

Gen. Noriega: The call to resistance will never die

General Manuel Antonio Noriega, commander-in-chief of Panama's Armed Forces until the U.S. invasion of December 1989, granted the following exclusive interview to EIR's Spanish-language sister publication Resumen Ejecutivo, on June 18, 1993 in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Miami, Florida. The interview has been slightly abridged.

EIR: The U.S. troops that invaded Panama yesterday are bombing Somalia today, and getting ready to intervene in Haiti tomorrow. What do you have to say to this?

Noriega: Yes, we are now facing specific actions where the United States has been perfecting its capabilities as a grinder, like a mower that chews up the grass. In Panama, for example, they were the main protagonists, but, since the world fell upon them, and they were criticized by the international community, the establishment has turned to its United Nations project to set up the "new order." Thus we see their actions in Somalia, where they are destroying a population, an entire community — and note the fact that that community is black — without scruples, to avenge the death of 23 soldiers and to capture one man.

There, too, we can see how, historically, as new governments emerged in those African countries . . . the Reagan-Bush administration tried to put in its weapons and governments instead, and now there is a saturation of weapons there; that is, each American-sponsored leader had an arsenal of American weapons. And that is what the American government provoked: The explosion came from the fact that, after doing away with the ideological Marxist governments, those groups which had been encouraged to take political control of the area remained. Also, we are dealing with a geopolitically strategic position, the Horn of Africa. Now, the United States seems to be taking a step back, but it is nonetheless imposing its "new order" strategy. As they say in Latin America, it is pulling the sausages out of the fire, but with someone else's [the U.N.'s] hands.

In Haiti, we see that precisely the same thing is going to happen. They took a long time in Haiti's case, and I am

talking more about Haiti, because it is here in the American hemisphere. Why did the United States delay in Haiti's case, when they didn't in Panama? That's what I want people to think about. They didn't move earlier against Haiti, because the problem there is long-standing, it is historic. Since the time of "Papa Doc," they have had dictators, repression, violation of human rights, and deeper problems such as ignorance, disease, etc., etc., and the United States has always turned its back on those problems. Why are they now interested, and why, if the problem goes back much further than that of Panama — because it stems from the '40s and '50s under "Papa Doc" — didn't they take action earlier? Simply because in Haiti there is no canal. Haiti is not a strategic position for the United States. That is why they went and invaded Panama, because there is a canal there, and it is of strategic interest to the United States beyond the year 2000.

Now, [we have] this blockade, the use of the United Nations to carry out blockades against humanity — because to impose a global blockade against Haiti is to blockade, not the governing junta, but the people of Haiti; this Machiavellian approach, that the ends justify the means, is a crime against humanity. It strikes at the very Christian conscience of the world; it is a blow against the humanitarian sentiment of peace upon which the United Nations Organization is predicated and for which it was founded.

EIR: Also in the case of Haiti, they are trying to destroy its Armed Forces. Panama's Defense Forces are gone. From this perspective, with all the experience of the Defense Forces and what has happened to Panama, what recommendations would you have for the governments and armed forces of Ibero-America?

Noriega: In terms of knowledge from experience and from books — because the study of history gives one a handle on history — we see that history is made up of cycles. No one learns from the experiences of other nations or of other men; such is human nature, human behavior. We are facing the cycle in which the theory of imposing the "new order" will

bring its own consequences. Right now, this is the rule of the game of the superpower; one can no longer speak in the plural, because there exists only one superpower, the United States, which is imposing its "new order" upon the entire world. But reality, developments in the geographic situation of the nations of this planet Earth, are going to force that "new order" to fall into disuse by the sheer force of conviction and of human evolution.

What I want to say is this: From this critical situation, in which people are being led to destroy their armed forces, the logical outcome is going to be chaos. Chaos against whom? Against the populations themselves. Let's not look at it globally, but people by people, country by country; the result is anarchy. A country without its forces of order must fall into anarchy. The forces of order themselves must have an internal order. And that cannot be with the creation of police forces, as is being done in Panama, because this is the creation of happy-go-lucky policemen, as I call them, armed with whistles and nightsticks, and that's what they want for Latin America.

