Reporters Notebook

Daniel J. Glenn

I was killed in Nicaragua. Shot dead by Nicaragua sol-
diers on the streets of Granada, Nicaragua. I went down
in a swirl of dust with gunfire blasting all around me.
A dozen or so gringos clamored past me as bodies fell,
desperately trying to reach the relative safety of an adobe
house at street's end.

I lay still under the burning sun, my lungs heaving
duty. My shirt was soaked in sweat and I felt
sharp pains in my hips and legs. Four Nicas lined
up behind my body, knife and fire in the direction of
the house. The explosion of gunpowder rang in my ears,
and just as I thought I'd taken my last breath, British
director Alex Cox yelled, "Cut, just as I thought I'd taken my last breath, British director
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I eased myself back on my feet and prepared to die one
more time for 15,000 comrades (about five bucks) a day
and a fleeting chance at fame. I was working as an extra
OF THE QUAD on set of Walker, TLH a film about the life of Walker shot on location this spring in Nicaragua.

Colonel William Walker, who is played by Ed Harris,
was a US adventurer who led a successful mercenary ac-
tack on Nicaragua in 1854. With the financial backing of
William Vanderbilt and official recognition by US Presi-
dent Franklin Pierce, Walker declared himself President
of Nicaragua.

Walker, who re-established slavery and made
English the country's official language before being driven
out by Central American armies in 1856. Executed in
Honduras after a failed comeback in 1860, Walker was
largely forgotten in the United States, but in Central
America he has remained a lasting symbol of US aggres-
sion.

While I wasn't getting shot or yelled at I occasionally
had a chance to speak with Alex Cox, who is best known
for his film Repo Man and Sid and Nancy. Cox was right
pointed to what he sees as similarities between William
Walker and President Ronald Reagan, and he was outspun-
ked about the political role of his movie.

Reagan, according to Cox, is carrying on a policy of
intervention in Nicaragua begun by Colonel Walker's
invasion in 1854, continued by the US Marine invasions
in 1912 and 1956, and Lt. Colonel Oliver North and the
Contras in 1981-87.

The Walker film uses anachronistic devices such as
green plastic sunglasses, a downdraft airplane, and a troop
transport helicopter to connect Walker's world of the
1850s with Reagan's world of the 1980s.

I didn't go to Nicaragua to be in a movie. Like most of
the other extras on the Walker film, I went to do solidar-
ity work with the people there. My co-workers, Susan Ar-
kisson, and I had only been in Managua a few days when
we heard someone was making the rounds of the hosp.
houses, looking for interviewees to play the role of
Walker's infamous mercenary soldiers. Los Inmortales,
Los Immortals.

At 7 am on March 21, Susan and I squeezed into the
back of an old Datsun marked "Walker #23" and head-
ed to Old Leon for our first day of filming.

We were driven out to an ancient farmhouse on the
edge of Lake Managua. Below the farmhouse a tent was
set up with tables, benches, and props. We were
fitted with costumes and props were packed around all:
Hanging out at the shade of trees were a lot of dusty, unshaven
cowboys carrying black powder rifles and long knives.

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