mediated truce had been agreed upon October 3 in Damascus between Syrian president Hafez el-Assad and Sheikh Saeed Shaaban, the leader of Tawheed. The three remaining hostages were eventually freed October 30, 1985.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Alexander, Yonah and Finger, S.M. (eds.) Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. New York: The John Jay Press, 1977.
- Alexander, Yonah, and Gleason, J.M. (Eds.) Behavioural and Quantitative Perspectives in Terrorism. New York, Pergamon Press, 1981.
- Bergeron, Claude. Les attentats dirigés contre l'aviation civile internationale (1930-1983). Research essay, Carleton University, 1986.
- Carlton, David and Schaerf, Carlo (eds.) Contemporary Terror. Studies in Sub-State Violence. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.
- Clutterbuck, Richard. The Media and Political Violence. London: The Macmillan Press, 1981.
- Clutterbuck, Richard. Comment Vivre avec le terrorisme? Paris: Stanke, 1979.
- Crawford, Nelson Antrim. The Ethics of Journalism. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969.
- Crelinsten, Ronald D. (ed.) Research Strategies for the Study of International Political Terrorism. Montreal: International Centre for Comparative Criminology, 1977.

- Dobson, Christopher and Payne, Ronald. War Without End. The Terrorists: an Intelligence Dossier. London: Harap, 1986.
- Freedman, Lawrence Zelic and Alexander, Yonah (eds.) Perspectives on Terrorism. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983.
- Goldstein, Tom. The News at any Cost. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.
- Goren, Roberta. The Soviet Union and Terrorism. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984.
- Jenkins, Brian. Terrorism in the 1980's. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation Research Paper, 1980.
- Jenkins, Brian. International Terrorism: a New Mode of Conflict. Los Angeles: Crescent Publications, 1975.
- Jenkins, Brian and Johnson, J. International Terrorism: a Chronology, 1968-1974. Santa Monica, Rand, 1975.
- Labin, Suzanne. La violence politique. Paris: France-Empire.
- Laqueur, Walter. Terrorism. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977.
- Laqueur, Walter and Alexander, Yonah (eds.). The Terrorism Reader. A Historical Anthology. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Liston, Robert A. Terrorism. New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1977.

Merill, John C. The Elite Press. New York: Pitman Publishing Co., 1968.

Ra'anan, Uri, Pflatzgraff Jr., Robert, Shultz, Richard H., Halperin, Ernst, and Lukes, Igor (eds.) Hydra of Carnage. The International Linkages of Terrorism and Other Low-Intensity Operations. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1986.

Rapoport, D. Assassination and Terrorism. Toronto: 1971.

Rapoport, D. and Alexander, Yonah (eds.) The Morality of Terrorism. New York, Pergamon, 1982.

Rubenstein, Richard E. Alchemists of Revolution. Terrorism in the Modern World. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987.

Schmid, Alex. Political Terrorism: a Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1983.

Schmid, Alex and de Graaf, Janny. Violence as Communication. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982.

Wieviorka, Michel, and Wolton, Dominique. Terrorisme à la une. Media, terrorisme et démocratie. Éditions Gallimard, 1987.

Woodward, Bob. Veil. The Secret Wars of the CIA. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

ARTICLES

- Bassiouni, M. Cherif. "Media Coverage of Terrorism",
Journal of Communication, vol. 32 (Spring 1982).
"Dossier terrorisme", Magazine Litteraire, No. 168, p. 8 -
35.
- Efremov, V. "Mezhdunarodnyi terrorizm - orudiye
imperializma i reaktsii", Aziia i Afrika
Segodnia, 1981 (7), pp. 24 - 26.
- Epstein, E. "The Uses of Terrorism: a Study in Media
Bias", Stanford Journal of International Studies
12 (Spring 1977), pp. 67 - 78.
- Galtung, J. and Ruge, M.H. "The Structure of Foreign
News", Journal of Peace Research 2 (1965), pp. 64
- 90
- Kelly, Micheal J. and Mitchell, Thomas H. "Transnational
Terrorism and the Western Elite Press", Political
Communication and Persuasion, Vol. 1, No. 3.
- Vitiuk, V. "O poniatii 'meshdunarodnyi terrorizm",
Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya, 1982 (2), pp.
59 - 68..
- Weinmann, Gabriel. "Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?
Labeling Terrorism in the Israeli Press",
Political Communication and Persuasion, vol. 2,
number 4 (1985), pp. 433 - 445.