

Shultz's Panama plots are floundering

by Gretchen Small

While Reagan administration officials debate whether the United States' international image can best be saved by kidnaping the commander of Panama's Defense Forces, invading Panama outright, or simply ordering all American businesses to leave the country, Committees in Defense of Panama are being set up, country by country in Ibero-America, to provide the infrastructure through which economic aid, and if necessary, military assistance, can be channeled into Panama.

The announcement April 7 that 210 Brazilian senators and deputies have founded a Committee of Solidarity and Defense of Panamanian Sovereignty (see *Documentation*), provides the most dramatic indication that support for Panama within the region is building, fast. The Committees are already organizing popular pressure, to force Ibero-American governments to act upon the commitment made "to consider [the government of Panama's] request for assistance" to withstand U.S. economic aggression, at the March 29 emergency session of SELA (Latin American Economic System).

The initial drive behind the mobilization to defend Panama, is the understanding that the principle of sovereignty itself is at stake. As *Excelsior's* respected political commentator, José L. Mejias, reminded his Mexican readers on April 3, Benjamin Franklin's old saying, "If we don't hang together, we will hang separately," summarizes the choice facing Ibero-America.

War has its own laws, however. What began as defensive unity, will soon pass over into discussion of the possibility of Ibero-America retaking the offensive on the international scene, raising the specter again of the "debt bomb" as the regional weapon of most efficacy to bring Washington back to its senses. The genie would then be out of the bottle.

Meanwhile, Soviet moles in Washington continue to pump out propaganda that only Moscow's clients back Panama's nationalists. The radical discrepancy between reality and the lie inundating Washington, that a U.S. invading force would be welcomed as liberators of Panama, only reaffirms *EIR's* insistence that Soviet strategists would like nothing better than to see the U.S. attempt to remove Gen. Manuel Noriega by force. Such an effort would be strategic disaster.

As April 1 came and went with General Noriega still commanding Panama's Defense Forces, despite a U.S. ultimatum that he leave by that date, U.S. policymakers have been forced to admit that they underestimated the character of the general, and exaggerated the strength of the opposition to the civilian-military alliance which Noriega leads. They have yet to figure out *why* they were so wrong, however, and so are proceeding to repeat the error on a larger scale.

Too accustomed to following the rules of the Establishment's game themselves, many in Washington assumed that General Noriega also played their game, and so, when the Establishment's orders came down, that he would simply step aside. They fail to understand, even now, that someone, in this case the general, could be so committed to his nation's independence and development, that he would be willing to put his life on the line, were that required to defend it.

U.S. actions against Panama have triggered a similar commitment among many in the Panamanian population. Militias are being formed with such names as "Sovereignty Brigades" and "Dignity Battalions," which have begun drilling under the direction of the Defense Forces. When Secretary of State Shultz's threats to send in a commando squad to capture Noriega were reported, a new slogan was adopted: "Every Patriot is Another Noriega." The question was raised: How many is the United States prepared to fight?

Even the well-heeled opposition parties have found themselves unable to rally their membership behind the party leaders' call for a U.S. invasion. The only opposition party with any base of support outside Panama City's financial district, the *Panameñista* party of Arnulfo Arias, is splitting over the issue of U.S. intervention.

The oligarchic top of the opposition, not-so-fondly named "white tails" by their countrymen, hope the United States will succeed in bringing them to power, but are complaining that they may lose too much money in the process. When the Civic Crusade's strike collapsed, U.S. officials and opposition leaders began muttering over the "yellow-bellied white tails."

So, Reagan administration officials scramble over one another to find a way out of the mess in which their war upon Panama has placed them. Shultz and his assistant for the Americas, Elliott "I Lie, And So What?" Abrams, compete for the title of maddest dog in town. Shultz demands the Marines rescue the policy he has ruined; Abrams insists that if the CIA cannot get the Defense Forces to kill Noriega, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 must be activated against Panama, empowering the administration to prohibit any American companies from paying taxes and fees to Panama.

