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'Missing'

Costa-Gavras' Newest Left-Wing Propaganda

Commercials for the film, *Missing*, say that it's "based on a true story" that "the events portrayed are real," and that the "incidents are documented."



Director Costa-Gavras sets up a sequence in "Missing," an anti-American propaganda film about the 1973 military coup in Chile.

But the theme of the film—that the U.S. government was involved in the murder of an American journalist in Chile nine years ago—is not true, not real and not documented.

Nevertheless, many critics have treated the film as if it were an historical documentary. What they should be doing is examining the political motivations of the film's director, Constantin Costa-Gavras, and asking whose interests are served by this anti-American propaganda film.

The movie deals with the case of Charles Horman, an American journalist who disappeared in Chile after that country's Marxist president, Salvador Allende, was overthrown in a popular military coup in 1973. Horman was later found dead.

The facts of the case do not make for an exciting and dramatic film. So they have been altered. Ignoring the 1975 Church Committee report, which found "no evidence" of direct U.S. involvement in the 1973 coup, the film implies that Horman was executed because he "knew too much" about the alleged U.S. role in that coup.

Missing is based on a book, *The Execution of Charles Horman*, written by Thomas Hauser, who, according to syndicated columnist John Lofton, is the same Thomas Hauser who perpetrated a hoax on the *New York Times* in 1975. At that time, Lofton reports in his column, the *Times* published a series of letters from an alleged nine-year-old "Martin Bear," and the responses he received from leading politicians. "Martin Bear" turned out to be Thomas Hauser. The *Times* apologized and questioned Hauser's ethical standards.

Responding to the film and the book, the State Department released a three-page white paper which made the following points:

- Although the U.S. government was sued in 1977 in connection with the case, the parents and widow of Charles Horman dropped the suit in 1981. During the four years of litigation no information was uncovered which implicated any U.S. officials in the Horman disappearance or death.

- "The Department of State undertook intensive and comprehensive efforts to locate Charles Horman from the moment it was learned that he was missing, to assist his relatives in their efforts to locate him and also to learn the circumstances of his disappearance and death. These efforts continued for eight years and involved many special investigations.... However, no light was shed upon the circumstances of his death and little upon the circumstances of his disappearance. Furthermore, nothing was discovered to support any such charges, rumors or inferences as contained in the complaint against U.S. government officials."

- Secretary of State Edmund Muskie testified by affidavit in the Horman case "that the State Department officials who investigated and considered this matter have found no evidence of involvement by any United States government personnel in the disappearance and death of Charles Horman."

- CIA Director Stansfield Turner testified "that no evidence was found by the CIA to support the Hormans' contention that agency personnel had advance knowledge of the abduction or of the subsequent death of Charles Horman."

Interestingly, a co-star in *Missing* is Jack Lemmon, who starred in the film, *China Syndrome* with Jane Fonda. *China Syndrome* distorted the problems associated with nuclear power just as *Missing* distorts the facts in the Horman case. Lemmon himself seems to recognize this. He has stated that the film is "one hundred per cent true" from "one aspect"—the point of view of the Hormans.

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