

## Fight heats up in Univision takeover

*The fight over the proposed takeover of the Spanish-language U.S. cable channel Univision by the Venezuelan Cisneros group is heating up. Among those contesting the deal is EIR. Below are excerpts of a July 14 letter from editor Nora Hamerman to Donna R. Searcy, the secretary of the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. (the documentation, supplied to the FCC in the form of affidavits, is omitted here):*

The PTI filing . . . attempts to deny *EIR* standing in this matter by asserting that *EIR* is not an interested party, but merely has “private axes to grind.” That is false. *EIR*, and a number of its employees, were the direct victims—and thereby have “personal knowledge”—of the use of Gestapo-style tactics by Venezuelan media magnate Gustavo A. Cisneros, one of the principals in this acquisition bid. Our concern is that, by giving Mr. Cisneros much-coveted power within the U.S. media industry through approval of the PTI application, similar unconscionable tactics by Cisneros et al. will be sanctioned, and employed again, both against ourselves and other public media competitors in the U.S.

As a company which has Spanish-language publications such as *Resumen Ejecutivo de EIR*, the *Executive Intelligence Review* is concerned that it might again be subjected to attempted strongarm tactics by Cisneros, in their effort to silence a dissenting, and competing, voice in the Hispanic market in the U.S. It is preposterous to aver that we have no standing or legitimate concern in this case.

We must underscore that we are concerned not only for past behavior inside Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and other foreign countries, but also for current and possible future efforts of the Cisneros media empire to silence opposition inside the United States itself. Indeed, this is already occurring, as we document in Point 4 below. . . .

3) The only point at which either the PTI or the Univision filings even bother to address the substantive issues raised by *EIR*, is in the affidavit by Gustavo Cisneros Rendiles, appended to PTI’s “Consolidated Opposition.” In point number three of his affidavit, Mr. Cisneros complains that “very serious accusations” contained in *EIR*’s book *Narcotráfico, SA* were directed against himself and his family, which constituted “an attack on my character, reputation, and

honor.”

But even if one grants, for the purposes of argument, that Cisneros did feel so offended by the book in question, he had available to him, under Venezuelan law, the recourse of a defamation suit. Cisneros claims that he did not have this option, because of the book’s alleged “anonymity”—a patent lie, which is disproven by even the most cursory glance at the book, which shows that *Narcotráfico, SA* was published by The New Benjamin Franklin House and authored by a team of *EIR* investigators, a partial list of whose names appears on the Acknowledgments page.

Rather than filing a standard lawsuit, Cisneros chose instead the Gestapo-like tactics of instigating raids on the offices of a news service; the confiscation, destruction, and permanent banning of an “offending” publication; and the arrest, interrogation, and deportation of journalists unfriendly to his media empire. Cisneros further used his vast resources to finance the publication and distribution of pamphlets slandering *EIR* and its associates, including items which he went so far as to enter into the court record in Venezuela.

Mr. Cisneros fabricated the lie of “anonymity” regarding the authors of *Narcotráfico, SA* in order to justify his manifestly preferred approach to dealing with opponents, or mere competitors—be they political, financial or journalistic.

In point four of the Cisneros affidavit, he refers to the book *In Banks We Trust*, which also contains unfavorable references to the Cisneros family and which was cited in *EIR*’s Letter of Objection. According to Mr. Cisneros, author Penny Lernoux has since retracted those references. In reading the disclaimers by Miss Lernoux—now deceased—one can’t help but wonder if her *pro forma* letter wasn’t perhaps simply an effort to protect herself from also receiving the “*EIR* treatment” at the hands of the Cisneros empire.

4) As *EIR* warned in the original filing of its Letter of Objection, the Cisneros media empire has a demonstrated preference for trying to strongarm and bully its critics into silence. In fact, the Cisneros interests have already begun to employ the same tactics on U.S. soil, in order to silence all opposition to the granting of FCC approval to its takeover bid.

On or about June 29, 1992, the San Juan, Puerto Rico daily *El Vocero* published a story based on an *EIR* News Service press release announcing the filing of its letter of objection with the FCC to the sale of Univision to PTI. The editorial board of that newspaper apparently deemed the story of sufficient interest to conduct a followup interview on July 1 with an *EIR* correspondent in Leesburg, Virginia. One day later, a source at *El Vocero* told *EIR* that a representative of Cisneros had “contacted” officials at the newspaper. The source indicated that publication of the interview was abruptly canceled as a result of this “contact,” and that no further stories about Cisneros and the bid to acquire Univision would be forthcoming.