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Reporting on El Salvador by left-leaning news media criticized

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Left-leaning reporting about El Salvador has been apparent from the beginning of the trouble there with the Communists. On Feb. 21, 1981, the State Department released a White Paper on El Salvador. The main point of the White Paper was that the USSR and Cuba are much involved in helping the guerrillas to overthrow the non-Communist government of El Salvador. The State Department's sources of information were very good, e.g., captured documents and weapons. In particular, the report revealed that the Salvadoran Communist party members had travelled to the USSR in the summer of 1980 to arrange the delivery of 800 tons of military equipment to be distributed to El Salvador via Cuba and Nicaragua. While there were some superficial errors made in the haste of getting the White Paper out, the main point of the report has been self-verifying in the course of subsequent events.

However, the national media were very industrious in their attempt to destroy the White Paper. They set out to indict the White paper on grounds of internal contradictions and unsupported evidence. First among the critics of the White Paper was Philip Agee, who had earlier defected from the CIA and had subsequently made a career of trying to destroy that agency. (Agee told *Esquire* in 1975 that "I aspire to be a Communist and a revolutionary.")

Of course, the *Washington Post* was among the leading critics of the White Paper. On June 19, 1981, it published Robert Kaiser's story on the front page under the title "White Paper on El Salvador is Faulty."

Even the *Wall Street Journal* turned against the White Paper in an article which was noticeably similar to Agee's critique. In fact, while Agee is not mentioned in either the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Washington Post* article, Agee himself said in the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* of July 1, 1981, that he had supplied the analysis of the White Paper for the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*.

Jonathan Kwitny, who actually wrote the infamous *Wall Street Journal* article of June 8, 1981, entitled "Apparent Errors Cloud U.S. 'White Paper' on Reds in El Salvador," admitted to using one of his sources material obtained from John Kelly, editor of the *CounterSpy*, a journal of distinct political prejudice to the Left. It, for example, had portrayed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an invention of the United States. In particular, it was *CounterSpy* which had leaked to a Greek newspaper the residential address and identity of Richard Welch, a CIA principal operative in Athens. The result was that on Dec. 25, 1976, Welch was gunned down before his house in Athens. It should also be noted that at this time Philip Agee was on the Advisory Board of *CounterSpy* along with Mark Lane and Marcus Raskin, co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies.

The *Wall Street Journal* was culpably closed to dialog on the White Paper. When the State Department issued a point by point rebuttal to the Journal article, the Journal did not print any of the rebuttal. The reputation of the Journal was greatly damaged by

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the Kwitny article on El Salvador, though some months later the Journal acknowledge that Philip Agee's material had been used by Kwitny in its article on the White Paper.

In the course of preparing his article for the *Wall Street Journal*, Kwitny had interviewed Jon Glassman of the State Department because Glassman had been a major compiler of the State Department's White Paper. However, Kwitny used little of Glassman's remarks about El Salvador in the article. When asked to comment on Kwitny's article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Glassman responded, "The thrust of the article does not represent my views. Mr. Kwitny simply extracted from a three hour interview a few anecdotes to support a different point of view. The result is a story which does not accurately reflect my position."

Both the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* assailed the White Paper for not having enough evidence for its claim that the PLO was supporting the Salvadoran Communist guerrillas. In January of 1982, Arafat in a statement from Beirut made a fool of both newspapers when he announced that PLO guerrillas and pilots were serving in El Salvador. The Journal did at least then acknowledge this embarrassing fact on their front page. The Post obscured it on page 20 of one of their issues.

Hodding Carter III gave further visibility to these slanted White Paper critiques on Public Television's program, "Inside Story." There he praised both the Journal and the Post for identifying the White Paper to be the "tarnished report," which the Journal had said that it was.

These various attacks on this White Paper by the media were apparently designed to discredit the judgment of our State Department on Salvadoran affairs. Indeed, they did succeed in poisoning the waters of support for the Salvadoran junta government. The result has been another tale of our indecisive support of a small but strategically located country that is fighting to save itself from the tenacles of international Communism. When the Communists have succeeded, civil rights in El Salvador will be permanently suspended. A ruthless suppression of freedom, which will far exceed any curtailment of civil liberties which El Salvador has so far experienced, will set in. The press will have to bear much of the blame for the tragic events which will happen when El Salvador falls to the Communists.

Thanks mainly to Accuracy in Media and to *Human Events*, we have some knowledge of how the perversion of news in El Salvador occurred in these news stories about the El Salvador White Paper. It is a paradigm of the slanted reports which we receive each day in the news media. All too often the sources of avowed enemies of the United States are valued much higher by the media than sources emanating from our own government.

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