

X: IC, Baumann, PM, Clark

Intercontinental Press Inprecor



P.O. Box 116 Village Station, New York, N.Y. 10014

December 15, 1979

MSR
Panama

Comrades:

We were surprised by your objection to Will Reissner's article on the Canal Zone in number 37 of this year's IP/I. We do not agree that the article was in contradiction to the political line of the Fourth International or previous IP/I articles on this question.

We are, however, very interested in reading your opinions. Your letter of November 7, while insisting on a public retraction and suggesting that the article contained factual inaccuracies, neither pointed to any specific errors nor presented your own views on the matters covered in the article. We are not sure what your objections are. We look forward to reading your views and weighing your criticisms. On that basis, we can determine whether a real difference of opinion is involved, or if there has simply been a problem of conflicting information.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve Clark". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Steve Clark
IP/I

cc: United Secretariat
PSR Colombia
LCR France
PRT Mexico

NOV 14 1979

Panamá, 7 de noviembre de 1979

A: La Dirección Política del Socialist Workers Party.

Al: S. U. de la IV Internacional

Camaradas:

Queremos expresar por este medio nuestra profunda y formal protesta por el contenido del artículo aparecido en el Intercontinental Press/Imprecor, Vol. 17-37 Pág. 2, con fecha 15 de octubre, el cual lleva por título: "Panamá 250 Hail Return of Canal Zone" y aparece firmado por un tal Will Reissner.

Dicho artículo además de contener una serie de aseveraciones falsas, se nutre sobre la base de informaciones emanadas de "Radio Habana" y de "Granma", ambos órganos cubanos que mantienen una actitud de defensa y propaganda de la dictadura militar bonapartista que impera en Panamá.

Por otra parte la línea política que desarrolla en ese artículo el tal Will Reissner está en contra de las resoluciones del S.U. de la Cuarta Internacional sobre el caso del Canal de Panamá publicadas en Imprecor/Intercontinental Press de octubre de 1977.

Queremos hacerles saber a ustedes que este tipo de análisis supérfluos, acientíficos y falsos, dentro de una publicación de la Cuarta, deja mucho que desear de la seriedad que debe tener una publicación de nuestra Internacional.

Valerse de informaciones de la prensa burguesa y de lo que pueda decir la Radio de un país distante, para emitir juicios como lo hacen en ese artículo, en lugar de informarse directamente en el terreno o con nuestra organización es una actitud que merece todo nuestro repudio.

Nuestra organización exige una retractación pública e inmediata de todas las falsedades y aberraciones de dicho artículo, de lo contrario nos veremos en la obligación de rechazarlo también públicamente.

Cón saludos revolucionarios,

P. Liova

Movimiento Socialista Revolucionario
Sección Panameña de la Cuarta Internacional

cc: P.R.T. México
P.S.R. Colombia
L.C.R. Francia

NEWS ANALYSIS

250,000 Hail End to U.S. Rule Over Canal Zone

By Will Reissner

On October 1 an estimated 250,000 Panamanians surged through the once heavily guarded gates of the Canal Zone. They were celebrating the end of seventy-six years of direct U.S. rule over the 533-square mile zone that had previously cut their country in half.

The ceremony turning the Canal Zone over to Panama marked the first step in implementing two treaties signed by the governments of Panama and the United States on September 7, 1977. The return of Panamanian sovereignty over the Canal Zone was marked by huge celebrations throughout Panama.

The size and anti-imperialist militancy of these outpourings signalled the difficulties the U.S. rulers will face in maintaining the onerous concessions they extorted from the Panamanian government during the negotiations two years ago.

As Vice-president Walter Mondale addressed the October 1 ceremony, hailing the "success in the peaceful resolution of disputes and good relations between large and small nations," he was repeatedly interrupted by chants of demonstrators waving banners reading "Yankees Out of Panama" and "Sovereignty or Death."

"A climate of indescribable joy" reigned throughout Panama, Radio Havana reported October 2. "Popular fiestas began Saturday [September 29] and lasted until Monday night." Spontaneous street demonstrations erupted during the day October 1.

"The Canal Zone will be erased from the map," Panamanian President Aristides Royo told a cheering crowd of 100,000 at the ceremony where a giant Panamanian flag was raised over the zone. "All that has been off limits to us since 1903 has begun to be ours."

