

Britain Sees Way Out of Anguillan Affair

By HUGH O'SHAUGHNESY

LONDON — Mr. Joseph Godber, the British Minister of State responsible for the dependent territories of the Caribbean recently announced a run-down of the numbers of British troops and police stationed on Anguilla.

It is the beginning of the end of another act in the tragi-comedy which for four years has pitted the 6,000 Anguillans and their leader, Mr. Ronald Webster, against Mr. Robert Bradshaw, the Premier of the unitary Associated State of St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla.

But the news about Anguilla is only one of a number of likely new political developments this year in a region which because of its diversity and fragmentation, faces Britain with a greater concentration of colonial problems than any other on the globe.

The problems began in May, 1967, when the Anguillans proclaimed their secession from the unitary state.

In the next few weeks the British Government is going to make one last effort to get an agreed solution. The tactic will be to try to persuade Mr. Bradshaw to give up, temporarily at least, his claim to rule the recalcitrant Anguillans.

ANGUILLA

With Anguilla cut free from rule from the St. Kitts capital, Basseterre officials in London feel that time and separation will have their soothing effects and possibly allow for some resumption of the relations between the Kittitians and the Anguillans at some future time.

If Mr. Bradshaw does not agree — and it is unlikely that he will — then surgery will be performed. Anguilla will juridically be separated from St. Kitts and Nevis if only for a time.

According to the Act which set up the various Associated States of the Caribbean — besides St. Kitts - Nevis - Anguilla, they are Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenada — the responsibility of Britain is limited to spheres of foreign affairs and defense.

Now in the face of the intractability of the situation, the British Government seems to be taking a wider interpretation of the Act.

Separation would allow the Anguillans to emerge from their current administrative limbo where effective power is wielded by a resident British Commissioner and Mr. Webster himself.

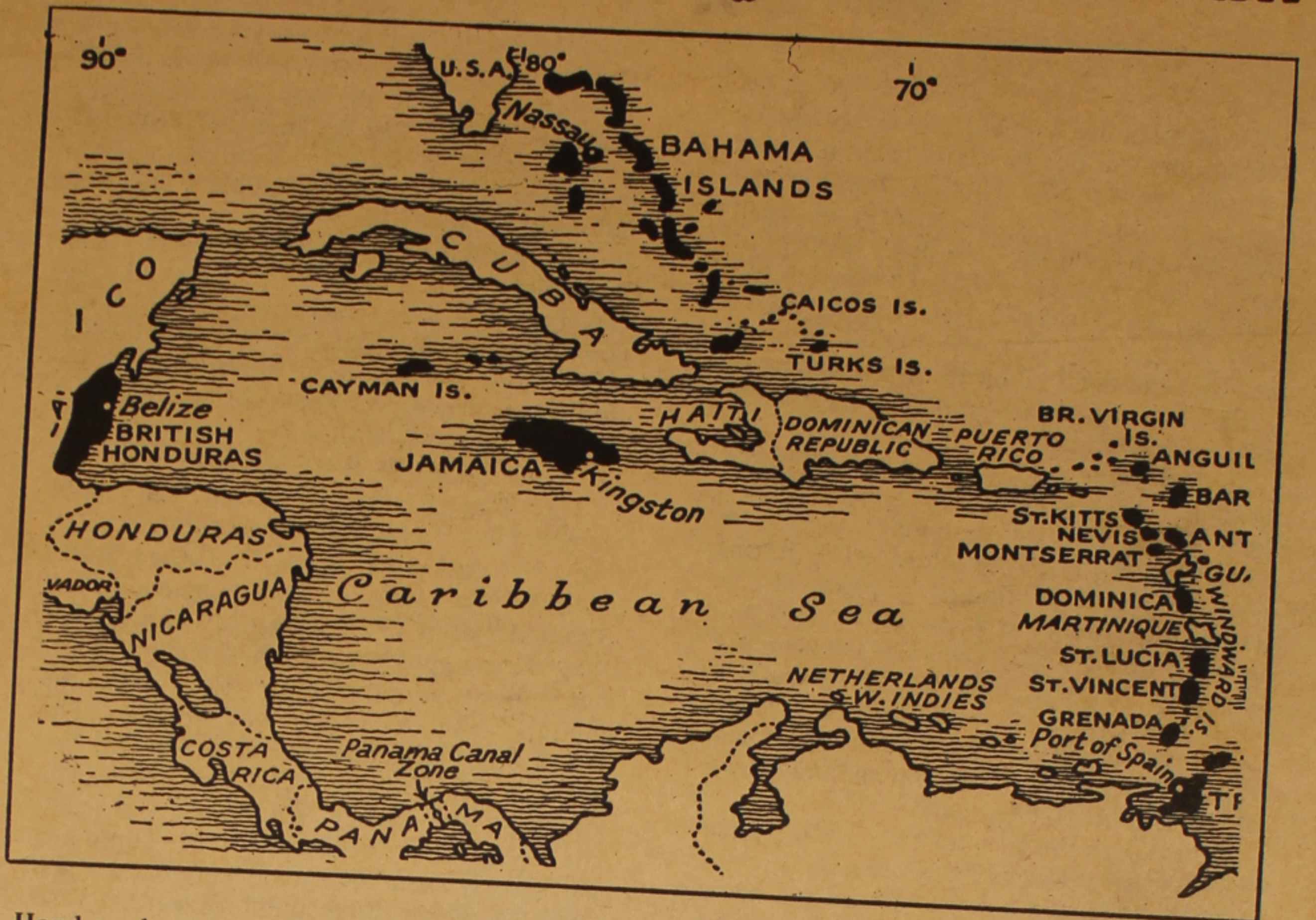
Meanwhile there are signs that the neighboring Associated States are taking the road to full independence.

