

Panama Canal Treaty - General Torrijos-Misc., 1977

Folder Citation: Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files; Folder: Panama Canal Treaty - General Torrijos-Misc., 1977; Container 36

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memo	Robert Pastor to ZB	10/21/77	A
memo	General Omar Torrijos (58 pp.)	n.d.	A
corresp.	JC to Omar Torrijos	n.d.	A

FILE LOCATION

Chief of Staff (Jordan)/Box 6 of 8 (org.)/ Panama Canal Treaty -General Torrijos-
Miscellaneous 1977

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PANAMA: TORRIJOS ADDRESSES OPENING OF STUDENT CONGRESS

PA160108Y PANAMA CITY DOMESTIC SERVICE IN SPANISH 1906 GMT 15 SEP 77 PA

(SPEECH BY PANAMANIAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT GEN OMAR TORRIJOS HERRERA AT THE OPENING OF THE 10TH CONGRESS OF THE PANAMANIAN STUDENTS FEDERATION (FEP) AT THE AUGUSTO SAMUEL BOYD NATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTITUTE IN DIVISA, HERRERA PROVINCE, ON 15 SEPTEMBER--LIVE)

(EXCEPT) THIS IS A CONGRESS OF THE STUDENT FEDERATION, WHICH IS THE GREATEST SOURCE OF LEADERS--LEADERS OF GREAT DIGNITY--THAT THIS COUNTRY HAS.

I KNOW, AND KNOW IT WELL, THAT DEEP IN YOUR HEARTS THERE IS SOME REGRET BECAUSE THE SOLUTION WAS NEGOTIATED, AND MAYBE THAT REGRET EXISTS EVEN IN THE DEPTH OF MY OWN HEART. (APPLAUSE) HOWEVER, A GOVERNMENT LEADER IS COMPELLED TO BE REALISTIC. A GOVERNMENT LEADER HAS TO DO NOT ONLY WHAT HE FEELS BUT ALSO WHAT HE THINKS HE HAS TO.

WHEN I RECALLED THE DEATHS OF ASCANIO AROSEMENA, CONRADO GUTIERREZ, NAVAS AND PENITEZ, I THOUGHT THAT EACH OF THOSE DEATHS WAS A PART OF MY SOUL. I MUSED: THERE ARE 360,000 PANAMA YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 25, AND I HAD TO THINK RESPONSIBLY TO REACH THE CONCLUSION THAT IF THERE WERE ANOTHER ROUTE THAT WAS NOT THE ROUTE OF LIBERATION (AS HEARD) IT HAD TO BE ACCEPTED. AND WE HAVE ACHIEVED A WORTHY LIBERATION WITHOUT SACRIFICING AN ENTIRE GENERATION, THE BEST MEMBERS OF A GENERATION, WHICH WOULD HAVE MEANT LEAVING THE FOLLOWING GENERATIONS WITHOUT LEADERS BECAUSE ALL THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED ARE MEN WHO HAVE THE GREATEST LOVE FOR THEIR COUNTRY. THOSE MEN WHO AS YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A GREAT LOVE FOR THEIR COUNTRY ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE TO LEAD THAT COUNTRY IN THE FUTURE. WE WOULD HAVE HAD A FREE COUNTRY BUT WITHOUT LEADERS. (APPLAUSE)

I KNOW, AND I SAY THIS HONESTLY BECAUSE I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HONEST--AND WITH THE YOUNG I AM EVEN MORE HONEST THAN USUAL--THAT THE TREATY IS NOT PERFECT, THAT IT CONTAINS TRACES OF COLONIALISM. BUT ALSO WE HAVE SET A DEADLINE FOR THE END OF EACH TRACE OF COLONIALISM. (APPLAUSE)

I DID NOT HAVE TO MAKE ANY GREAT EFFORTS TO HANDLE MYSELF
WELL IN THE GRAND SETTING OF THE WHITE HOUSE, AND I THINK THAT
I DID NOT HAVE TO MAKE ANY GREAT EFFORTS BECAUSE THERE WAS A SPECIAL
CHEMISTRY (QUIMICA) AMONG THE PEOPLE THERE. REGARDLESS OF THE
COUNTRY ONE REPRESENTS, THERE IS A SPECIAL CHEMISTRY AMONG
HONEST PEOPLE. AND I THINK THAT THERE ALSO WAS A CLASS
IDENTIFICATION BECAUSE PRESIDENT IS A PEASANT (CAMPESEÑO)
AND I AM VERY PROUD TO BE ONE MYSELF. (HERE TORRIJOS
INTERRUPTS HIS SPEECH TO COMMENT TO SOMEONE AT HIS SIDE--THIS)

