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ACCURACY IN MEDIA

Anti-CIA Publication Targeted El Salvador

By Reed Irvine

WASHINGTON—Accuracy in Media has learned that a publication called CounterSpy attacked the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) as a CIA front shortly before the two Americans and peasant leader associated with the institute were assassinated in El Salvador. The evidence suggests that Mark Pearlman, Michael Hammer, and Rodolfo Viera had been targeted by members of the Marxist left, who want to destroy the CIA and anybody they think is associated with it.

CounterSpy Attacked Hammer

In the wake of those assassinations, elements of the media have resurrected charges that the AIFLD, a project of the AFL-CIO, which is helping run the land reform in El Salvador, was linked to the CIA. A reporter for National Public Radio (NPR) threw that charge in the face of AIFLD executive director William Doherty in a recent interview. NPR reported his denial but censored his description of Phillip Agee, a source of the charge, as a soviet KGB agent. The real possibility that associates of Agee, who published CounterSpy, had a role in the assassinations has been totally ignored by the Big Media.

CounterSpy is the publication that revealed the identity of the CIA station chief in Greece, Richard Welch, before his assassination in 1975. Phillip Agee, the CIA defector who has collaborated with communist intelligence agents in their efforts to destroy the agency, was a member of the advisory board of the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate (OC-5), which published Counterspy, in 1976. OC-5's subversive operations were the subject of a congressional investigation that same year. Hearings disclosed that one of OC-5's objectives was to agitate against organizations such as the AIFLD that were combatting communist domination of labor unions. One of the slain Americans, Michael Hammer, was a strong anti-communist who believed that the land reform would undercut the communist appeal to the peasants.

The November 1980-January 1981 issue of CounterSpy contained two articles on El Salvador, which both attacked the AIFLD. The author of one article,

the Marxist Allende regime in Chile. Arnold also noted that the CIA-AIFLD connection was raised on the Public Television series, "On Company Business."

The star of the series was none other than Phillip Agee. In another publication, Arnold recently expressed his concern about the AIFLD program in Nicaragua, saying that it was "small but a potential danger" to the Marxist Sandinistas. That article appeared in the Daily World, the newspaper of the Communist Party USA.

The other CounterSpy article called on the AFL-CIO to end its involvement with the AIFLD. The article included personal attacks on Viera and Hammer and it praised the Revolutionary Democratic Front, the left-wing terrorist group in El Salvador that murders peasants who cooperate with the land reform program. The author of the article, Richard Hobbs, quoted from a report issued by the Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Communication and Action (EPICA), which claimed that the peasant union once headed by Viera and supported by the AIFLD was somehow aligned with the right-wing terrorist group ORDEN. Not mentioned, of course, is the fact that the director of EPICA, Rev. Phillip Wheaton, served with Agee on the advisory board of OC-5.

Mudslinging from the Left

Hobbs also claimed that University of Wisconsin Professor John Strasma, who in 1977 investigated the financial affairs of the peasant union, found that Viera had "pocketed" some of the money for the land reform and that Mike Hammer "did nothing about it." Hobbs went on to question Viera's honesty and reliability and Hammer's association with him. However, Professor Strasma told Accuracy in Media in an interview that he did not find that Viera had "pocketed" any funds. He described Viera as a respected, charismatic leader who was well-liked by the peasants.

Shortly before CounterSpy's blast at Hammer and Viera, it published what it called a list of "CIA Cops in El Salvador," which purportedly identified about 75 Salvadoran police officers who had undergone "CIA-directed training" in the U.S. CounterSpy charged that the training was designed to expand the "CIA infrastructure in El Salvador." It is not known how

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