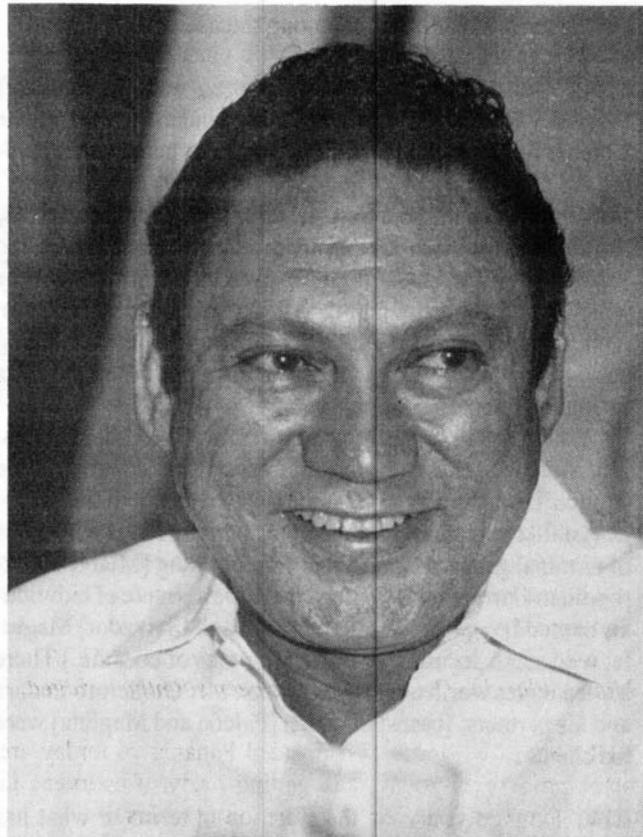
But this does not constitute security for the communities, because crime is rising, human misery is rising, and the walls of containment, which should be the armed forces, have deteriorated or do not exist at all, as in Panama.

Take a look in the mirror of Panama, a country whose Armed Forces were destroyed. Within two or three months, it became a country where vice, crime, and human needs had increased. It is a country where one cannot go out after seven in the evening. A country which had no kidnappings for 21 years (and if there were any, they were solved within four hours), where robberies were under control, where people could stay out all night; now, no one dares go out after seven at night. Now there are assaults and robberies in broad daylight. There is a cop, with whistle and nightstick, who sees a robbery or a crime and turns his back, because it is not his problem, and he is not going to get involved in a situation in which he is just a pawn on the chessboard.

That's how it will happen in El Salvador, Guatemala, the rest of Central America, and all the countries where the "new order" establishment is intervening. We can already see the tip of the iceberg in Argentina, for example, where the Armed Forces is definitively marked for destruction. We can also see this, as a spearhead, in Brazil. So, this is a plan against the Armed Forces which is going to unleash chaos and anarchy.

Then another thing will happen: The theory of the "new order" will collapse, and, therefore, we cannot at this time, while the machinery is moving, do anything to stop it. The people themselves and history itself will put an end to it.

EIR: We can see that there is a major effort under way to destroy the Armed Forces of Peru. There is Shining Path, which is a terrorist group of a kind never before seen in Ibero-America, entirely against the population, carrying out massacres all over, and yet the United States insists that



Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega

it's the armed forces which are violating human rights. The United States government and so-called human rights organizations, the United Nations and Organization of American States, have a violent campaign against the Peruvian Armed Forces.

You studied in Peru, at the Peruvian military academy, and so I'd like to ask you how you see the situation there.

