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Nothing perhaps more appropriate and risky at the same time, than to talk about social communication, about journalism, in this city of St. Louis, where the very great Joseph Pulitzer decided to set forth his best journalistic adventure, which has become one of the reducts of good journalism in the world today

It is appropriate because I m going to say something already said by Pulitzer He wanted news stories not only for their own sake, but for the good that would come out from them and benefit the community He wanted positive news This, unfortunately, seems to have been forgotten by too many journalists today.

I tell you that Pulitzer's advice is resting in oblivion, because we don't see it in our daily reading of newspapers and magazines from all parts of America -- from Point Barrow to Cape Horn -- and think that what we read in those pages is not a true rendition of reality.

If we take in account the stories that are being distributed throughout the world about Latin America, you could well think that I do not exist, because I'm not a guerilla, nor a terrorist I don't hate the United States, I'm reasonably healthy, I wear shoes and I'm not a desperate economist trying to find a solely economic solution to the problems of my region of the world.

Also, and always bearing in mind the news spreaded about us, I could think that I don't have much time to finish my speech before the United States collapses.

Earthquakes, murders, coup d'etats, guerillas, terror, violence, communists. could it be possible that these are the only things that happen in Latin America?

Mass murders, riots, rebellion, immorality, piano-braking championships. are these the only things that happen in the United States?

I don't think so. You and I are enough proof that these things are not the only things that come about You and I are evident proof that in both parts there are people who worry more about finding and showing the virtues, the positive, than defects and communists

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Since April last year, a group of Latin American journalists formed a team to classify and synthesize every day the news which, about Latin America and the rest of the world, are published in nine morning papers in Mexico City.

To this date we have classified a little over a hundred thousand news stories in three hundred days, along these main subjects: Education and Culture, Science and Technology, Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Labor, Tourism, Industry, Finance and Business, Government, Politics, Religion, Obituaries and Editorials and Comment.

We believe that those subjects include the transcendent aspects of human activity although we do not classify the social pages, amusements, crime or sports. The number given, represents a ten percent of the total news which the reader gets, but we have found out that they are enough to attack what is news, what is truly transcendent.

We picked a month at random - June 1967 - to analyze the characteristics of the information given to the public about life in North and Latin America.

We were amazed and shocked when we discovered the focussing used. Seventy-six percent of the news were approached in a pessimistic, black way. They were negative, depressive, dismaying.

Let me read you a list of the themes played by the Mexican Press about Latin America. Most of the news were received via international press agencies: Abductions, Abortions, Abuses, Accidents, Accusations of governments, Agitation, Air pollution, Alcoholism, Anarchy, Anticastroites, Anticomunist Council of Guatemala, Archeological plunders, Armed Forces of National Liberation, Avarice, Barrientos, Rene Black Magic, Blackouts, Brain drain, Bribes, Capitalism, Castroism, Cattle stealing, CIA, Communism, Communistic parties, Contraceptives, Castro, Counterfeit dollars, Countryless peoples, Death penalty, Debray, Regis, Demagogy, Devaluation, Dictatorships, Dysentery, Divorces, Drop-outs, Drug addicts, Economic crisis, Economic recession, Euthanasia, Executions by shooting, Exiles, Expropriations, Family disintegration, Famine, Fanaticism, Floods, Foot and Mouth Disease, Frauds, Guerillas, Guevara Lynch, Ernesto Hate, Homosexuality, Imperialism, International incidents, Interventionism, Juvenile delinquents, Land invasions, Malnutrition, Martial law, Mentally disturbed, Mexican Communist Party, migrant workers, Militarism, Military trials, Mortality, National Liberation Front, Nationalization, Nazism, Organized crime. Orphans, Overpopulation, Police, Polygamy, Political asylum, Political crisis, Political murders, Population explosion, Pornography, Poverty, Prisoners Exchange, Protectionists, Revolutions, Riots, Segregation, Sensationalism, Sickness, Slander, Smuggling, Socialism, Sterility, Strikes, Student Rebellion, Subversion Suicides, Swindles, Teacher's lack, Teacher's strikes, Terrorism, Tricontinental Conference of Havana, Underdevelopment, Unemployment, Vice, Violence, Water pollution, Yellow fever.

