

reached its shores on his fourth voyage. Panama has its own history, its own military antecedents. Here, it was made to seem that I was the first to establish an army or to arm troops. But the Army of the Isthmus of Panama fought in the War of Independence from Spain on the side of Bolívar and Sucre in the battles of Junín and Ayacucho. That is to say, Panama is not a colony of the United States. It never was nor ever will be a star in the flag of the United States, and its officials cannot abide by the orders of their masters, the chiefs of a colony.

The importance of bringing up the foregoing, is for Your Honor to see the impression the jury took with it in believing that the violation of American laws and my supposed culpability was because American authority had not been complied with as they demanded.

The jury was never able to properly learn that Panama has its own laws, its own way of life, its own culture, its customs, its history, and its own political and economic interests.

Panama enters into the sphere of interests of the United

States because of its geographic location as the shortest route from the Atlantic to the Pacific and because of the building of the canal. The 1903 Treaty was imposed; it was not signed by a Panamanian but by a Frenchman who was bribed and imposed.

All this history culminated in the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, a process led by Gen. Omar Torrijos and assisted by many civilian and military advisers. It was not General Torrijos alone who achieved this advance.

To achieve this great objective, General Torrijos had first to overcome the threat of a drug indictment against him and his minister of foreign affairs. I went to the office of [Drug Enforcement Administration head Peter] Bensinger in Washington, to discuss the situation. In the end, Torrijos's brother was indicted by a grand jury in New York; years later, the charges were dismissed.

### **DEA officials lied shamelessly**

However, Bensinger, the former DEA administrator, lied shamelessly to the jury and never mentioned those discus-

## **Who is Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega?**

Why the U.S. government threw its vast financial, political, and military resources into overthrowing the government of Panama, is best understood by taking a closer look at General Noriega, the man who was sold to the world as a corrupt dictator, a drug-trafficking "pineapple face" who had enslaved his people and defied the United States government.

Manuel Antonio Noriega moved up in the ranks of the Panamanian Defense Forces alongside Omar Torrijos, the military man who led Panama from October 1968 until his assassination in July 1981. Torrijos helped shape a generation of Panamanians—civilian and military—committed to ending the legacy of U.S. domination of Panama, as codified in the treaty governing the Panama Canal since 1903. The foreign policy adopted by Torrijos championed the integration of Ibero-America as a means of guaranteeing regional sovereignty and national self-defense.

It was that nationalist and Ibero-Americanist legacy that Noriega brought with him when he assumed command of the Panamanian Defense Forces in 1983. But it posed a threat to the international banking elites which dictate U.S. State Department policy and whose intention was—as Noriega himself explains in his sentencing

speech—to 1) abrogate the 1978 Torrijos-Carter Treaties giving control of the canal to Panama by the year 2000, and 2) convert Panama into a drug money-laundering center, as the opening shot of a "free trade" offensive against all of Ibero-America.

Panama under Noriega took a leading role in organizing the Contadora peace process for Central America, and was poised to give a *Torrijista* orientation to policies regionwide. The U.S. State Department countered by putting banker Nicolás Ardito Barletta into the Panamanian presidency in 1984, to sabotage that potential and to dismantle the key institution sustaining the *Torrijista* doctrine in Panama, the Panamanian Defense Forces. But Barletta's support for the International Monetary Fund's drug-pushing policies, and his hostility to Latin Americanism, stripped his presidency of all support. He was forced to resign in September of 1985.

While continuing to collaborate with the U.S. on intelligence and to take a leading role in fighting drugs, Noriega refused to play the lackey. He would not allow the U.S. to sabotage the canal treaties, nor would he allow Panama to be used as a launching pad for U.S. destabilization of Central America. Neither would he ignore the rampant drug trade which Barletta's banker buddies were financing. He scored major blows against both the drug cartels and their bankers, something for which he was never forgiven.

Noriega has been overthrown and imprisoned by the U.S. regime, but he has not been broken, as is evident from his sentencing speech.