Noriega: Because I studied there, I have a bit more familiarity, and what I would say is that the Peruvian Armed Forces were created on the basis of their experience: the fight for independence and, later, the War of the Pacific. They were created with a profound nationalist sentiment. They were also armed forces shaped, basically, by their indigenous cultural foundations. Their ideological makeup is nationalist and that nationalism includes a lack of reverence for imperialism and neo-colonialism. They are an Armed Forces which by tradition have found their own solution to their own problems on the basis of their own socio-economic situation, above all, that of the Indians. Since they don't yield, since they don't depend on a superior power, the superpower acts like a spoiled brat, beating or trying to destroy it, and that is the reality in Peru today.

So we see the typical cycle of destruction: infiltration, gray propaganda, trying to entice members of the Armed Forces to go against the institution, dividing the Army and

having the best cadres fight among themselves.

EIR: What is the situation of the drug trade in Panama? From the time when you were commander-in-chief of the Defense Forces to the present day, what has happened regarding the drug trade?

Noriega: I can tell you that statistics speak for themselves, above all, those statistics that are produced here in the United States. They indicate — there is even a Senate committee which made the calculations — that there is an increase in money laundering, that deposits of drug money are taking place shamelessly. You yourselves have published the facts in your magazine.

Where do the accusations come from? The United States. If it were a white and pure and crystalline country, there wouldn't even be a mark. But the very President of the republic [Guillermo Endara] has been presented here as a member of criminal gangs. Here, in this very building [Miami's Metropolitan Correctional Center], there are a couple of individuals named [Augusto "Willie"] Falcón and [Salvador] Magluta, who stand accused [of trafficking tons of cocaine.] There are ten boxes worth of charges against Mr. Guillermo Endara and his partners, [cases] in which [Falcón and Magluta] were his clients.

EIR: How do you view the situation in terms of what has happened and what is going to happen politically in Panama? What can one hope from the coming elections?

Noriega: . . . Many people thought that [the invasion] was manna from heaven, a panacea, the goodness of the gringos, the beauty of the United States, Santa Claus, and all that. They discovered instead that it was a wolf in sheep's clothing, and in that disguise they swallowed up the entire Panamanian oligarchy; because it was from the homes of the members of the Union Club [the center of Panama's oligarchy], that those who led the foreign invasion were egged on, encouraged, and supported, and now they are the ones suffering the consequences.

EIR: There are those who have repented?

Noriega: There are penitents and repentance. Not only that, they have found that the current regime does not shower, but bathes in tubs, as we say vulgarly, so they don't splash, everything is for them alone. So, the 21 families are eating the whole cake; they don't spatter. If you are not part of the only center of government, the presidential Palace of the Herons, you don't get, you don't receive. So, there is no shower, just a tub.

EIR: And what can be expected from the coming elections?

Noriega: Within the current situation there is both growing public awareness and chaos. That is, chaos and awareness are growing in tandem. Chaos and anarchy in the proliferation of police crimes; chaos and anarchy in the proliferation of

political parties; chaos and anarchy in the disillusionment of the people's political course. So, the people begin to develop an internal awareness; nobody has to tell them, nobody has to go to school to know it. This internal awareness is one of rebellion and it is going to create a so-called "vengeance vote" — that's the name I would give it, VV, or vengeance vote — in 1994.

Why? Because the people are going to take revenge silently. Against whom? They are going to take revenge against those who allowed, those who helped, those who accepted, and those who collaborated and supported the invasion. They will take revenge on the Panamanian Pétains.

There will be a vengeance vote from Chorrillo for every bomb that imperialism and neo-colonialism dropped on the wounded fatherland: on Chorrillo, on Rio Hato, against Colón. For every death there will be 50 votes against.

We can see how the Panamanian people are silently forming a resistance, a passive resistance like the French had. The French laughed at the Germans during the occupation of France. The women danced, and there was prostitution, and the bars were open; but, on the inside, when the time for getting "to the barricades" came, everyone was at the barricades, and, instead of carrying bread under their arms, they carried rifles. The same is true of the Panamanian people, in a passive and silent resistance, awaiting the moment to avenge the offense. That is going to be the moment of the elections, and they are going to cast a vote of vengeance.

