

Mr. Auque recalled standing on a hotel balcony the night of his release, looking at the stars, which he had not seen for a year, and thinking, "I'm the best negotiator to release others. That would be using the press in a positive way." The press is used in many ways during a hostage situation, and he argued that this is necessary. Captors use the press to make demands, delivered in brown envelopes by motorcycle courier. Demands are rejected through the media, but even if they are used as mouthpieces for terrorists, that often assists in negotiations.

"Americans have a kind of naive belief in not negotiating with terrorists, but they benefit as much as anyone else." Asked whether it would not be better if journalists did not write about hostage-takings, he answered: "No! I'm a journalist and I've been a hostage and I think press stories are needed." An American diplomat had once told him that being captured was the hostage's fault, and that the US government would not change its policy to help a few people. "I think he should remember that the American government has a responsibility to protect its citizens abroad."

Mr. Pelletier, who kept the secret of the hostages in the Canadian embassy until he was sure they were out of danger, was asked when a journalist should forebear to publish. "I have no recipe, or magic formula. I couldn't take the decision myself, I discussed it with my bosses, and finally it was left to me. I decided to keep the secret rather than endanger lives. The press often has to keep secrets." He agreed with Mr. Auque that the media should make sure that hostages are not forgotten. The worst media mistake in the case of the embassy hostages, Mr. Pelletier said, was the proclamation by a TV network that "America was held hostage." Evidently this sensational exaggeration, which he attributed to the ABC network, fired the pride of the hostage-takers in their violation of international law and diplomatic immunity.