

Panama's sovereignty, Gen. Omar Torrijos and Gen. Manuel Noriega—are no friends of Moscow. While the experts debated over what role Torrijos and “Torrijismo,” the political movement founded to continue his nationalist project, should be accorded in history, all participants agreed that Torrijos and his followers had failed to implement the domestic “progressive changes” which they had promised, instead compromising with the bourgeoisie.

A particular bias against Panama's Defense Forces had shown through the debate. All participants agreed that the PDF cannot, and must not, be viewed as either anti-American or pro-left. Two of the Institute's Caribbean and Cuban experts reminded the others that the PDF, under both Torrijos and Noriega, participated in over 20 joint military exercises with the United States, asserting that Noriega has been on the Pentagon's payroll for years. They demanded that “contradictions” within the military be studied carefully, in light of charges by Panama's communists that the PDF has displayed an increasing “appetite for bourgeoisification.”

Then, in mid-September, the widely circulated *New Times* weekly (No. 38, 1988), carried an article which not only attacked Panama's Defense Forces, but signalled that the Soviets have opened contacts with Washington's Panamanian opposition movement. Mikhail Baklanov, Novosti's correspondent in Panama, penned the new line:

“A compromise is needed. . . . Panamanians are tired of the crisis. There is a pressing need for a gust of fresh air, for new ideas. The government is trying to maintain the status quo. As for the opposition . . . is it capable of carrying out the long-awaited reforms? This is no rhetorical question. Over the past year, any political action against the regime has been identified with the extreme-right ‘civil crusade’ movement, which the U.S. embassy in Panama has certainly had a hand in organizing. . . . However, not all of the opposition are prepared to betray the interests of the nation.”

Baklanov then reports that he was invited to the Union Club, the oligarchy's most exclusive whites-only club, to lecture opposition leaders on *perestroika* in the Soviet Union. His conclusions from the meeting? “Even Panamanian big businessmen are tired of the old ways and also want change. . . . The atmosphere grew warmer as the evening progressed.”

His *New Times* article makes no mention of the Soviet's new Canal proposal, but suggests that Panamanian interests in recovering sovereignty are motivated solely by greed. Panama's “army is looking after its own corporate interests in the matter,” when it demands that the Canal be returned to Panama, Baklanov charges—just as Panama's “big businessmen also want the Canal back . . . to reap the dividends.”

Was this the agenda Karen Brutents, deputy chief of the Soviet Communist Party's International Department and a top controller of Soviet operations in both the Middle East and Central America, brought with him when he visited Panama City on Sept. 15-18?

Panama's Solís Palma U.S. war plans before

by D.E. Pettingell

In his first trip abroad since he took over as Constitutional Chief of State in February, Panamanian President Manuel Solís Palma laid out before representatives of the world's nations attending the United Nations General Assembly, the truth of the United States' escalating economic and military war against Panama. This war is no defense of democracy, nor a fight against drugs, but “an act of piracy without precedent in world history” which seeks to strip Panama of its right to national sovereignty, Panama's President stated.

He emphasized that, without support from other nations, Panama now faces the danger of military invasion.

Panama's civilian and military leaders, by sticking to their defense of Panama's right to sovereignty and economic development, have become an obstacle to the liberal U.S. Establishment's efforts to set up a joint world dictatorship with the Russian imperialists. President Solís's decision to take the global “Big Lie” campaign against Panama head-on, by personally bringing Panama's case for sovereignty before as many nations as possible, exemplifies the international potential Panama's nationalists represent.

Solís Palma's speech shook the delegates, who commented upon both the bluntness of his warning, and the dignity with which he delivered it. The U.S. delegation was notably absent from the General Assembly hall.

“I categorically state that my government has abundant reason to fear direct U.S. military aggression against the Republic of Panama,” he said. The United States has installed “commandos of surprise attack specialists, an elite battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division, electronic warfare experts, and over 300 attack and personnel transport helicopters; in addition to units for the control and occupation of urban centers.” He added that the U.S. military presence in Panama has increased by 1,300 troops and 800 marines and her “offensive military equipment” has expanded beyond that required for the defense of the Panama Canal.

“Fighter planes have taken over the Panamanian skies; not only do they carry out with significant frequency threatening maneuvers against Panamanian military installations, but also against international commercial planes,” he stated.

