
However, Weathersby adds, the Soviet document also shows that the assumption—made by President Harry Truman’s administration and by many scholars—that the initiative for the attack came from Stalin is false. “This was Kim Il Sung’s war; he gained Stalin’s reluctant approval only after persistent appeals (48 telegrams!).”

The question of who called for war is crucial, in Weathersby’s view. By the spring of 1950, she says, “the Truman administration had concluded that South Korea was not of sufficient strategic importance to the United States to justify military intervention to prevent a North Korean takeover of South Korea. However, for the *Soviet Union* to attempt to gain control over South Korea was a different matter entirely.”

The Soviet document, Weathersby says, suggests (but does not state) “that Stalin supported Kim’s plan only because he calculated that it would *not* involve military conflict with the United States.” Other documents in Soviet archives, as well as memoirs recently published in Russia, she says, “indicate that Stalin was surprised and alarmed by the U.S. intervention. He evidently blamed Kim for having badly misjudged the situation.”

But Washington, too, misjudged the situation, Weathersby thinks: “The nearly unanimous opinion within the Truman administration was that [the invasion] was a Soviet probe; if the United States did not resist this act of aggression, the Soviet Union would move next into West Germany, or perhaps Iran.” In reality, Weathersby believes, the North Korean attack on South Korea was not intended as “a test of American resolve.”

Remember Panama?

“Panama: Casablanca without Heroes” by Silvana Paternostro, in *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1993–94), World Policy Inst., New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

More than three years after the United States invaded Panama with 24,000 troops, toppled General Manuel Antonio Noriega’s military regime, and brought Noriega to Florida to stand trial on drug trafficking charges, the country, no longer in the spotlight, “has reverted to old hab-

its,” writes Paternostro, a freelance journalist.

Although no longer centralized, as under Noriega, the drug trade still flourishes, and official corruption remains a problem. A Panamanian legislator was arrested in Tampa, Florida, last October and charged with conspiring to smuggle 150 kilos of cocaine into the United States. Javier Chérigo, deputy director of Panama’s restructured and demilitarized intelligence police, says his 800-man force on the drug beat spends most of its time investigating drug trafficking on the streets of Panama, where rival Colombian and Panamanian drug gangs battle one another. Police corruption, Chérigo says, is his biggest problem.

In addition to Panama’s 3,500 lawyers, “who for less than \$1,000 can form and register a company on paper in less than 24 hours,” Paternostro notes, the country has “104 banks, an iron-clad secrecy law, and no restriction on the amount of cash entering the country.” In other words, Panama has all the classic ingredients for money laundering on a grand scale. In 1992 alone, total banking center deposits increased from almost \$2 billion to \$19 billion.

Lawlessness has bred more than 100 private-security companies since 1989. Many ordinary Panamanians pack guns. Now, many fear that the political campaigns leading up to what some describe as Panama’s first free elections this May could be marked by bloodshed. Guillermo Endara, who was sworn in as president at the time of the U.S. invasion, is not running. Of those who are, Ernesto Pérez Balladares, the candidate of the Revolutionary Democratic Party, which was the political arm of Noriega’s regime, appears to be leading.

The turnover of the Panama Canal to Panama in 2000, in accordance with the 1977 treaty negotiated with the United States, is not a hot election issue this year. Unemployment seems to be Panamanians’ biggest concern. But many Panamanians, Paternostro says, are no longer enthusiastic about the prospect of control over the canal. The U.S. Department of Defense employs about 5,400 Panamanians and pumps more than \$250 million into Panama’s economy each year. Some Panamanians have proposed that their government renegotiate. “You can’t eat sovereignty,” one observed.