EIR: Nonetheless, it would appear that none of today's parties have stood up for the Defense Forces, for the work of the Defense Forces, for the construction of a Panamanian nationality through its Armed Forces and, of course, for the defense of the canal and the possibility that this would allow the canal treaties to be fulfilled.

What are the possibilities that former military personnel who are now civilians will play an important role in the political arena, in this new political opening?

Noriega: I am drawing a map of the situation with you, developing an analysis that I know will be picked up by those who study the socio-political problems of societies. The crisis under way is total. With the defeat and destruction of the Defense Forces, anything that smelled like the Defense Forces was smashed, was devastated, was repudiated, because those were the psychological and sociological conditions of the moment; and they still persist, but less so now. Those conditions are fading in the face of today's reality.

The people themselves now realize that they need their Defense Forces. They are coming to realize that the role of the Defense Forces went far beyond that of an armed institution. It was a civic institution based on the organizations of the countryside, the farmers, the peasants. These men exist, these men are not dead. And [the influence of] these men is multiplied by their families. And where are they? They are also in the resistance, because they can't go

out and do anything because they, too, would be victimized, as many have been, being either expropriated or in jail. Why do they have in jail 60, 70, 90, 100 corporals, sergeants, privates? Why do they hold them prisoner if they don't bear any responsibility? That is why they don't want to offer an amnesty, because these men and their families exist.

Thus . . . the [political parties] all worshipped in the halls of the imperialist invaders, and all the political parties beat their chests and accepted the instructions they got in the halls of the imperialist invaders, and one of the things they were told from the first moment onward was "deny the armed forces, deny your connection to them, deny their presence, loathe them, attack them." And they did so, they all went on the attack, even yesterday's friends.

Yesterday's friends have become today's carpers. Those who complain that everything was done by dictates, were the most dependent. And how they loved those dictates! Now they yearn for that, because it meant discipline, understanding, order, and also that promises were kept. Now, you can't believe the promises.

Now, they are called the "I don't's." "I don't even remember," they say. "I didn't even know him. I wasn't even his friend." There are many who say, "No, I was just his acquaintance. I was just a friend of the family. I didn't, I didn't. I didn't even speak to him, I didn't even phone; never even spoke with him. I never even called him on the phone." These are the Panamanian "I don't's." But the population has a long memory, as well as a great capacity for silence; they don't expose themselves to be exterminated, but they have a great capacity to wait and to know at what moment to apply their great power of decision, which is precisely at such small moments as the elections, or in such great moments as uprisings. However, that is not at issue now; what is at issue now is the elections.

EIR: And your situation? You are in jail. What solution do you anticipate?

Noriega: We know that it is God who makes the great decisions for all human beings. As the Bible says, as the proverb says, "Don't say tomorrow I shall, because everything is in the hand of God." So I believe that everything is in the hand of God and the most important, for which I give thanks to God, is that I am alive and well. Because only in Sheol, or death, can one not praise God or do anything. But I exist, thank God.

EIR: In a recent interview, you said that you never believed the United States would invade. Why not?

Noriega: Because there exist the rules of the international community, the rules of respect for relations among nations, where there are procedures for declaring war and for doing anything and to prevent a treacherous invasion, another Pearl Harbor. Because what they did with Panama was a Pearl Harbor. They called the day Pearl Harbor was bombed a Day

of Infamy. And that is how I see it, and it will go down in the history books of our coming generations, that Dec. 20 in Panama was the day of treason, the day of darkness, when the laws, the international rules, the treaties of the United Nations, of the Organization of American States — which later condemned the invasion — were totally violated by the most powerful nation in the world, against the smallest nation on earth.

It is true that many people had warned us. We ourselves saw it as a logical consequence: Invasion was a major option. But for a long time, ever since the signing of the [Panama Canal] treaties with [President Gen. Omar] Torrijos, whenever a critical situation arose, the United States would deploy aircraft from Ft. Bragg, increase the troops and apply psychological pressure on us; so, that was typical.