A RANKING LEADER OF IMPERIALISM, TO PLEASE THE COMRADE (AS
HEARD), SAID TO ME: (WORDS INDISTINCT) COULD YOU NOT SILENCE
THOSE PANAMANIAN WHO ARE ENGINEERING--AS THEY ARE INDEED
ENGINEERING--A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE RATIFICATION OF THE
TREATY? THEY ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO TOMORROW WILL ENGINEER THE
SAME CAMPAIGN WHEN WE DIGNIFY (DIGNIFICAR) U.S. FOREIGN
POLICY TO THE EXTENT THAT WE HAVE PLANNED. COULD YOU NOT
SILENCE THEM FOR ME?

NO, I CANNOT. I CANNOT BECAUSE I CONSIDER THAT THOSE
PANAMANIAN PAY MORE ATTENTION TO YOU BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT
EXILES: BECAUSE I CONSIDER THAT AN EXILE IS A MAN WHO PULLS UP
HIS NATIONAL ROOTS, AND THEY HAVE (WORDS INDISTINCT)
EXILED HERE BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE CULTURAL OR SOCIAL OR
POLITICAL OR PATRIOTIC ROOTS HERE, BUT RATHER ECONOMIC ROOTS,
AND ECONOMIC ROOTS HAVE NO COUNTRY. (APPLAUSE)

AND THEY ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO, WHEN THE RANKING LEADERS
HAVE DECIDED TO NORMALIZE AND END THAT SHAMEFUL PERIOD IN THE FOREIGN
POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CERTAIN OTHER HEMISPHERIC COUNTRIES,
WILL OPPOSE THE RESTORATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE OF CUBA.
THEY ARE THE SAME PEOPLE. THAT IS WHY (WORDS INDISTINCT) I
CANNOT SILENCE THEM. SEND (AS HEARD) AN EXTREME RIGHTIST,
SOMEONE WHO WILL BECOME ENTHUSED WITH THE SOUND OF A CASH
REGISTER, WHICH IS HIS ANTHEM, HIS PATRIOTIC SONG. MAY BE HE
COULD SILENCE (WORDS INDISTINCT).

4 I AM NOT AFRAID, NOR AM I DENYING THAT WE SIGNED A CLAUSE
WHICH IF MISINTERPRETED BY FUTURE U.S. GENERATIONS COULD CAUSE
INTERVENTION. BUT I AM NOT AFRAID BECAUSE I KNOW THE
YOUTH THAT WE ARE PRODUCING. AND IN ORDER FOR THERE TO BE
INTERVENTION THERE MUST BE A PEOPLE WILLING ACCEPT INTERVENTION,
AND THESE PEOPLE HAVE NO INTENTION OF ACCEPTING IT. (APPLAUSE)

I LIKE THE TREATY, AND I AM GOING TO DEFEND IT. I WOULD BE
DISHONEST IF I DID NOT DEFEND WHAT I SIGNED. I LIKE IT AND
IT IS GOOD. (APPLAUSE) I HAVE CHANGED THE TERM "PERPETUITY."
DO YOU KNOW THE SYMBOL FOR PERPETUITY? IT IS AN 8 ON ITS SIDE.
IT MUST BE ON ITS SIDE BECAUSE PERPETUITY IS ETERNAL AND CALM.
(LAUGHTER) I HAVE LEFT YOU 23 YEARS AWAY FROM THE TOTAL
ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM, 23 KILOMETERS (AS HEARD) AWAY, AND
IF YOU, IN THESE 23 YR, PERMIT WHAT WE HAVE OBTAINED IN THE TREATY
TO BE SNATCHED AWAY FROM YOU, THEN YOU SHOULD NOT BE CALLED
PANAMANIAN, YOU SHOULD BE CALLED JERKS. (APPLAUSE)

WE MUST VOTE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT EVERY PANAMANIAN WITH THE RIGHT TO VOTE WILL DO SO. HE WILL VOTE BECAUSE THIS IS A SACRED COMMITMENT AND BECAUSE HE WILL BE A TRAITOR TO HIS COUNTRY IF HE IS NOT PRESENT AT THE POLLS, WHERE HE WILL DEPOSIT THE VOICE OF HIS CONSCIENCE ALONG WITH HIS BALLOT. (APPLAUSE)

