

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

Time to clean out Alan Riding

The New York Times correspondent in Mexico is a one-man disinformation service.

Since President Reagan has scheduled a meeting with Mexico's President José López Portillo this spring, it is important to clean up one of the persisting contributory factors in the troubled U.S.-Mexico relations: dishonest news reporting.

A husband-and-wife news mafia operating out of Mexico City is responsible for three-quarters of what most U.S. opinion-makers see as their daily-press news from Mexico. They are Alan Riding of the New York Times, a British national, and his wife, Marlise Simons, Mexico correspondent for the *Washington Post*. Their coverage is an unbroken stream of disinformation and distortions.

On Dec. 28, 1980 Riding teamed up with a faction in Mexico's Foreign Ministry to try to scuttle the Reagan-López Portillo meeting at Ciudad Juárez set for one week later. Foreign Minister Castañeda and his stepson in charge of "North American relations," Andrés Rozental, called up Riding to give him 24 hours previous notice that Castañeda intended to let existing fishing treaties with the United States lapse.

Riding knew what to do and the next morning the story was prominently featured on the front page of the *New York Times*, complete with Riding's warning that the issue could derail the Reagan-López Portillo summit and would definitely figure on the agenda at the border meeting. Wife Marlise duti-

fully reworked the same story for the *Washington Post*. The first news most Mexicans heard of their foreign minister's action was from the *New York Times* wire service; only as an afterthought did the foreign ministry circulate a release for the domestic press.

When López Portillo and Reagan met the next week, the fishing issue was not even mentioned in the singularly cordial meeting.

But Riding is usually much more circumspect, reflecting the refining influence of his Jesuit associates. Alan Riding is the journalist of the left-Jesuit Theology of Liberation, and from intimate personal knowledge poured streams of favorable coverage of Central America's Jesuits into the U.S. media in the two years leading up to the current slaughter in El Salvador. To no one's surprise, the flashy front-page *New York Times* interview Dec. 27, 1980, announcing with as much fanfare as it lacked foundation the "final offensive" of the left in El Salvador, was conducted by Alan Riding.

Riding currently is attempting to set Mexico and the United States at odds over El Salvador as his crowning achievement.

The characteristic form of Riding's dispatches is promotion of the same conditions of Jacobin anarchy in Mexico as that spreading through Central America. At a time when Mexico's exciting industrialization projects, based on its new oil

wealth, make our southern neighbor a pre-eminent partner for U.S. friendship and trade, Riding slickly and cynically manufactures a panorama of "rich getting richer and poor getting poorer" in which an "authoritarian" state sets the conditions for an Iran-style explosion.

Take a look at the individuals and organizations Riding has favored in his background features over the past three years. It is a catalogue of Mexico wreckers.

There's the Jesuit-run clearinghouse for environmentalism, "human rights" causes and terrorism, the Center for Social Communication (Cencos). There's Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, a virtual Riding creation, who heads a fraudulent "political prisoners defense committee."

The catalogue goes on: Herber to Castillo, the proterrorist engineer and would-be ayatollah who is leading a crusade to stop Mexico's oil development and thus its economic development. Riding calls him the "respected critic" who is "the conscience" of his nation. Then Carlos Hank González, the "strongman" mayor of Mexico City who coordinates terrorism from backstage to clear his route to the presidency.

No list would be complete without Francisco de la Cruz, the man Riding extolled in 1977 as the savior of Mexico City's land squatters. In March 1981 de la Cruz landed in jail with a hundred charges against him in the most spectacular antiterrorist bust in Mexican history.

If you see Riding's byline on any coverage of the next López Portillo-Reagan meeting, assume the opposite of what is reported and you will be headed in the right direction.