In our analysis of the conditions at the time, we did see an invasion as one of the possibilities. But we dismissed it, because of the laws, the treaties; that is, why make treaties? Treaties exist to prevent abuse by the strongest, to prevent invasions, wars. Upon what can a weak country base its security, the preservation of its existence? Upon an international treaty. We had that life preserver, an international treaty, but they tore up that life preserver by force.

EIR: What will happen with the canal now? Now that the Defense Forces are gone, and the canal is without protection, what is going to happen?

Noriega: We can see what is happening step by step. It is



As the dying palm tree in the corner attests, this is not Bosnia, but the poor neighborhood of Chorrillo in Panama City, destroyed by U.S. bombers in the 1989 invasion. Estimates are that 4,000-7,000 civilians were killed in the invasion.

the intention of the United States to remain after the year 2000 in the most important area — the most strategic for them — of the American continent, which is the Isthmus of Panama. They are obeying their own interests. The Tripartite Commission to study a new canal or a new set of locks, which I denounced in an earlier interview, is being reactivated. There is a hidden agenda behind that reactivation, under the table, and that is that they want, on the basis of a new set of locks, or a new canal, a new treaty. They are trying to get this through with dependent governments, servile to their orders, governments lacking in patriotism, such as those they are imposing in the region. These are their “yes men.”

Look at the polls that are coming out now: that the people want the gringos to stay, want the bases to stay. The bases don't leave anything. They don't leave us dollars, just pain. This is clear enough after the School of the Americas and Ft. Gullick left Panama. They said everything was going to fall apart. But the only thing the Americans bought there were vegetables; that's the only thing, green vegetables, which they got from our Chinese truck farmers. But eggs, milk, bread, ice cream, everything was brought in from the United States. They paid labor minimum wages. So, the military bases are no great bargain, at least, not for Panama, and less so, because payment is not per military base. There are seven military installations, but there is no payment per base. The bases are free of charge, they are given in conjunction with the treaty with the United States.

Now, there are no longer seven military bases. What we now have is a country which is a single military base of the United States, a colony. In Panama, the President is a United States governor.

The concept of a sovereign nation that determines its own destiny no longer exists. Why? Because we are an occupied country. Until a generation of patriots comes along with a conception of a single territory and a single flag, we cannot talk about a free and sovereign country.

EIR: We have carried out numerous studies, and, as you know, we have proposed a sea-level canal. We think that the invasion and everything that followed was carried out in large part to prevent such a project from being constructed at some point, given that such a project would not be a point of control for the United States, but would be something else, for which another kind of institution would be needed, a different kind of relationship between Panama and the international community.

We also think that much of this ecology issue is nothing but a campaign to say: “It can't be done, it can't be done.” Because this ecology stuff comes from the United States. It was also said that the current canal was going to cause serious ecological problems. But no such thing occurred. We also think that it has to do with geopolitics, the question of Japan, because the United States doesn't want Japan to acquire greater trading power.

Would you like to comment?

Noriega: Nothing the United States does is by accident. I believe that one of the reasons that the meetings of the Tripartite Commission have been prolonged is because other interests, besides Panama's, are involved, such as the U.S. trade rivalry with Japan. Recall that the United States was never in agreement with Panama's decision to invite Japan to join this commission. It was because of consistent pressure from, first, Torrijos, and, later, myself, that Japan joined the planning for a new canal.

EIR: Of course, the question of Panama has concerned all of Ibero-America. That is why the event called “Toward a Second Amphictyonic Congress” was held in Panama, at which integration of the continent was promoted, to carry out the dream of Bolívar, of San Martín, to have Ibero-American unity against the International Monetary Fund, against the debt problem, and against the two superpowers. At that time, you helped, sponsored, and shared our efforts. What do you think of that meeting and of a possible Amphictyonic Congress in the future?

