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Western Hemisphere

ECUADOR ATTEMPTING TO REVIVE BORDER DISPUTE WITH PERU

Ecuador has been preparing diplomatically to try to bring before the Extraordinary Inter-American Conference scheduled to open on 20 May its claim that the Rio Protocol is void.

The Rio Protocol of 29 January 1942 established in detail the boundaries between Ecuador and Peru, disputed since 1822. These reflected Peru's de facto control of most of the upper Amazon basin, its victory in a 1941 border war, and its strong colonial titles. Ecuadorean public opinion has been so intensely committed for generations to unattainable aspirations for territory on the Amazon-Maron river system that the protocol has been exploited by the political opposition to embarrass successive Ecuadorean governments.

Impotent to loosen the ruling military junta's grip on power, or to speed up its plans for transition to civilian rule, Ecuador's political parties demanded in February that the government use the forthcoming OAS meeting to present "just grievances." Ecuador has claimed since 1960 that the juridical background of the protocol, and a minor flaw in geographical terms of reference of the stipulated boundary, nullify the instrument.

Peru adamantly maintains that the protocol is a valid, freely ratified, unalterable instrument whose execution should be completed. The Peruvian opposition, which controls congress, has repeatedly demanded unilateral demarcation of the 78 kilometers of

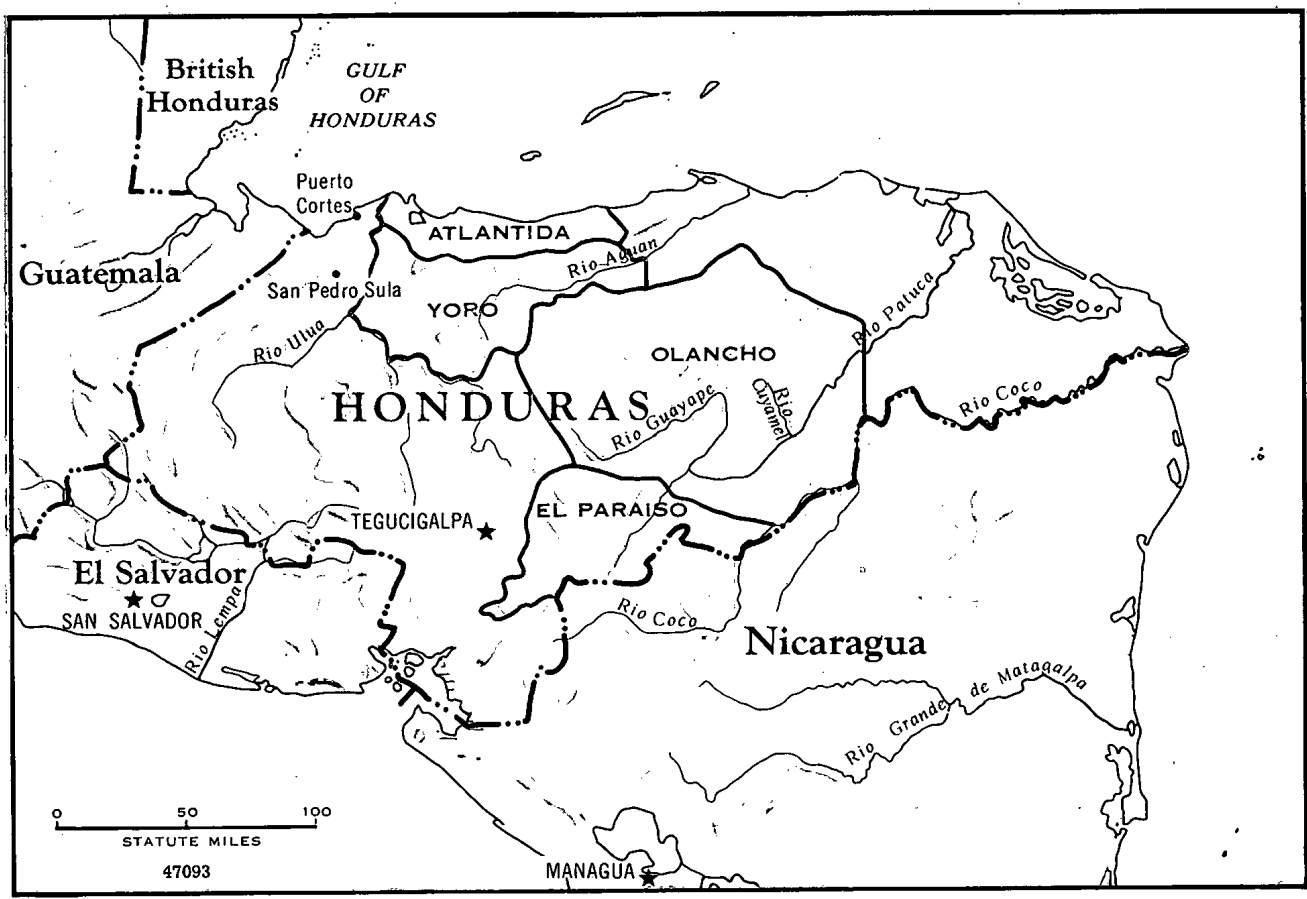
frontier remaining open between the last two border markers emplaced, but President Belaunde opposes this.

