

## Uruguayan vs. British Press Coverage of a Political Kidnapping

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**Abstract :** What began as a middle-class insurgent political movement whose slogan was 'Words divide us. Action unites us!' ultimately mutated into an underground terrorist group that staged a series of armed robberies, kidnappings and even executions in the 1960s and early 1970s. One of the most memorable was the kidnapping of the British ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, in January 1971, who was held captive for eight months. The episode, which triggered a massive government response and resulted in the capture of the Tupamaros leaders, continued to have political repercussions decades later when Tupamaros leaders emerged from prison to re-enter mainstream Uruguayan politics. The kidnapping and its aftermath attracted intense media coverage in Uruguay and Britain, coverage that affected public opinion profoundly. The treatment by the Uruguayan and British medias' diverged, however. Uruguayan newspapers focused on political issues, mirrored the positions of various political parties, and showed the larger context of social, cultural and political forces that rocked Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s. By contrast, the British press limited its attention mainly to the human drama. On the 30th anniversary of Sir Geoffrey Jackson's death, this study compares over one hundred major newspaper articles and suggests some reasons for the differences between Uruguayan and British media treatment in terms of the volume, content, and perspective as well in the effect on readers. The differences have persisted and continue to matter in present day coverage of terrorism and its victims.

**Keywords :** British Ambassador, Churchill Archives Centre, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, political kidnapping, Latin America in the 1960's, Tupamaro guerrillas, Uruguay

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