Reflecting the deepgoing popular support throughout Latin America for the struggle of the Panamanians to gain control over their greatest resource, the heads of state of seven Latin American countries attended the rally.

These included the presidents of Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, and Costa Rica. Nicaragua was represented by Violeta Chamorro and Daniel Ortega, two of the five members of the Junta of National Reconstruction.

Implementation of the first phase of the treaties gives Panama control over the cities of Cristobal and Balboa, as well as over the railroad that runs parallel to the canal. Control over operations of the canal itself, however, will not revert to Panama

until the last day of 1999.

The United States had ruled the Canal Zone since 1903, when a treaty with the newly independent Republic of Panama granted the U.S. control over the zone "in perpetuity." In return, Panama received a one-time cash payment of \$10 million.

Until the October 1 ceremony, the Canal Zone had been directly administered by Washington, subject to U.S. rather than Panamanian law. The Canal Zone had its own police force, laws, courts, and school system and was serviced by the U.S. postal system. Most jobs associated with the canal were reserved for U.S. citizens.

The U.S. continues to have a massive military presence in Panama. There are at present fourteen U.S. military bases in what was the Canal Zone.

Panamanian nationalists have long been struggling against the U.S. presence in their country. Large demonstrations and strikes in 1947 forced cancellation of an agreement granting the Pentagon a new lease on military bases *outside* the Canal Zone. The U.S. was forced to withdraw from those bases at the end of that year.

Throughout the 1950s Panamanians organized marches into the Canal Zone to try to fly the Panamanian flag alongside the U.S. flag as a symbol of Panamanian sovereignty over the zone. In one such march, on November 3, 1959, demonstrators were driven out of the zone by U.S. troops and some eighty persons were injured. The ensuing anger in Panama convinced U.S. President Eisenhower to allow the Panamanian flag to be flown symbolically in *one* place in the zone.

The bloodiest U.S. assault took place on January 9, 1964. More than twenty Panamanians were killed and some 500 were wounded when U.S. troops and Canal Zone police opened fire on thousands of unarmed people attempting to raise a Panamanian flag alongside the U.S. flag at Balboa High School in the zone. Since then demonstrations have taken place each year on the anniversary of the massacre. And President Royo read out the names of the slain protesters at the October 1 ceremony, as the crowd shouted "present" after each name.

U.S. sovereignty over the Canal Zone has been a hated symbol of U.S. imperialism to people throughout Latin America. President Carter hopes that the new treaties will improve Washington's image, while maintaining effective control over the canal itself.

Under the two treaties, the U.S. government retains the permanent right to intervene militarily in Panama to maintain the canal's "neutrality." U.S. warships will have the right to priority passage. The U.S. military can keep its bases through 1999 and maintains the right to use all lands and waters it deems necessary for the canal's defense.

In other words, the full U.S. military presence will remain in what had been the Canal Zone.

The U.S. also retains its control over operation of the canal itself, although under an altered form. Effective October 1, operations were transferred from the Panama Canal Company, which was exclusively controlled by the U.S. government, to a Panama Canal Commission made up of nine members—five Americans and four Panamanians—all of whom must be approved by the U.S. government.

The treaties stipulate that through 1990 the administrator of the canal will be an American, with a Panamanian deputy. In August President Carter named the first administrator of the new Panama Canal Commission. He is Gen. Dennis McAuliffe, who had until then been serving as the head of the U.S. Southern Command, headquartered in the Canal Zone.

As the October 1 celebrations in Panama dramatically showed, the Panamanian people value the concessions they have won but are not happy with the extensive control the U.S. still retains.

The victory over Somoza in Nicaragua and the rising tide of rebellion in El Salvador and other parts of Central America are likely to inspire the Panamanian masses to press forward for the withdrawal of all U.S. bases from Panama and for immediate, full Panamanian control over the canal. □

Correction

A line was inadvertently dropped from the article "Worldwide Aid for Kampuchea Now!" in last week's *IP/I*. The ninth paragraph in column one on page 941 should read:

According to Chanda, "Vietnam so far has supplied 10,000 tons of rice seed, 20,000 tons of rice, 9,000 tons of fuel oil and 5,000 tons of consumer goods such as condensed milk, cloth and household utensils."