

Where and how the 'hot spots' have been planted throughout the region

by Gretchen Small

Guatemala/Belize: The border conflict between Guatemala and the soon-to-be-independent British colony Belize could overturn the whole chess-board in Central America.

Great Britain announced in mid-July that it will grant its last sugar-plantation colony in the Americas independence on Sept. 21, an operation personally overseen by Foreign Office Secretary Lord Carrington as a demonstration of British "anticolonialism." Immediately, the Guatemalan government, which still maintains centuries-old claims on Belize, rejected the terms of the independence: "We will continue using access to the ocean through Belize as in the past," read a recent foreign ministry statement.

As part of the package "independence" settlement, British troops and a large jungle-training school will remain in Belize—thus setting the stage for a simple "incident" to blow up into a full confrontation.

Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, himself an agent of the Socialist International, responded to the Guatemalan bravado with a provocation of his own: "If Belize as an independent state is attacked by another country, all our countries have certain resources in international organizations to denounce this, and even mount a defense operation."

The creation of international military forces, as suggested by Castañeda, is being mooted from several other sources as well. The Guatemalans have hinted they might ask other American states for help. And talk of a "Caribbean regiment" made up of forces from Guyana, Jamaica, and other Caribbean countries has also been revived by the British press.

Full-scale civil war may break out in Guatemala in any case in the September period. Right-wing forces are reportedly plotting a "preemptive military coup" for that month, a step that would play right into the hands of the insurrectionary forces that are seeking to broaden the conflict throughout the area. While not yet reaching Salvadoran levels of unity and firepower, Guatemala's Jesuit-run guerrilla groups have steadily stepped up activity over the past few months.

Indicative of the increasing mobilization was an interview in the latest issue of Mexican terrorist magazine

Por Esto with Father Donald McKenna, a leading member of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) in Guatemala. McKenna, a former member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), issued a call for all bishops, priests, nuns, catechists, and sacristans in Guatemala to assume their "responsibilities" on the side of the "poor."

Presaging the outbreak of broader civil war, the U.S. State Department placed Guatemala on its travel advisory warning list last week, as unsafe for American visitors, a category only El Salvador shares in the region.

Nicaragua: Highly reliable Mexican security officials privately report that Nicaragua could well explode as early as the end of August, in the squeeze of severe factionalization inside the Sandinista government and pressure from abroad—including economic warfare directed by the U.S. State Department. The French newspaper *L'Express* last week noted that the Sandinista leaders are hardened by a psychotic fear of U.S. subversion directed against them.

Rumors of an imminent full-scale split in the Sandinistas have reverberated since the July 9 resignation of Deputy Defense Minister Edén Pastora. While opposition forces, now regrouping in Miami for a major new offensive against the Sandinista regime, proclaimed Pastora's dramatic resignation and flight from Nicaragua as a strengthening of *their* forces, likewise left networks in the area claimed Pastora's leaving followed a decision by a faction of the Nicaraguan leadership that only the immediate activation of another revolutionary situation in Central America can defend the Sandinista government, and that Pastora was sent to head up that new front.

The two-day visit to Nicaragua this week by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders, a Kissinger protégé who echoes Haig's defense of the Socialist International, will further polarize the situation. Enders will meet with top opposition leaders in the country to help strengthen their hand—but this may well also provide the final provocation needed to induce a hardline left coup within the Sandinista leadership.

Panama: An expert on Central America at the Jesuit Georgetown University told *EIR* that Panama, in the

