

Rockefeller off the hook as the conservatives play fall guys for the Administration. General Torrijos has called six Latin American heads of state to a meeting on the Canal in Bogota, Colombia for August 5, and advance reports indicate that they will praise Carter's efforts to reach an agreement and issue strong attacks on the treaty's congressional opponents. One scheduled at-

tendee, President Daniel Oduber of Costa Rica, is already quoted as calling for "launching a battle against the core of conservatives in the North American Senate who are using every method to block a new treaty."

Carter, meanwhile, will be repeating over and over, "Don't look at me."

— Dan Wasserman

## Background To A 'Managed' Crisis

### The Panama Scenario

The Carter Administration's intentions on the question of the Panama Canal are underlined by a comparison of two documents: "The United States and Latin America: Next Steps," the second report by the Commission on United States-Latin American Relations (the "Linowitz Commission") and "Latin America: Struggle for Progress," written by James Theberge and Roger Fontaine for Nelson Rockefeller's Commission on Critical Choices for Americans. The first, the semi-official "transition document" of the Carter Administration, recommends:

The new Administration should promptly negotiate a new Canal Treaty with Panama; it should involve members of both parties and both Houses of Congress in the negotiations; and should make clear to the American public why a new and equitable treaty with Panama is not only desirable but urgently required.

The second document, in which top negotiator Linowitz had an equally sizeable hand in drafting, reveals the reality behind the conciliatory advice of the Linowitz report. (See below) From the analysis of the Critical Choices book and from the actions of the Carter Administration it is clear that the current U.S. government has no intention of signing a new Panama Canal treaty. Instead, the Carter Administration is attempting to use the Canal talks to lay the preconditions for a major explosion in the region, and, as suggested in the Critical Choices report, provoke the Cubans into a confrontation that would serve as an "Angola" in the Western Hemisphere.

The various scenarios spinning off of such a confrontation are myriad, but the basic objective would be an attempt to force the Cubans, and through them the Soviets, to cede strategic ground. Within the same plan, according to the blueprint, the Caribbean would be reconquered as the domain of the U.S. Sources in the U.S. intelligence community have confirmed that the same forces within the U.S. government who are attempting to instigate a Guatemalan invasion of Belize are working to insure that a new treaty is not signed.

There are three distinguishable options open to the Carter Administration to achieve this end and thereby provoke the desired confrontation. The first is to act so intransigently at the negotiating table and simultaneously to be so provocative elsewhere that the

Panamanian government will be forced to break off negotiations. The second is to draft a treaty with the Panamanians and then rely on strong opposition in the U.S. Senate to block its ratification. The third, closely related to the first, is to utilize one of the terrorist networks under the control of the government or related private intelligence networks to either assassinate General Torrijos or to sabotage the Canal.

Since the Critical Choices report deems the second scenario "the more likely," it will be dealt with at greater length. Concerning the first and third options, the following facts should be pointed out. First, that the decision on whether or not to force a breakoff in talks before a treaty is drafted will depend largely on the pressures on the Administration from outside the Americas. The motion of the Soviet Union, the Europeans and the OPEC member nations in forging an alternative to the current dollar-based monetary system will be the key determinant of both the desperation and the political capabilities of the Rockefeller-Carter forces in attempting to stage an early confrontation over the Panama question.

In his Yazoo speech two weeks ago, Carter trampled on several of the most sensitive issues of the ongoing negotiations. He casually talked about the construction of a new sea-level canal and referred to the U.S. relationship toward the canal over the length of the new treaty as one of "partial sovereignty." These remarks did not succeed in provoking any angry response from the Panamanians. Ambassador Linowitz's public affairs spokesman, when asked about the Carter speech, said that he was "very surprised" that Gen. Torrijos had not reacted. Several days later, according to the Panamanian press Torrijos was nearly killed in a helicopter accident when the Canal Zone air control tower ordered his craft to descend in altitude, putting it directly in the path of two U.S. Air Force a-7 jets.

