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ACCURACY IN MEDIA

Public Broadcasting May Have Death Wish

By Reed Irvine

WASHINGTON—The Reagan transition team recommended that budget support for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting be phased out. Now it is reported that a cut of 25% in the CPB budget has been proposed. One strong argument in favor of this is that public broadcasting has become an expensive way of providing entertainment to a very small and generally affluent audience. With the growth of cable television and what is expected to be a greatly increased home use of video tapes and disks, it is argued that there are now enough alternatives to regular commercial television to make it unnecessary for the federal government to pour \$175 million or more annually into public broadcasting.

Helping Our Worst Enemies

However, another factor that may have influenced the budget cutters is the strange tendency of Public Broadcasting to finance propaganda broadcasts for causes supported by our worst enemies—the communists. The most egregious example of this was the airing of three hour-long programs in May 1980 called "On Company Business." This series featured a notorious defector from the CIA, Philip Agee, who is now a proponent of the communist cause and who has dedicated his time and talent to trying to destroy the CIA by exposing as many of its agents as he can. Not only did the film feature Agee, but the company that produced it was partly owned by Agee. It was a vicious attack on American intelligence activities, unrelieved by any significant defense of the CIA or any mention of what the Soviet KGB is up to.

The Public Broadcasting Service came under strong attack for having performed that significant service for our enemies, but neither that criticism nor the election of Ronald Reagan has persuaded it to change its ways. Perhaps the people who manage the Public Broadcasting Service have a death wish. How else can one explain their recent action in airing an hour-long film attacking American policy in El Salvador that was timed to coincide with

strations, in turn, were supposed to coincide with the "final offensive" of the communist-led and armed rebels in El Salvador. The timing was off a bit because the offensive, which began on January 10, quickly fizzled and was over before the demonstrations began on January 17.

There is something very wrong when tax-supported public television in this country can be manipulated to produce and air programs that are clearly a part of an anti-American agit-prop operation. There is certainly a lot to be said for diversity on the airwaves. But that doesn't mean that we have to open up our airwaves to the propaganda of our enemies, much less pay for its production. Public Broadcasting has done this often enough that it has outraged those who are aware of its strange behavior. Many will probably enthusiastically support the budget cuts that have been suggested.

The Last Straw

The January 22 program, "El Salvador: Another Vietnam?", may have been the straw that will break the camel's back. One thing that both the outgoing Carter Administration and the incoming Reagan Administration agreed on was that there is a concerted communist drive to take over Central America. El Salvador is currently the main focus of that drive. Adm. Stansfield Turner, the director of the CIA under Jimmy Carter, made this very clear in an interview on "60 Minutes" on February 8. Turner said that the critical thing in Central America is "the internationalization of the revolution" going on down there.

Turner said the Soviets, Libyans and others were providing the arms and that they were being funneled through Cuba. He said we were faced with the danger of Soviet or Cuban dominated regimes in that area, "a very serious prospect for the U.S."

While the government on one hand is spending millions to keep this from happening by giving economic and military aid to El Salvador, PBS provides \$40,000 to a group sympathetic to the other side to produce a film plugging that cause. At least they should have sent the bill to Mos-