

Counter-Spy: From Obscurity to

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By Ron Shaffer

Top Attention

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For nearly three years a group of young Washingtonians have been laboring in obscurity, putting out a magazine from a basement in the Adams-Morgan section of the city, trying to convince the American public that the CIA is evil.

Now this group, which calls itself the Fifth Estate, is reaching audiences as never before because, ironically, the CIA has so bitterly denounced it.

"It looks like the CIA has made us famous," said Fifth Estate member Winslow Peck, more with incredulity than glee. "Instead of us fingering them, the CIA has fingered us."

Peck and his colleagues, a collection of a half-dozen former antiwar activists and college dropouts in their 20s, have been catapulted into public attention because the CIA has claimed the group is responsible, at least indirectly, for the assassination of CIA station chief Richard S. Welch in Greece on Dec. 23.

The CIA has charged that by naming Welch as a CIA operative in their magazine, Counter-Spy, the Fifth Estate contributed to his death.

They have been on the Today Show, major national radio and television networks and they have been interviewed by the country's major newspapers.

"Basically, we're out to burst the bubble on James Bond," said Tim Butz, one of the leaders of the group.

For too long, he said, Americans have held the CIA as some sort of mysterious entity that should not be challenged. "People sort of thought of it like God—it's too big to understand," said Eda Gorden, another Fifth Estate member.

So what their organization is trying to do, Butz said, is provide hitherto unknown

information about national security agencies and the criminal justice system in general, and about the CIA in particular.

Fifth Estate was launched by author Norman Mailer, who envisioned forming "something equivalent to Nader's Raiders . . . an ombudsman composed of literary, scholarly and detective minds . . . to avert the country's slide into totalitarianism."

Peck, Butz and others, involved in various antiwar efforts in Washington, had the same idea, and they merged into the Fifth Estate, with Mailer supplying the bankroll.

Counter-Spy has a circulation of about 3,000.

Butz, Peck, Gorden and four other "coeditors," whose interests ran from Attica to Wounded Knee, put out Counter-Spy. They operate on a \$20,000 a year budget financed through subscriptions and donations.

They volunteer their time for the Fifth Estate, Butz said, and survive by working part-time in such jobs as bartending and free-lance research. Butz attends school on the GI Bill.

Butz, 28, served in Vietnam in the Air Force in 1966 and subsequently entered Kent State University in Ohio as a journalism student. It was there, he said, that he became active in the antiwar movement.

Porter, a journalism school dropout, wrote stories on San Diego financier C. Arnholt Smith in an alternative paper there long before Smith was indicted.

Margaret Van Houten, 28, who worked her way through the State University of New York at Buffalo as a sociology major, then became enraged over the uprising at Attica, found her way to Washington and the now heads a prison reform study group for the Fifth Estate.

They function as "coeditors" of the magazine, drawing editorial contributions from



By Joe Heiberger—The Washington Post

Tim Butz, Eda Gorden and Winslow Peck, with controversial Counter-Spy magazine.

"associates" scattered around the country. Because these coeditors fear reprisals, and because they operate on a shoestring budget, they move around with no fixed address, working out of a post office box number, taking phone calls at various offices of groups friendly to them.

For Gorden, "awakening" did not come until later in her life. She graduated in journalism from Simmons College in Boston and began work as a senior editor for the American Trial Lawyers Association.

One day, she said, "I began

to see some contradictions in the positions I was raising," and she was off to found the Coalition to End Grand Jury Abuse. From there she went to South Dakota to help in the defense of American Indian Movement leaders.

Then there is Julie Brooks, 21, a former editor of the University of Wisconsin student newspaper, who left school to join Counter-Spy; Peck, 29, a former analyst for the National Security Agency who took up antiwar politics; Harvey Kahn, 24, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin

an antiwar activist who taught school in Mexico for a while before joining the Fifth Estate.

The group works with an advisory board of former government employees and libertarians, including such New Left activists as David Dellinger and William Kunstler, compiling research and making appearances when they can.

Butz and Gorden said they first heard of Richard Welch's death on the night of Dec. 23 when a New York Times reporter called them.

"His first question was, 'Why are you responsible for the death of Richard Welch?'" Butz said.

"He said he had heard about us from the CIA. We were angered and shocked that they would blame us for his death."

Welch had been named as a CIA agent in journals and magazines for years, Peck said. "He was well known by his enemies; CIA agents are known in the countries they work; it's people here who don't know who they are."

Counter-Spy first published Welch's name last January in an article about what CIA station chiefs do. His name appeared in the magazine again last June, this time as a CIA operative whom some

Peruvian priests believed was trying to interfere in that country's religious life.

Fifth Estate members said they were unaware that Welch had been transferred from Peru to Greece, Butz said. A Greek newspaper identified Welch as the chief CIA officer in Greece a month before his death.

Butz said his organization sees the CIA attack on them as an attempt to use the Fifth Estate as a "whipping boy" for critics of the CIA in general in this time of increasing scrutiny of the agency. "It's a lot more convenient to pick on us than the Senate Intelligence Committee," Butz said.

David Atlee Phillips, head of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers and a staunch defender of the CIA, has spoken out bitterly against

Fifth Estate in television debates.

Congress, Phillips said, is expressing "honest concern" about the CIA, but Counter-Spy stories are "irresponsible," drawing information from suspect sources. "Such irresponsibility will see that people will become dead," he said.

Fifth Estate members defend the veracity of their articles, and claim that congressional committees investigating the CIA use the Fifth Estate as a resource.

"They're a darn good organization; their information has been accurate without exception," said an administrative aide for a congressman on the House Select Intelligence Committee.

The Fifth Estate has not solicited interviews, and does not seek to expand its operation in the aftermath of the Welch shooting, members said.

"We are not taking any pleasure in this tragic event," said Peck. "And we are not taking credit for it either," said Gorden.

Fifth Estate will continue to publish names of CIA agents, Butz said, "because it allows the American people to know who they are, and holds them responsible for their actions."

Meanwhile, members of the group said they will consider whether to withhold names of CIA officers when they have not yet been printed in local papers in the countries where they work.