I DO NOT WANT TO INTERFERE AND TELL YOU WHO TO ELECT IN THE NEW FEP DIRECTORATE, BUT I WANT YOU TO ELECT MEN WITH WHOM WE CAN WORK DISCREETLY, OPENLY OR IN HIDING, UNDERGROUND OR NOT UNDERGROUND, BECAUSE I AM CONVINCED THAT OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT YET OVER. (APPLAUSE)

LOOK, HAVE YOU STOPPED TO THINK THAT AFTER THE STRUGGLE IS OVER, AFTER THE POSSIBILITIES NO LONGER EXIST THAT OUR LIBERATION WILL HAVE TO BE OBTAINED THROUGH A LIBERATION STRUGGLE, NOW ALL PANAMANIAN SHOW THEIR FACES. THIS IS VERY COMFORTABLE FOR THEM. (LAUGHTER) THEY FLED IN PANIC. TORRIJOS IS CRAZY, (THEY SAID--FBI). HE WANTS TO DRIVE OUT THE GRINGOS WHO ARE SO GOOD, WHO HAVE THE DOLLAR. NOW THEY ALL SHOW UP AFTER THEY FLED IN A STAMPEDE, ABANDONING THE COUNTRY'S TO ITS FATE, AFTER THEY FLED LIKE COMRADES KNOWING THAT IT WAS TRUE THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD HAD SAID, I.E. THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT THE ONLY PATH TO LIBERATION. THEY FLED AND NOW THEY SHOW UP POSTURING AS THE GREAT LEADERS AND RESUSCITATING PARTY NAMES, WHICH MAKES ONE WANT TO VOMIT. (APPLAUSE)

WE HAVE INVITED INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS--THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION--DESPITE THE FACT THAT PANAMA IS NOT A COUNTRY ACCUSED OF BEING DISRESPECTFUL OF MAN'S DIGNITY. WE HAVE DONE SO BECAUSE IF WE HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE WE WILL ALWAYS BE WILLING TO HAVE SOMEBODY WITNESS OUR ACTIONS. I WANT THE OBSERVERS TO TALK WITH THE PEOPLE, WITH EVERYBODY, TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE INCLINED TO DISRESPECT THE DIGNITY OF THE PANAMANIAN CITIZEN. IF THEY TALK TO ME ABOUT EXILES, I SHALL TELL THEM THAT THEY ARE NOT EXILED, BECAUSE THEY LIVED IN EXILE HERE SINCE THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY TYPE OF ROOTS HERE.

IN FACT, THEIR CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, ETHNIC, AND EVEN (WORDS INDISTINCT) ROOTS WERE ALIEN, BECAUSE IN THEIR SMALL GROUPS THEY DO NOT SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE; THEY SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE DOLLAR. (LAUGHTER)

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TORRIJOS COMMENTS ON INTERVENTION ISSUE

PA011924Y Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1800 GMT 1 Oct 77 PA

["Report No 3" from Panamanian Chief of Government Gen Omar Torrijos Herrera sent from Yugoslavia--read by announcer; no date given].

[Excerpt] I had stopped sending reports because I was told that it was not elegant. However, I have thought about it carefully and I have reached the conclusion that I have never wanted to be elegant. I am interested in sincerity and not in elegance. I am interested in informing my people and honoring them.

Reports are always rendered by those in lower ranks to those in a higher position. As I see it, the people have a superior rank. They are the highest hierarchy. The people are my conscience.

The first thing I did on Monday the 26th when I arose in the morning was to set my feet firmly on the floor. This helps me face reality. Reality is for me a mixture of many things: intuition, logic, sentiments and even a bit of superstition. On that day I had to firmly step on the floor a couple of times. I was expecting to have breakfast with key people in the U.S. Government: Hamilton Jordan, a Carter aide; Bob (Paco), an adviser of Brzezinski; and Under Secretary of State Terence Todman.

de facto

I was very impressed with the human qualities of these young people that form part of the Carter team. They gave me a personal and warm letter from Carter on whose behalf they asked my opinion regarding the relations between the United States and the Latin American countries. It appears, from what they told me, that Carter believes I am a man very much aware of the feelings of the people, something like a well placed antenna receiving the signals with which our people transmit and receive. I would have accepted this as praise if I were a person far away from the people and receiving their messages from afar. It would mean that I am a sensible person. However, what is the merit in examining myself and knowing what I think?