Noriega: The Amphictyonic Congress was held at a critical moment for U.S. relations with the countries of Latin America, where the “new order” had already begun to be imposed. The resolutions and concepts elaborated there should be looked at again, and we would find that all of the presentations were not far off from what we are seeing four years later in our land and in Latin America.

We believe that the spirit of Bolívar, the ideas of Bolívar, should continue to be an inspiration, a beacon for the struggles of the Americas, and that the phrase of Bolívar continues to be in force: “The United States seeks no friends, only servants.” That is what Bolívar said, and it remains true today.

But I can assure you now that if you wanted to hold another Amphictyonic Congress, they would not allow it because it is subversive. . . . The same thing happened to Bolívar: When he tried to do the same thing, he wasn't able to attend the first congress.

EIR: Here in the United States, Lyndon LaRouche — also from jail — has launched a major campaign against the individual who founded the Ku Klux Klan, the Confederate Gen. Albert Pike, who has a statue in his honor in Judiciary Square in the U.S. capital, Washington, D.C. But the establishment and the U.S. authorities oppose removing this monument to racism from their capital.

In Panama, the United States also imposed a racial system in the Canal Zone. What can you tell us about this?

Noriega: The racial question is still very fresh in Panama. There are many, many Panamanians who suffered segregation under the “Gold Roll” and the “Silver Roll,” where the “Gold Roll” was for the whites, and the “Silver Roll” was for the blacks. There were residential areas like La Boca, La

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Boca Town, Gatún Lake: All these areas were for the black people. They were isolated, in the wild Panamanian jungle. The whites, however, lived in Clayton, Albrook, in all the other bases and areas that were more comfortable, with ocean views, etc. Panama is very aware of this racial discrimination by the Americans, which still exists, because, in the Canal Commission, there still is racial discrimination when it comes to appointing Panamanians, I am told. The better salaries and greater wage increases go to the Americans, and not the Panamanians. The best options for promotions go to the Americans, and not the Panamanians. So racial discrimination continues.

EIR: Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín was also in Panama. He was Argentina's military attaché in Panama, and then a military adviser (I believe that was his official title according to the Argentine government) of the Panamanian Defense Forces when you were commander. Today, Colonel Seineldín is a prisoner and is head of the Movement of National Identity and Ibero-American Integration. Would you like to make some comment about his work and his philosophy?

Noriega: Colonel Seineldín is a military officer with depth, a visionary, one of those military officers who are ahead of their time, who live in the wrong place and time: He belongs to that race of military men, and that is why his problems stem from honest conceptions and his intellectual capacity, from his desire for change, from his profound Christian sense, from his spirituality as a man of arms. And that is why he was betrayed.

. . . But I believe that he still has many pages and words to write and say in Argentina and for Argentina.

EIR: Returning for a moment to the situation in Panama. I understand that you requested that the current Panamanian government allow you to testify in person in the Spadafora case, in a trial where you are under indictment, but that you were told no. Can you tell us a little about the Spadafora case, why they refused you permission to testify in person, and why they don't want General Noriega to speak in Panama?

Noriega: Let me answer the last one first. They don't want me there, because they are afraid of me. As a Panamanian told me the other day, "It looks like they killed the tiger but

are afraid of its hide." They are afraid of me. That is why they don't dare seek my extradition.

It is a total contradiction: They want to carry out a high-profile political trial, because they hope to win the elections with this trial. The lawyers they have are all candidates, and they are afraid of the words and of the truth of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, who is alive and who has a very good memory.

Among their contradictions is the fact that I am not implicated in the deed. There are about a dozen people under indictment. They dragged me into it, because they wanted to raise the trial to a level of importance. Were it not for me, it would just be another trial: Someone is dead, and someone committed the crime.

Why, then? I have nothing to do with the judicial or legal aspect, because I wasn't there. Because I was not the chief of the unit at the time, I was not responsible for what was done or not done. I was in Europe at the time. It was not hidden, but on an official mission planned seven or nine months earlier.