Cooler heads warn that such economic measures just might "do some permanent structural damage to trading relations . . . that are difficult to repair once the emergency is over." But while Pentagon officials continue to balk at the wildest military measures proposed, the madmen at the State

Department continue to push for them, step by step, to bury U.S. strategic interests upon the isthmus's Ancon Hill.

Documentation

The following Manifesto of the Committee of Solidarity and Defense of Panamanian Sovereignty was signed by 210 of Brazil's 559 deputies and senators.

Whereas the sister republic of Panama is victim of an insidious interventionist campaign, like nothing since the times of Theodore Roosevelt's "Big Stick," a policy now replayed by President Reagan through his State Department officials, especially George Shultz and Elliott Abrams;

Whereas the economic and financial warfare measures launched by the North American government against Panama are causing serious harm to the people of that country, being contrary to the most fundamental principles of International Law, of self-determination of the peoples, and of coexistence between civilized nations, as consecrated in the 4th and 5th articles of the draft Constitution [of Brazil], already approved by the Plenary of the National Constituent Assembly;

Whereas such actions are directed against the Carter-Torrijos treaties, which assure the delivery of the Panama Canal to Panamanian sovereignty, and are also directed toward imposing a program of forced liberalization of their economy, with the objective of converting Panama into a "free trade zone," as publicly sought by former National Security Council adviser Norman Bailey's group;

Whereas in the current aggression by the United States Government against Panama are joined several private groups linked to the Wall Street banking systems, such as Arnold and Porter, the law firm of former Assistant Secretary of State William D. Rogers (which, conspicuously, the Brazilian government has contracted to represent our interests before the foreign debt creditor banks);

Whereas the North American attacks on Panama expressly violate the United Nations Charter and the Rio Treaty which created the Organization of American States;

And whereas, finally, our government has adopted a passive and negligent—and almost conniving—policy toward North American aggression, we, the members of the Constituent Assembly signed below have decided to organize:

A *Committee of Solidarity And Defense Of Panamanian Sovereignty*, declaring:

1) The defense of Panama's legitimate sovereignty constitutes the defense of the sovereignty of all the Latin American nations and of the principles of self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

2) Economic—and possible military—aggression against Panama is aggression against all Latin America;

3) Repudiation of all designs which seek to impose a system of "limited sovereignties" in the Western Hemisphere;

4) The Brazilian government must negotiate with the North American government in regard to immediately suspending the economic warfare measures adopted against Panama, to eliminate all embargoes and freezes on Panamanian assets in the United States, as well as stopping troop shipments to that brother country;

5) Similarly, we demand our government give its solidarity to the Panamanian people, by giving economic aid;

6) Finally, we support unconditional compliance with the Carter-Torrijos Treaties.

The following resolution, directed to President Raúl Alfonsín, was approved by the Chamber of Deputies in the Argentine Congress on March 25, 1988.

Motivation

Mr. President:

The North American government, ignoring the constitutional resolution of the Panamanian Assembly of Representatives of last Feb. 26, seeks to continue considering Eric Delvalle as President of Panama, which becomes a new interference in the internal affairs of the small Central American nation.

This determination of the Reagan administration has served as a pretext for suspending payment of the debt for use of the Canal, which is causing a difficult financial situation that aims at internal destabilization.

In turn, the United States of America has encouraged efforts toward implementing a regional economic boycott against Panama, and provoked the diplomatic isolation of the new government of Manuel Solís Palma, with the clear intention of creating conditions appropriate to carrying out a rapid-deployment military invasion, such as was done in 1983 with the Republic of Grenada.

For this, more than 7,000 troops have been sent to carry out maneuvers in the former Canal Zone, which is expressly forbidden by the inter-oceanic Torrijos-Carter treaties, signed in 1977, and which goes against the preservation of peace in Central America, which the Latin American countries—including Argentina—endorse.

For these reasons, we present the following resolution:

The Chamber of Deputies of the Argentine nation declares:

Its repudiation of United States government interference in the internal affairs of the sister republic of Panama, and rejection of the military maneuvers that that nation is carrying out in the former Canal Zone, because it considers them a threat to Panamanian sovereignty and to peace in Central America, which the Latin American countries—including Argentina—endorse.