



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S CUFF

By Reed Irvine

AIM Report

December-B 1989

SOME MEMBERS TELL US THAT THEY ALWAYS MAIL THE POSTCARDS WE INCLUDE with each issue but they wonder if it does any good. The answer is an emphatic YES. The latest proof of this has been provided by Time magazine. With our October-B issue we included a card to Jason McManus, editor-in-chief of Time, asking him if he would call to his readers' attention the confession of his science editor that Time had crossed the boundary from news reporting to advocacy on environmental issues. In its December 18 issue, Time published the reply, reproduced here, at the end of its letters-to-the-editor column. I knew that hundreds of you were mailing the postcards we provide with each issue, but frankly I was surprised to learn from Time that they received over 3,400 of these cards. That is terrific! We thank all of you who mailed those cards and letters. Time's unusual response shows in a very public way that they do have an impact.

TO BE SURE, TIME'S REPLY IS DISAPPOINTING IN THAT it endorses the advocacy journalism that Charles Alexander, the science editor, confessed Time was practicing. But all we asked was that Time inform its readers that this was the case. They have now done so. They have alerted the readers to the fact that they are not getting straight news from Time on environmental and other issues about which the editors feel deeply. Mr. McManus must now be challenged on his claim that Time can do this and at the same time be fair, balanced and accurate in its presentation of the news. A card doing this is included with this issue. Please send it or your own letter to Mr. McManus. Let's send him 10,000 cards this time!

TAKE THE STORY IN TIME'S NOV. 27 ISSUE ON THE terrorist attack on San Salvador. It was illustrated with a gory photo of the bodies of three of the murdered priests that occupied nearly two-thirds of a page. It said the priests were killed by M-16 rifles (both AK-47 and M-16 cartridges were found at the site); that it was widely believed to be the work of right-wing death squads and that "it will be difficult to convince outraged citizens that the military played no role." Time was doing its best to pin the murders on the army. It said in its Dec. 4 issue, "It has become harder to avoid the conclusion that only the army or the police carried out the murders. Witnesses have told of seeing as many as 30 men in olive-drab uniforms enter the priests' residence." The fact: One woman claimed to have seen 5 or 8 masked men in camouflage uniforms outside the residence. It is now reported that she has failed six FBI lie-detector tests.

TIME SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE TERRORISTS' FAILED ATTEMPT TO MURDER President Cristiani and other high officials. It said nothing about the terrorist tactic of taking up positions in the homes in three working-class districts, exposing the residents and their property to death and destruction when the army moved to root them out, as it had to do. Instead of blaming the terrorists for the deaths resulting from their callous conduct, Time said: "While both sides inflicted civilian casualties, the air attacks by the army appeared to take the highest toll." It didn't mention that the terrorists had to force people at gun-point to help them, nor did it say that they were failing to achieve any of their goals until the six priests were murdered on Nov. 16. That diverted the negative publicity from the terrorists to the government and its supporters, one of the main terrorist goals. All three stories in Time from Nov. 27 to Dec. 11 gave the impression that the attacks had demonstrated the strength of the terrorists

Editorial Judgments

We've received more than 3,400 identically worded postcards referring to this quote in the *Wall Street Journal* from TIME senior editor Charles Alexander: "On this issue [the environment] we have crossed the boundary from news reporting to advocacy." The postcards said, "Tell your readers about this."

We are happy to. In all our coverage we try to be balanced and fair in our presentation of the facts and in reporting the range of differing views on the issues posed by the facts. But from the beginning of TIME over 66 years ago, we have also undertaken—and made no secret of it—to add our own judgments on subjects that truly mattered, from civil rights to arms control. We do not believe this will be news to our regular readers. Indeed, because they so often eloquently agree or disagree with us in these columns, it may be part of the reason they value TIME. We hope so, because we believe considered journalistic judgments are an important contribution to an informed society. And, yes, our stand on the planet is that we support its survival.