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ON PAGE 1HUMAN EVENTS
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How Major Media Were Duped by Philip Agee

What is one to do about journals that, however unwittingly, have served as transmission belts for Communist propaganda and then refuse to correct the record? The most that can be done, apparently, is to expose such journals when they engage in such outrageous practices.

The *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, we submit, are two newspapers which have served as such transmission belts, and neither has made any effort to rectify the grave damage it has done to U.S. foreign policy. Both papers were obviously used by an ideological agent of the Soviets and the Cubans, Philip Agee, to undermine American policy in El Salvador and to help destroy the American government's thesis that the Soviet bloc has been instrumental in furnishing aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas. In so doing, they have helped greatly to foster the leftist myth that the guerrillas are nothing more than reform-minded freedom fighters, battling a horribly repressive regime.

On February 23 of this year, the State Department, as was widely reported, released a White Paper on El Salvador which meticulously detailed the Soviet Empire's heavy hand in assisting the guerrillas. Relying on captured documents, the discovery of hidden weaponry and critical intelligence sources, the State Department document disclosed that the Soviet Union, and most of its thuggish satellites and allies, such as Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia, the PLO, East Germany and the like, had combined in an effort to furnish the guerrillas the wherewithal to overthrow the non-Communist Salvadoran government.

The department said that the guerrillas were promised 800 tons of modern weapons and equipment—machine guns, rifles, mortars, anti-tank weapons and other supplies—and that at least 200 tons were known to have been delivered. The arms shipments were arranged by the leader of the pro-Soviet Salvadoran Communist party, Shafik Handal, who traveled to the Soviet Union and other Communist states during the period June 2–July 22, 1980. The arms were transferred to the guerrillas via Cuba and Nicaragua.

The release of the White Paper signaled the end of the Carter era practice of cozying up to the far left in Latin America and the beginning of a get-tough policy with Communist insurgents in the region. Clearly, the aim of the document was to give justification to a policy of furnishing U.S. military aid to a Salvadoran government menaced by Communist forces.

But this turn of policy was to be deliberately undermined by both the *Journal* and the *Post*, though neither would reveal that they became the pawns of Agee in the process.

On June 8, the *Journal*, in its lead, front-page piece, ran an article by Jonathan Kwitny charging that the White Paper was rife with error. The headline immediately informed the reader of the article's slant: "Apparent Errors Cloud U.S. 'White Paper' on Reds in El Salvador." The kicker read: "Tarnished Report?" A subhead said: "State Department Aide Says Parts May be Misleading But Defends Conclusions."

The placement of the story, the

carping about the document, but that it was trying to destroy its credibility entirely. Indeed, the thrust of the *Journal* story was that evidence of Soviet-bloc interference in El Salvador was virtually non-existent.

The following day the *Washington Post* unleashed its own savage indictment. In a front-page piece, above the fold, the *Post* headlined its story: "White Paper on El Salvador Is Faulty." Written by Robert Kaiser, the article strongly echoed the *Journal's* theme that the White Paper had highly exaggerated the evidence concerning Soviet-bloc involvement with the Salvadoran guerrillas.

The articles in both papers had a tremendously negative impact. Editorially, the *Post* referred to it as the "defective" White Paper. Hodding Carter III, the moderator of the Public Television program, "Inside Story," praised the *Journal* and the *Post* for raising "serious questions" about the document. Though the White Paper had been accepted as fact by Western officials, claimed *Newsweek*, "independent investigations by the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* have raised serious questions about the accuracy of the report and the validity of its conclusions."

Thanks to the *Journal* and the *Post*,

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