The agenda of the OAS meeting was approved before the Ecuadorean junta was driven to action. Should it belatedly raise the matter there as it has promised, Peru would leave the meeting. Furthermore, the guarantors of the execution of the 1942 protocol--Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and the US--have no wish to permit the opening of a Pandora's box of demands for boundary revisions. Most governments are unwilling to touch this hot potato, and consequently Ecuador has little hope of obtaining the necessary two-thirds vote to introduce its pleas at the OAS meeting.

If the junta and Belaunde are able to resist political and public pressures, this episode in the long dispute will probably pass without diplomatic or frontier incidents. The basically friendly relations between the two governments favor gradual dissipation of the current storm. Nevertheless, Ecuador reportedly has added 90 days to draftees' military service, and if nationalistic pressures in either nation force strong actions, a critical situation could develop rapidly. The affair carries the potential for wrecking the OAS conference and, if the Ecuadorean junta does not do enough to placate its people, conceivably could be the issue to bring about its fall.

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SPANISH GOVERNMENT RISKS FURTHER STUDENT UNREST

Student demonstrations are likely to resume following a virtual turndown by the Council of Ministers of demands for democratic reforms in the Spanish University Syndicate (SEU). Following a cabinet meeting on 18 March it was officially announced that a study of reforms must await a "normal situation" and be carried on within the existing syndicate structure.

Students will consider this a disavowal of the commitment which they felt they received from Herrero Tejedor, under secretary of the movement (the parent body of the syndicates), on 7 March. A further hint of some uncertainty within the regime over the question was the tone of editorial comments in the controlled press. The support it evidenced for reforms in the university syndicate had suggested that some accommodation of student demands would be forthcoming.

Police action against demonstrators was mild when the current round of student demonstrations against the SEU first began in Madrid on 29 January. A protest march on 24 February was roughly

broken up, however, and the faculties of medicine and of philosophy in Madrid were closed for several days and five professors who participated in a student meeting were suspended. Herrero Tejedor met with student leaders and quieted the situation with promises of reform. Students indicated that a lull in demonstrations would depend on the way the government acted on Herrero's promises and on the treatment accorded to the five suspended professors. Demonstrations at Barcelona and Bilbao led to closings of faculties there.

The reversal of Herrero Tejedor's commitment is not surprising. While some elements within the regime are sympathetic to the students' demands, they are much more responsive to the dangers inherent in any liberalization in the monolithic syndicate organization. Any reforms granted to students would quickly bring new demands by workers for reform of their syndicates. This would undermine the government's rigid control of labor, with attendant political repercussions.

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