Solís Palma's presence at the U.N. was in itself a triumph since, up until the last minute, the U.S. government, the only

indicts the U.N.

one in the world that still recognizes the invisible government of "President" Eric Delvalle, tried to sabotage his appearance. The State Department did all in its power to show its hostility to the U.N. guest; no secret service protection was provided to Solís Palma, while there were attempts to confine his movements to U.N. headquarters. At the same time, the State Department-controlled Panamanian opposition Civic Crusade was allowed to demonstrate against Solís Palma in front of the U.N., an area normally off-limits, for security reasons, to demonstrations while the General Assembly is taking place. The anti-Solís Palma rally was a total flop.

In contrast, the Schiller Institute organized a warm reception for Solís Palma upon his arrival at Kennedy Airport on Sept. 25. "America Loves Solís Palma" and "Just Say Noriega," were some of the signs displayed by a group of 50 Americans and Panamanians. Solís and his delegation were pleasantly surprised.

Portraying Panama in a 'monstrous fashion'

In his speech, Solís Palma delivered a blistering attack on the U.S. government's attempt to "manipulate consciousness" by introducing into "world public opinion an image of Panama and its leaders which is nothing more than a product of its own invention, a fiction manufactured by its agents."

He denounced the "massive disinformation campaign" against Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, head of the Panamanian Defense Forces, as a "sinister tissue of lies and falsehoods," organized and carried out by the U.S. government. He said that the way that campaign had been carried out was a "new war of conquest," and the details and techniques should be observed carefully by other nations. The Panamanian President praised the Panamanian Defense Forces, under General Noriega, for carrying out an "exemplary war against drug trafficking."

In appealing for an end to the U.S. aggression against his country, Solís Palma reminded the American people of the most "distinguished and illustrious citizen" of the United States, John Quincy Adams (President 1824-28), who warned his government of the danger of going beyond its borders "in search of monsters to destroy." He then charged that the U.S. government has gone to the extreme of "inventing monsters"

in order to carry out its "designs of continental domination."

He explained before the world forum that the U.S. government has used as a "pretext" the lack of a "formal democracy" in Panama to try to "overthrow the legitimate Panamanian government, and impose a de facto regime headed by figures committed to the renegotiation of those clauses of the Panama Canal treaties which guarantee the Panamanian people definitive consolidation of an independent, free, sovereign, and neutral nation."

The 'October surprise'

The U.S. reaction to Solís Palma's charges did not wait. Two hours later, while Solís Palma was still inside the U.N. headquarters, a defensive U.S. Ambassador Vernon Walters called a press conference to answer Solís Palma. He called the speech a "litany of false accusations against the United States," and denied that the United States was preparing a military intervention against Panama, but promised the U.S. will "continue its efforts to help bring democracy to Panama."

In response to insistent questions about Solís Palma's charges that the U.S. military build-up inside Panama was in preparation for a military action, Walters shocked a group of journalists by replying, "not by the United States," and then blustering, "The United States does not engage in military aggression!" He brushed off Solís Palma's argument by saying that Nicaragua has also been warning about an imminent U.S. invasion for the past four years.

Walters's affirmation, "not by the United States," and his comparison of Panama to Nicaragua, further confirm reports that the United States is backing politically and logistically a group of mercenaries and "Panamanian Contras" based in Costa Rica under the orders of former Panamanian Col. Eduardo Herrera. According to reliable reports, the Panamanian Contras are getting ready for an "October surprise"—an invasion of Panama to try to kill General Noriega. The Contra operation would be openly backed militarily by the United States.

Any U.S. military action against Panama would be devastating for the entire Ibero-American continent. In calling upon the world community for "solidarity" with Panama, Solís Palma warned that only the immediate integration of Ibero-America could prevent Panama from becoming "the last link in a chain of similar cases."

Asked about his reactions to Panama's appeal to the U.N., Peruvian Foreign Minister Luis González Posada stated his country's position: "Latin America's sovereignty is a commitment that we all share" and added, "our main concern is that, yes, we have to accelerate the process of Latin American integration."

"Latin America is in crisis, and in a great crisis. . . . The only way out of this crisis is advancing deeply, without bureaucracy, without delay, in an urgent and vital process of integration."