Second, the specific case of Mr. Hugo Spadafora, as is well known, stems from his psychological profile. The man had belonged to mercenary guerrillas; he started in Guinea-Bissau, went on against Somoza on the side of the Sandinistas. He broke with the Sandinistas after they came to power, and allied with Commander Zero [Eden Pastora]. Later, he breaks with Zero and ends up fighting against everybody. So we can see how the number of international enemies he accrued was growing.

He then seeks help from countries in Africa, such as from the Palestinian liberation groups; he takes money from them, and seeks to launch a guerrilla war in Guatemala. But he doesn't keep his promises to the Palestinians.

Thus, a whole train of people begins to trail him, seeking either their money or the fulfillment of a mission, or the weapons he sold them. Later he gets involved with the Contras and makes an alliance with the U.S. intelligence agencies and gets involved with the arms-for-drugs trade.

From such an environment of conflict, what could be expected? It could be expected that the many enemies he was creating in his wake would not allow him to die of a common cold. What I want to explain is that he had created so many and such powerful international enemies, that his only refuge was Panama; because he went to Panama and was in Panama,

and nothing happened to him there. Nothing ever happened to him inside Panama.

The circumstances of the case are very problematic to explain now, because, at that time, the family, and especially his brother Winston Spadafora, didn't want the Defense Forces to carry out the investigation which it was their duty to do. He preferred to be subordinate to U.S. dictates, and he turned the death of his brother into a personal business, where he gained economic backing, political prominence, etc., through contact with the Americans. But he never loved his brother. He didn't love him while [he was] alive, and he only used him dead, as he is using him now, as a political cause. Winston was only Hugo's half-brother, since their father had three wives.

This is the situation. There are more details which I can't discuss here, but I have more details which I want them to hear there, but they are afraid of my words. The family of Winston Spadafora is the only one responsible for the truth not coming out as to how and why his brother died, and who ordered his death.

EIR: During a recent television program, they again insisted you supposedly had all these relations with the U.S. intelligence community, in particular with former CIA director William Casey, and with others also, such as Bush. Why do they continue to insist on this?

Noriega: During that TV interview, my full answer was not presented for technical reasons. The subject continues to come up because that was the charge they made against me to distort my image as a leader and a nationalist. So, they threw in this stuff on subordinations, the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency, etc.

It is true, that on the specific orders of the commander-in-chief of what was then the National Guard, Omar Torrijos, I was the liaison with [the CIA], as there are persons in charge of liaison in every single armed institution. In Panama, Torrijos chose me. Why? Because in 1969, he accused the Central Intelligence Agency of attempting a coup against him, on Dec. 16, when they had tried to overthrow him, while he was in Mexico. I guaranteed his return; I ensured his return. At that time my military rank was that of major. I didn't know about the CIA or any of that stuff.

General Torrijos threw them out of Panama, and then he allowed them to return on condition that they could have only one channel of communication, that they could not have any channel of communication with any officer except Manuel Antonio Noriega. I was not a covert agent, nor hidden, or any such thing. The entire military community knew that I was the liaison — and not just Panama's military community, but internationally as well.

Thus, my relations with them were that of a Panamanian professional, with their institutions. But they — since the CIA is not sacred or the fourth gospel found in the scrolls of Jerusalem — distort this. It filled the need to increase the defa-

mation of the "monster" that they wanted to create, which was Manuel Antonio Noriega. So they presented it as something strange, mysterious, which controlled the entire Latin American military community.

That is why they keep insisting on this. But if that were true, Bush would have put my name on the last pardon that he issued in December; he would have listed the name of Manuel Antonio Noriega. The proof is that they didn't put my name on the pardon. The conclusion? Two plus two equals four: I am not one of their CIA outlaws.

EIR: This leads me to another question: your status as prisoner of war. Does the United States respect that status or not? What is happening in that regard?