The likelihood of an attempt on Torrijos's life is a constant theme in the U.S. press coverage of U.S.-Panama relations. Reference to a coup against him is made in the Critical choices report. Explicit and lengthy discussion of Torrijos' possible sudden death is included in a February, 1977 article in the New York Review of Books, written by former British intelligence agent Graham Greene. To implement such "executive action" against Torrijos, the Carter forces would only have to turn to the right-wing Panamanian exile community based in Miami, Florida and organized around Torrijos's former collaborator, Boris Martinez. These exiles,

closely tied to the Cuban exile community in Miami, have made frequent threats against the General's life.

Similarly, the U.S. is well equipped to create a variety of incidents in Panama or the Canal Zone for the purpose of wrecking the treaty negotiations. The grid included as Appendix F recounts numerous manufactured incidents between Panamanians and Zonians and the Panamanian press characterization of these events as intentional provocations. The appearance last year of the mysterious "Yanki Go Home" terrorist organization reveals an operational capability in staging attacks on either government leaders, U.S. military personnel or the vulnerable Canal itself. It should be noted that the past experience of Carter's negotiators and Secretary of State qualify all three men as experts in the techniques of destabilizations and coup operations against uncooperative foreign governments.

It is probable, however, that the Carter Administration would rather not bear direct public responsibility for an explosion over Panama. It is much more likely that they will rely on anti-treaty factions in the U.S. Senate to assume the role of wreckers of a drafted treaty. The main point of contention during Congressional debate will probably be the question of defense and neutrality of the Canal after the year 2000. According to press reports in the U.S., this issue has been separated out from the questions of treaty duration, transfer of administration and jurisdiction and financial compensation. It will constitute a second accompanying treaty that will reportedly be offered for signing to other users of the Canal. It will, however, also be the lightning rod for the opposition of Congressional conservatives and the issue on which the planned failure of the treaty is hung.

The attitude of conservatives on the Canal question is by no means uniform. Senator Barry Goldwater is in favor of a treaty. Similar divisions show up in politically related circles in the U.S. military. General George Brown, from his position as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is actively backing a treaty. General Dennis McAuliffe, head of the Southern Command in the Canal Zone, however, is actively attempting to sabotage the agreement. (It is not known if McAuliffe is merely a dupe representing the narrow interests of the Canal Zone military or an active agent of the Carter Administration in a conscious fashion.)

To insure passage of an equitable treaty in the U.S. Senate would require a political organizing campaign of some skill and persuasiveness. It is almost certain at this point that a hard sell campaign by the Carter forces to

win passage of a treaty, while giving the appearance of support for the draft treaty, would actually drive the conservative forces into even more solidified opposition.

#### *The Soviets, the Cubans and Torrijos*

It is important to dispel in passing, certain reports about Panama's relations with the socialist countries that have appeared with considerable regularity in the U.S. and Latin American press during the course of the current negotiations. Among the scare stories circulated about Panama's future are tales that the Soviets are poised to move into the country, especially militarily. From a thorough and daily reading of the Soviet press — dailies, journals, magazines, etc. — it can be said definitively that there is no evidence to support that contention. The same can be said of the Cubans.

It is true that both the Soviets and the Cubans have consistently backed Panama's claim to a right to sovereignty over the Canal and that the two nations have consistently supported Panama in international forums such as the United Nations. But the only other evidence of either Soviet or Cuban interest in the country is in establishing trade and commerce ties that will foster mutual development of the countries' respective economies. Exemplary of this desire is the recent agreement between the Soviets and Panama to negotiate accords that would provide for the establishment of Soviet banking facilities and heavy manufacturing plants in Panama. If successfully negotiated, the accords also hold the possibility for expanded trade, through the Panamanian "Free Zone," by the Soviets with other countries of Latin America.

On the specifics of the Canal negotiations, the Soviets have said little. The Cubans, being closer to the situation, have carried regular reports of the ongoing talks. By way of advice, Cuban President Fidel Castro has told General Torrijos to be prudent, patient and not to allow himself to be provoked.

One other area that has been blurred by distorted press accounts is the question of General Torrijos himself. It has been widely reported that he is an unstable, irrational and impulsive man. These tales to the contrary, it should be pointed out that the General has been exceedingly patient over the course of the lengthy negotiations and has consistently sought to defuse tensions over the last year, including those arising from incidents clearly created by the U.S. and Canal Zone personnel.