

The PAN's gringo press brigade

Remember the tacks strewn across a road in El Salvador, cars and truck tires being ripped to shreds—tacks placed there by a U.S. TV cameraman under orders to show guerrilla activity? Remember the German flags, neatly arranged in front of an SS grave at the Bitburg cemetery—put there by a *Newsweek* photographer who had taken them from the local mayor's office?

Much of the U.S. press now preparing to descend on northern Mexico to "cover" the Mexican elections plan to do so in the El Salvador and Bitburg tradition. The phony interviews, staged confrontations, false reports, are already beginning.

The pictures of the incidents at Piedras Negras, Dec. 29, 1984, where the PAN burned down the city hall, were flashed almost instantaneously around the world—along with a UPI wire inflating the figure of one person killed, to five. This and other exaggerated U.S. press stories, fed back into Mexico, further whipped up the PAN mobs.

Or take the escalation of tensions in the Tijuana-San Diego corridor in late April and May. Passions were already running high, after a Border Patrol officer shot a 12-year-old Mexican boy, when on May 8, the pro-PAN *San Diego Union* published a leaflet put out by a "First Pro-Dignity Group Mexico 1985." The text of the phantom leaflet—police on both sides of the border denied ever having seen such a leaflet distributed—charged that if the United States did not take appropriate action to make amends for the shooting, Americans traveling into Mexico would be fair game for revenge shootings.

On May 9, the regional media erupted in pro-and-con debate over the *San Diego Union* "leaflet." On May 10, tours of visitors to Mexico began to be cancelled. Regular San Diego school trips were scrapped.

Mexicans and Americans concerned about avoiding violence on the border should study the backgrounds of the following "journalists" now planning to "cover" the Mexican elections:

- **Sol Sanders:** Formerly with *Business Week* and now finishing a book promoting the destruction of the Mexican state. Sanders is the "case officer" assigned to "Operation PAN" by the intersection of Kissinger's Center for Strategic and International Studies network at Georgetown University (Sanders will figure prominently in CSIS's June 3-4 policy conclave on Mexico) and the Jeane Kirkpatrick/Lane Kirkland grouping of right-wing Social Democrats promoting U.S. military involvement in Central America.

- **Barnard Thompson:** Editor of an intelligence unit called Mexican News Service, based in San Ysidro, California, started in 1978. Originally just a "clipping service," Thompson now has four full-time staff. "Just an academic" who taught extension history courses at the University of California for 10 years, Thompson acknowledges that he is "in contact" on a regular basis with State Department and FBI personnel, with mob frontman, Johnny Alessio, and with State Department/CIA "journalist" Daniel James. On the Mexican side, Thompson claims an extensive network of "well-placed businessmen and intellectuals who are members of the PAN." **Alfredo Arenas**, PAN leader in Baja who proposed in 1982 that Mexico sell Baja to the U.S. in order to pay the debt, says Thompson "provides us with clippings and helps us publish the truth."

- **Marvin Alisky:** A long-time U.S. intelligence operative working under U.S. Information Service (USIS) and journalistic covers throughout Ibero-America, now based as a "media specialist" at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Alisky first established a working relationship with Daniel James when both were stationed in Mexico in the 1960s, leading up to the student riots of 1968. He travels to Sonora and Sinaloa constantly, and has access to profiles of Sonoran leaders through his participation in the Arizona-Sonora Commission, sponsored by the governments and private sectors of the two states. On a May 1982 trip to Sonora to fabricate a story that "Latin Americans do not support Argentina in the Malvinas War," Alisky carefully profiled Sonoran political groups and shared his information, by his admission, with the U.S. consular offices in Hermosillo.

Other journalists deeply involved in pro-PAN operations, now preparing to descend on Mexico for the election events, include: **William Water**, of the *Arizona Republic*. His contact in Hermosillo is **José Santiago Healy**, FBI-linked director of the flagship PAN paper of the region, *El Imparcial*. "We have to support the PAN this time," he says. "If they send troops to Sonora, the U.S. will have to do something about it." Also chummy with Healy is **Keith Rosenblum** of the *Arizona Daily Star*. Jon Vaughn of the *Yuma Daily Sun* runs a one-man PAN propaganda outpost which was instrumental in the 1982 PAN takeover of San Luis Río Colorado, across the border from Yuma. "The PAN is the only alternative for the people in Mexico; the PRI has proved its ineptitude," proclaims Vaughn. **Ron Grenness**, "freelancer" in the San Antonio area, is of the same mind, and is planning to take a TV crew to the scene. Acknowledging that he works as an unofficial State Department channel, he chattered: "There are going to be a few deaths here and there, people jailed and demonstrations, and that is going to be a good excuse for the State Department to close the border down. . . . The State Department has many contacts in Sonora among the PAN leaders, clergymen, businessmen, and professors." **Juan Vazquez** of the *Los Angeles Times* and **Art Golden** of the *San Diego Union* are both preparing for big pro-PAN coverage.