

The Magazine the CIA

By Ron Shaffer
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FOR NEARLY three years a group of young men and women 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 December 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.

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

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.

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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."

S.F. Sunday

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 3000.

They said they first heard of Richard Welch's death on the night of December 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 why they are there."

Counter-Spy first published Welch's name last January in an article about what CIA stations 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. A Greek newspaper identified Welch as

Fingered

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.

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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.

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

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.