Noriega: Thanks to my lawyers' actions, the United States has obtained assurances for their own troops, because they can now claim that they recognized the status of prisoner of war and demand certain conditions for the imprisonment of their soldiers. Because of the court's decision, the Geneva Convention is, as the Americans say, the "law of the land," a law of the United States republic, a law they have to comply with.

We are constantly fighting to have that status respected in its entirety. But, honestly, we have encountered tremendous ignorance of the problem, of this document which is of such importance, and we were the first ones to bring it before a court. There have been a series of violations since the first moment in which I was captured. There have been a series of violations of the laws signed by the United States.

EIR: General, you know our magazine very well, and therefore, you have an idea of who our readers are. Do you have any special message for them?

Noriega: Your magazine already serves as an archive of political analysis, of documentation where we can not only follow the course of history, but also predict and determine the future of historic developments. You were the first to talk about the "new order." You were the first to talk about the contradictions within Russia . . . in which they themselves carried within them the seed of their own destruction. And we see how your analysts, your researchers provide a foundation of great value for those of us who love to undertake geopolitical, socio-political, and economic studies.

EIR: What other messages might you have for all the other Ibero-American compatriots, including military men, who are today prisoners in different countries, in Venezuela, Argentina, the companions with whom you studied in Peru, and so forth?

Noriega: The last thing I would say in this pleasant meeting is to the Latin American military men who are suffering persecution, whose principles and dreams of carrying out the patriotic role of the armed forces in the development of their country are being frustrated. All things pass, everything



The United States invaded Panama "because there is a canal there, and it is of strategic interest to the United States beyond the year 2000," charges Noriega.

changes and evolves, and every defeat, every fall finds a new wealth, which is the impulse to rise with still greater force. Remember, if we had never learned to get up again after falling down as children, we would never have learned to walk. So, too, as a military prisoner under any situation, one learns that there are many hearts throbbing in a psychic unity, that injustice cannot endure, cannot last.

In my mind's eye, I can see Seineldín free at the Plaza de Mayo, receiving the applause of his countrymen. I can also see the soldiers of Peru marching toward the liberation of their Indian people; and I can also see the Venezuelan military properly using their oil for the benefit of their country, and going beyond the errors and the right decisions dating from the period when [President Col. Marco] Pérez Jiménez was overthrown.

I can see the next target of destruction, which is the Honduran Armed Forces. I see them all playing their rightful role in their nation when it is discovered that the democracies — imposed, encouraged, and financed as political parties by the imperialist governments — carry within themselves the seed of their own destruction.

To Panamanians: The corporal, the private, the sergeant who is imprisoned in Modelo Jail; those officers, those colonels, those men who preserved their dignity, as well as those who lost it; their experience, the blows they suffered, and the disillusionment of those who supported the invader, will be

the best encouragement for a future in which we can all be united again around a truly free and sovereign Panama.

Above all, I cannot fail to mention that the best soldier, the best warrior was the Panamanian woman. I bow with respect to the Panamanian woman. That Panamanian woman came through when the men could not fulfill their mission, because they were a more direct target of persecution. The Panamanian woman went out into the streets, was the first to cry out. She was brought to the Americans' concentration camps and yet continued to fight. She has kept alive the flame of freedom, and of protest, and of dignity. I offer the Panamanian woman as a model for Latin America, and also as a model for all the armies and all the military organizations of the American continent.

After this dark night in which we nationalist military men and our families are submerged, the resplendent sun of truth and revenge will come. As Gen. Charles de Gaulle said to Nazi-occupied France: *Quoi qu'il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s'éteindre et ne s'éteindra pas* ["Whatever happens, the flame of the French resistance must not go out and will not go out"]. Just as Montgomery in the desert told Rommel, "Take care of my headquarters, for I will soon be back"; and as General MacArthur said as he fled the Japanese in the Philippines, "I shall return," so too Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega declares from this platform, and with faith in God, "We shall return."