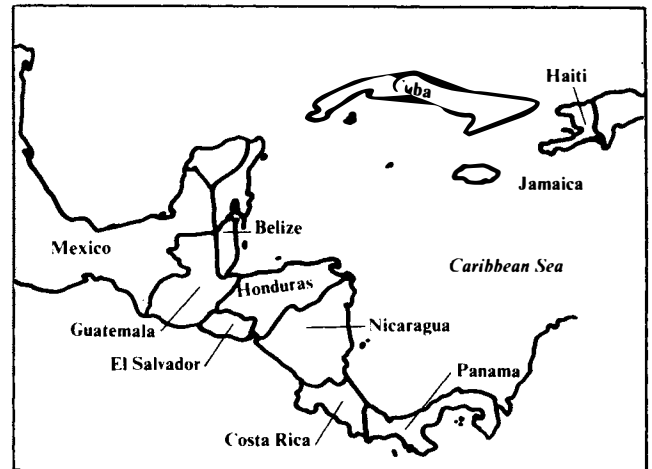
wake of Torrijos's death, "is far more unstable than even we thought it would be." There is universal agreement in the press that there is now a power vacuum in Panama, in which anything could happen as both "right" and "left" forces begin organizing to take advantage of the opening. For example, the Venezuelan daily *El Nacional* last week ran an article charging the Panamanian right with regrouping with financial help from the Venezuelan Christian Democrats. The article called on the "anti-imperialist" forces in Venezuela to launch an international effort of their own in behalf of the "broad popular coalition" which their counterparts in Panama are building.

The role of Panama's President Aristides Royo remains an open question in the situation. A technocrat who has closely followed a social-democratic line, Royo is widely attributed to have been only a figurehead for Torrijos and will be shortly swept aside. In a post-Torrijos interview with the London *Times*, however, Royo warned his detractors that "Torrijos was the Mao Tse-Tung; I was Chou-en-Lai," and proffered himself as a potential British asset in the region who intends to stay. "There is a future for British enterprise" in Panama, Royo gushed. "I personally like dealing with the British."

Honduras: Elections are scheduled for November 1981 in this military-run country, and there have been persisting reports that the right-wing faction of the army will stage another coup before they permit a return to democratic forms of government. Whether or not a coup occurs immediately, the election process, engineered by the State Department along the model of the planned elections farce in El Salvador, will lead to the same spiral of worsening conflict and weakened institutions as El Salvador now suffers. Indicative of the Haig strategy are the accusations that have appeared in the local press that U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Jack Binn has been using the election process to build up the forces of the local social democracy.

Although there has been relatively little guerrilla activity in Honduras, insurrections in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala could spill over the border literally overnight, fed by the growing refugee population throughout the area. The *New York Times* reported on Aug. 11 that U.S. Special Forces—Green Berets—have been deployed from U.S. military bases in the Canal Zone to help police the refugee camps.

El Salvador: Civil war here has been simmering since the failed left offensive of early 1981, but a new onslaught appears to be in the offing. The FMLN guerrillas have adopted a determined campaign of economic sabotage, including knocking out electrical lines to seven different towns in El Salvador last month. Private businessmen report only 40 percent of industrial capacity in the country is used; over 100,000 of the country's elite have fled;



30,000 more have become unemployed.

The Duarte Junta is also on the brink of collapse, with rumors sweeping the capital city that Duarte has resigned, been kidnapped, or left the country. The landed oligarchy and their business allies are demanding that one of their representatives be included in the ruling junta, and that the economic policies of the government be scrapped in favor of full-scale Friedmanism. But if their demands are not met by the Junta, the oligarchy appears prepared to launch another outright military takeover.

Costa Rica: Earlier this week, Costa Rica declared itself in default on the entirety of its \$2 billion in foreign debt, and cabled its creditors asking for a rollover. The government then adopted the uncharacteristically radical stance of throwing out of the country the IMF representatives who were there to negotiate—although the IMF itself is claiming that Costa Rica has *not* broken relations entirely.

As this was occurring, the French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson dropped in on the country, and presented himself as their trusted friend and ally in dealing with the IMF.

Terrorism is only beginning to assert itself in Costa Rica but the country has for years served as one of the primary staging grounds for much of the terrorist activities that have taken place elsewhere. This was best seen in the use of Costa Rica as the base of the Sandinista "Southern Front" during the civil war against Somoza. The core of the "Southern Front" leadership—sponsored then and now by aging social democratic leader José "Pepe" Figueres and his protégé-turned-opposition Rodrigo Carazo now the President of Costa Rica—is now regrouping in Panama under the direction of social democratic mercenary Hugo Spadafora. They intend to do battle as a new Simón Bolívar Brigade in other Central American countries. It was to Spadafora's crew that Pastora, still a Costa Rican citizen, fled upon his resignation from the Nicaraguan government.