

Confirmation of the thesis of The Spike came from a very important quarter after the book was published. Dr. Andrei Sakharov, the inventor of the Soviet H-bomb, who had every door in the Kremlin opened to him until 1968, when he became a dissident, has warned in a letter published in the New York Times Magazine that the Soviet KGB has had great success in influencing many Western minds in ways that aid Soviet goals. Sakharov said that the people "bought" by the KGB include "some political figures, businessmen, a great many writers and journalists, government advisers and heads of the press and television."

While working on The Spike, we became aware of one organization in the United States that was actively combatting disinformation in the American media. It is a private, grassroots group called Accuracy in Media (AIM). It was started in 1969 by a small group of public spirited citizens in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of exposing error and distortion in the media and the reasons for suppression of important news--the "spiking" of significant stories.

We arranged to get the AIM Report, the newsletter that Accuracy in Media puts out twice a month. We found it to be an invaluable source of information. We met Reed Irvine, the chairman of AIM and the editor of the AIM Report, and we found him to be a man who is not only unusually knowledgeable about the way in which our media is being used against us, but a man who has had the courage and determination to do something about it.

Accuracy in Media, we found, is more than a publisher of a fine newsletter. It is an activist organization. It has a weekly syndicated newspaper column, a daily radio commentary. It sends out hundreds of letters to editors and broadcasters, and it mobilizes its thousands of members to write and protest serious cases of distorted reporting or "spiked" news stories. Reed Irvine even beards the heads of the most powerful media companies at their annual shareholder meetings, raising embarrassing questions and pressing for higher standards in their news operations. This is healthy, since the media are often inclined to assume that they have the right and duty to question every social institution--except their own.

AIM is effective. A lot of other people in our business agree, even though many of them don't like to be the targets of the kind of criticism that AIM levels at them. Charles Seib, former ombudsman for the Washington Post, has written: "It sticks in my craw, but I'll say it: Irvine and his AIM are good for the press." Ben Bradlee, executive editor of the Washington Post, was slightly less gracious after AIM had shown that a Post editor had "spiked" the story of the Cambodian genocide and then had lied about it. Bradlee wrote to Irvine: "You have revealed yourself as a miserable, carping, retromingent vigilante."

Arnaud de Borchgrave and I want you to know about The Spike. We also want you to know about Accuracy in Media and the AIM Report. The book gives you the big picture. The AIM Report will fill you in on a current basis on distortion and suppression by the news media. It will also tell you something specific that you can do twice each month to combat the problem.