

Japan, West Germany recognize Panama's Solís Palma government

by Robyn Quijano

On June 15, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz announced that the United States intended to use the Toronto Summit of major industrialized nations to discuss ways of combating Panama's Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. The Reagan administration has been pressuring its allies throughout the world for four months to recognize Panama's deposed "President-in-hiding," Eric Arturo Delvalle, and join the United States' economic warfare against the government of Panamanian President Manuel Solís Palma.

On the same day Shultz announced his plan, the new ambassador from West Germany presented his credentials at Panama's presidential palace. On June 24, just days after the Toronto Summit, Japan's ambassador to Panama met with Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter in Panama City to convey his nation's recognition of the government.

When asked for an official reaction, State Department spokesman Charles Redman said, "Our view is that it is not the thing to do."

The State Department's arm-twisting has now officially failed, and the United States will shortly be the only government to recognize ex-President Delvalle, into whose bank accounts the Reagan administration is funneling tens of millions of dollars of payments belonging to the Panamanian government. Delvalle has just instructed U.S. companies and individuals operating in Panama to pay their taxes into his account at the New York Federal Reserve. The *Wall Street Journal* noted that, while the State Department says the money will be frozen until Noriega has been ousted, Delvalle expects to use it to regain power. This is a corruption scandal that U.S. allies are declaring they want nothing to do with.

A spokesman for the West German foreign ministry said, "Since the Solís Palma government seems to be generally accepted by the Panamanians," his presidency is therefore viewed as valid. Solís Palma's predecessor, Delvalle, seems to have pulled out, and isn't considered as in power by the Panamanians, noted the spokesman. He went on to explain, "It is German policy to have relations not with persons, but with countries."

Japanese officials told reporters in Tokyo that the recognition of President Solís Palma had been "put on hold" since March, when the State Department asked Tokyo not to grant

diplomatic recognition to the new government. But now that many European and Ibero-American nations have recognized the government, Japan made it official.

Despite Reagan administration aggression against the tiny nation of 2 million, Panama's foreign minister announced on June 21 that his government has no intention of breaking diplomatic relations with the United States. Foreign Minister Ritter told a meeting of the anti-imperialist organizations of the Caribbean and Central America: "We are not going to take the step which the U.S. is seeking as an excuse to show the world through the power of its press, that Panama created the current state of relations between the two countries. Our relations are historically one of common enterprise which is the canal, whose security we have to guard."

General Noriega also addressed this gathering, largely composed of leftists and communist-connected organizations. He began by stating that history and nations are created by God: "There is only one empire we can accept: the divine empire, a superior kind of justice—God. This is the only kind of imperialism we can accept, the only empire before which we bow."

Noriega described the operation against Panama as an experiment in psychological warfare against the nation's economy and prestige. "Experimental techniques used in the Philippines were transferred to Panama," he said. Philippines President Corazon Aquino is still waiting for the money the U.S. promised, just as now Washington is promising Panamanians \$5 billion if they give up the nation's sovereignty. "We must tell John Maisto [U.S. embassy deputy chief of mission, who ran operations against Ferdinand Marcos] to return to the Philippines to ask how much the Philippines received and how much they have rebuilt. The answer will be that the leftist forces, the communist parties, and the anarchist groups have grown and are now important in the Philippines."

Noriega described the role of the Panamanian Defense Forces: "The PDF is not the one that is offensive in a war of annihilation. Its war is against hunger, poverty, and illiteracy . . . that is our national security. Those armies where soldiers remain in garrisons playing the games of Napoleonic wars, are the armies of countries that now have guerrillas in their territories and have been unable to drive them out.

"This is the PDF, which inspires fear because its wealth, power, and aggressiveness lie in the morale and the capacity of each honest, patriotic, and nationalist man. That is our aggressiveness, that constitutes our combat capability, the capacity of the moral forces that surround us.

"There are no Cuban, Libyan, or foreign commando units in this territory, because the PDF does not need them," he said, and mocked the U.S. reports that Cuban commandos had entered a U.S. military base in Panama. "We are a defenseless people. We are a friendly people. Not one U.S. citizen has ever been kidnaped or attacked for ideological or political reasons here in Panama. Panama has not been like Lebanon for the U.S. people."