There is continuing talk of Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent banding together and seeking full sovereignty.

Grenada under Mr. Eric Gairy may seek independence on its own. The situation in Antigua where a new government came into office only last month is less clear.

There is little doubt that but for defense problems British Honduras would be independent today under Mr. George Price and with the new name of Belize.

The obstacle is that neighboring Guatemala claims the territory as its own and the talks and mediation which have for years gone on between Britain, Guatemala, and



Honduras have so far not solved anything.

The present Conservative Government in London is following in the footsteps of its predecessors and telling the Belizeans that if they want independence they will have to assume the full responsibility for their defense.

Britain does not want to be landed with an "open-ended commitment" to defend a sovereign Belize, but at the same time 100,000 Belizeans with hundreds of miles of open frontier with Guatemala have neither the men nor the money to insure themselves against possible Guatemala incursions.

BAHAMAS

The question of defense is also one of the factors affecting the progress to independence of the Bahamas.

The Bahamians are not one in wanting independence. While Mr. Lynden Pindling's predominantly black government sees it as an eventual goal, the opposition United Bahamian Party, which has more following in the white business community, is less sure.

There is some agitation for the question of independence to be put to a referendum. The forthcoming general elections will doubtless make it clear what the majority of the Bahamians want.

But this will not settle the question of the southern boundary of the islands. Hundreds of islands and cays, many of them just over the horizon from Cuban, have for the past 10 years been a happy hunting ground for Miami-based anti-Castro groups, not to mention large numbers of Haitian laborers trying to find in the Bahamas the work they cannot find in Haiti.

The patrolling of the southern Bahamian cays has become one of the most important duties of the two Royal Navy frigates stationed in the Caribbean.

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question of patrolling the southern sea frontier is going to be a difficult one.

One solution envisaged in Whitehall is that the U.S. which at the moment carries but unofficial patrols in the area, be asked to undertake a contractual commitment to do so.

This might produce friction with the Cubans who may well be loath to see the task of checking the anti-Castro raiders go to a country whose Presidents have in the past openly encouraged them.

There remain the tiniest British dependencies in the region, the Turks and Caicos, the Caymans and Montserrat which have no hope or desire of achieving independence. It is expected that they will be allowed to remain direct dependencies of Britain.

"Nobody wants to drive these particular little chickens over the edge," was the remark... official summed up the... (Financial Times)

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