Summing it up, that month, we found a total of 675 negative news negative by themselves or approached negatively. All of the news were concerned with Latin American life and, in particular, the subjects more widely treated were: Accusations between governments, 22 days, Political murders, 11; Activities by President Barrientos, 11; Fidel Castro, 17; Student rebellion, 24; Communism, 18; Problems related to birth control, 12; Political crisis, 14; Regis Debray's trial, 18; Riots, 25; Guerillas, 23.

Famine, 13 Strikes, 22 Nationalizations, 11 Revolutions, 15 Subversion, 12; Terrorism, 24.

We have personally checked some news items as to arrive to some conclusions:

- 1 Sometimes that particular piece of news is entirely imaginary. For example, when newspapers said, basing their information on a wire by international agency, that in Cordoba, Argentina, twenty thousand communists were plotting to overthrow the Government and that President Ongania had made a statement, I personally asked people from Cordoba if they knew anything and the answer was emphatic: nothing of the sort had happened. Information such as this explain why the most frequent question made to a Latin American is: Are there many communists in your country?
- 2 It could be that the situation be as bad as the one shown by that wire. In such a case, the proper action should be taken as to avoid such a thing. If the proper course of action is not taken to help, North America would face a very proximate and dangerous situation.
- 3 It could be that negative facts are being exaggerated, while the positive ones are underestimated. This would mean a plot is being made against Latin America.
- 4 Lastly, we may suppose that everything has a very simple reason: that there's a lack of information, a lack of objectivity in those things related to Latin American life. Evidently, this is a grave thing from the viewpoint of journalistic professionalism.

As a consequence of all I've said before, anyone of you could find out today that the image the average American has of Latin American life is extraordinarily deplorable. He thinks that the poor, unhappy United States, have been punished by an evil angel to live together and bear such chaotic, dirty, sick, unstable, disorganized neighbors, who will only mean to him an interminable series of problems and conflicts. Thinking like this it's not very difficult for the ignorant American to wish the suppression of Latin Americans.

Now let's see the kind of information we get about you, about American life. We can say--although it sounds incredible--that things stand equally deplorable.

In the same period of June, I have been referring to, our press has informed us of accusations on territorial annexations, of missiles - anti-missiles, arms race, atomic weaponry, military aid, agitation, anticastroites, belicism, affaire Cassius Clay, the antiamerican conspiracy headed by General De Gaulle, slander, free enterprise excesses, CIA activities, border incidents, Ky Klux Klan, riots, LSD, wars... (As a curious thing there were several stories already devoted to World War III and every day there was a mention about the Viet Nam affaire).

The average Latin American, ignorant, thinks that the future of the United States is, at the very least, uncertain:

If President Johnson's popularity descends, we all know it; but not always when it goes up. The riots, arson, and plunders of the Negroes, will do away with more than 150 important US cities this very year, the failure of the Alliance for Progress is just around the corner and still funds are being

reduced; loans get more difficult; American politicians get wide and ample publicity if they say that foreign aid should be channeled more towards Africa and Asia than to Latin America. Juvenile delinquency, hippies, sexual perversions, the increasing rate of family disintegration and divorce, materialization of every walk of life in the US, get enough columns as to instill public opinion that an irreversible decadence of the country has begun and that she will fatally succumb before the Communist aggression and to the violent internal reaction of those who have been exploited and vexed up to now.

We don't think that is the real panorama about Latin America, nor regarding North America. That is why we believe that a revision of such sensationalistic attitudes should be urgent. To advocate for a thorough study of one and the other that will let us discover more values in ourselves is our only desire, and to give those values at least the same publicity that the negative get.

We believe that in those things pertaining to public opinion, the press and North and Latin American relations, the wise advice of Pope John XXIII, should be imperative:

Let us talk more about that which unifies us, than of that which separates us.

Let us talk more about truth than about error.

Let us appeal to the good will there is in every man.

Twenty-five years from now we will celebrate the Fifth Centennial of the discovery of America: couldn't we work during 25 years in such a way so the Fifth Centennial find us totally integrated and with our Christian ferment animating all of our life, all or our human togetherness with the sense of Christian fruitfulness?

This paper may be quoted in whole or in part in any manner that will promote the interest of the Church in Latin America. Please acknowledge the CICOP Conference of the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Latin America. Mimeographed copies may be purchased at the CICOP Headquarters, Box 946, Davenport, Iowa 52805.