We discussed generally what I think and what I feel but I spoke in the third person. That is how I gave my report.

In turn, they told me about Carter's program to sell the Panama treaty to the senators and to the people. At one point I left the diningroom and passed by a television set. The first session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had begun. Linowitz was speaking. He was saying that the United States has the right to act freely if the canal is threatened in any way, and unilaterally, that is, whenever they decide to do so, and permanently, that is, per saecula saeculorum. Religions have a right to speak about perpetuity. This is the ingredient they use to promote their product. I did not want to listen any more.

My position in this regard is clear and public. For there to be intervention, there must be a people who want to be intervened. Never has a sign saying keep away, or a treaty clause, stopped an army. We know what is the only thing that can stop intervention, and that--as anybody who participated in the recent university meeting between our negotiators and the young people knows--is something of which the Panamanians have enough to spare.

I understand that some Panamanian exiles living in the United States will be giving their opinions later. This is good for us. I am sure that they will not attack the neutrality treaty. No one can prefer a present intervention, which is physical and overwhelming, to a threat of future intervention. Maybe they do prefer it, but they are not honest enough to say it publicly.

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Their only argument is a no for the sake of no, or in any case a no to Torrijos, a personal but not a political objection, as if this matter is about Torrijos and not about the treaty. They cannot speak without unmasking themselves and this, I repeat, is good for us.

TORRIJOS ON ROLE OF NONALIGNED GROUP IN CANAL PROBLEM

FL012350Y Havana Domestic Service in Spanish 2332 GMT 1 Oct 77 FL

[Text] Panamanian Government Chief Gen Omar Torrijos has asserted that the next nonaligned countries summit conference in Havana in 1979 will be held within a very important international context. The nonaligned countries are acquiring more importance even though a trend against peace exists in the world, the Panamanian leader added. The nonaligned countries, he said, have been an important forum for a negotiated solution to the Panama Canal problem.

The Panamanian general declared that his country would be forced to resort to other forums if the U.S. Government does not ratify the recently concluded canal treaty. We would talk with leaders of the world to inform them that in case the right of innocent passage through the canal is endangered, it would not be the fault of Panama.

Panamanian Government Chief Omar Torrijos said he is confident that a great number of Panamanians will approve the referendum on the new canal treaty. The referendum will be conducted on 23 October. After the canal problem is solved, we will have to face the challenge of development, Torrijos said in Yugoslavia where he held talks with Josip Broz Tito. Torrijos announced that emphasis will be given to education as well as to the sugar industry where Cuba has helped with much unselfishness, with that generosity which Commander in Chief Fidel Castro always expresses without imposing conditions.

Independence, Torrijos said, does not rest only on the fact that a foreign flag is no longer flying on Panamanian territory, but also on ceasing to be dependent. Torrijos added that his country is fully capable of operating the Panama Canal efficiently.

TORRIJOS DRAWS SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MIDDLE EAST, CANAL ISSUES

PA030227Y Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 2345 GMT 2 Oct 77 PA

[Report No 4 from Panamanian Chief of Government Gen Omar Torrijos Herrera from Madrid-- read by announcer]

[Excerpt] We arrived in Tel Aviv on Tuesday, 27 September, at approximately 2030. For that reason, there was very little protocol. That pleased me very much. Protocol and courtesies in general were invented to keep the people at a distance. There is no way to establish human and sincere relations without breaking protocol. This is true among persons as well as nations. I went to Israel to see for myself the outlines of the problem. I wanted to know whether the way we had been voting at international conferences on this matter was correct. It was. Previously I believed it, now I know. Panama's vote, regardless of whether it is for or against, must be conscientious and responsible.

From Tel Aviv we went by car to Jerusalem, the holy, historical city.

The next day, Wednesday, I had a long meeting with Prime Minister Begin. The meeting was held at the Parliament, a beautiful building from where one can see the hills where the Jordanian mortars had us within range. The closeness and even coexistence of Arabs and Jews is culturally, racially and geographically complete. The prime minister and I exchanged views on our respective problems and others which are encumbering the world. Both of us left better prepared to discover new aspects of the contemporary political reality.