SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD THE CUBAN AND NICARAGUAN REVOLUTIONS: A COMPARISON

By

SHANNON JOAN SELIN

B.A.(Hons.), The University of Saskatchewan, 1985

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Political Science

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 1986

©Shannon Joan Selin, 1986
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Political Science

The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date August 25, 1986
This thesis compares Soviet policy toward the Cuban revolution during the period 1959 to 1962 with that toward the Nicaraguan revolution from 1979 to the present in order to determine if the oft-levelled accusation that Nicaragua is "another Cuba" holds true. The initial Soviet reactions to the revolutions, subsequent Soviet economic, political, and military support for the new regimes, and the Soviet response to Cuban and Nicaraguan ideological declarations are examined, as is the effect of the revolutions on Soviet doctrine and on the Soviet prognosis for revolutionary success in Latin America.

In discussing the similarities and differences in Soviet objectives and tactics as regards each revolution, the thesis looks particularly at the influence of several general factors on Soviet policy. These include: 1) the relative military-strategic position of the Soviet Union in the Caribbean and the desire to avoid military confrontation with the United States; 2) the policies pursued by the United States; 3) the policies pursued by the revolutionary governments; 4) the state of Soviet-American relations. The impact of the character of the Soviet leadership, the policy of other actors, the state of the Soviet economy, relations within the communist world, and the Soviet perception of American willingness to use force to counter Soviet moves in the Basin are also examined.

The thesis concludes that Nicaragua is not "another Cuba." Although Soviet policy toward the early stages of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions followed a similar pattern, the Soviet
Union has not chosen to support Nicaragua economically, politically, and militarily to the same extent that it did Cuba. This is due to past unsatisfactory Soviet experiences with Third World clients, the lesser need of the post-Khrushchev leadership for gains in the Third World, Cuba's ability and willingness to aid the Sandinista government, and the Soviet perception that the United States is willing to use force to maintain its hegemony in the Caribbean Basin.

In general, Soviet policy in the Caribbean is best characterized as one of "prudent opportunism." The Soviet Union takes advantage of opportunities presented to enhance its position in the region, but, respecting American power and geographical advantage, proceeds with caution.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: SOVIET POLICIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Initial Reaction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Economic Relations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Political and Military Support</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Ideology</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: DOCTRINAL AND REVOLUTIONARY IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Doctrine</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Revolution in Latin America</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOTNOTES</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Although Fidel Castro's 1959 New Year's defeat of the Cuban dictator Batista and the Sandinista National Liberation Front's (FSLN) July 1979 ousting of the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua are temporally separated, the shared geographic location, grievances, nationalism, and emerging socialist character and foreign policy orientation of the new regimes provide a strong basis for comparison of the two revolutions. These similarities have not escaped the attention of individuals in the Reagan Administration, who are fond of referring to Nicaragua as "another Cuba," in a way that is not meant to be a commendation. For example, on February 21, 1985, Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger predicted that without American military pressure on Nicaragua, there would soon be "another Cuba in this hemisphere," a Soviet military base in Central America, and a direct threat to American strategic interests.1

Appellation is not limited to officialdom. Richard Staar feels that: "If progress has been slow in subverting Western Europe, the opposite is true of the Third World, where the USSR has made considerable inroads. 'Revolutionary democracies' and other governments that have chosen the 'non-capitalist' path of development exist in twenty countries, with Nicaragua well on its way to becoming a second Cuba in the Western Hemisphere."2

Such a labeling of Nicaragua rests, to a great extent, on the labeler's perceptions of the Sandinista government's relationship with the Soviet Union. This paper will compare Soviet policy toward the Cuban Revolution during the period 1959 to 1962 with that toward the Nicaraguan Revolution from 1979 to
the present. Four chapters follow this Introduction. Chapter Two establishes the context for the subsequent analysis by providing background information about the Soviet world view in the late 1950s and late 1970s, the Soviet perception of revolutionary opportunities in Latin America, and Soviet involvement in the revolutionary movements. Chapter Three, entitled Soviet Policies, is divided into four sections, examining in turn the initial Soviet reaction to both revolutions, subsequent economic relations with the new regimes, Soviet political and military support to the new regimes, and the Soviet response to Cuban and Nicaraguan ideological declarations. Chapter Four, Doctrinal and Revolutionary Implications, looks at the effect of the revolutions on Soviet doctrine and on the Soviet prognosis for revolutionary success in Latin America. The Conclusion ties together the threads of the previous chapters and arrives at a characterization of Soviet policy best designated "prudent opportunism." The paper finishes with a discussion of probable future Soviet action vis-à-vis Nicaragua, and in so doing, answers the question, is Nicaragua another Cuba?

In one scholar's words, "[t]he greater the understanding of the forces behind and constraints on Soviet policies, the greater the potential to respond successfully to Soviet initiatives and even to anticipate those initiatives." Thus, in discussing the similarities and differences in Soviet objectives and tactics as regards each revolution, the paper looks particularly at the influence of several general factors on Soviet policy. These include: 1) the relative military-
strategic position of the Soviet Union in the Caribbean and the desire to avoid military confrontation with the United States; 2) the policies pursued by the United States; 3) the policies pursued by the revolutionary governments; 4) the state of Soviet-American relations. The impact of the character of the Soviet leadership, the policy of other actors (e.g., Cuba in the case of Nicaragua), the state of the Soviet economy, relations within the communist world, and the Soviet perception of American willingness to use force to counter Soviet moves in the Basin will also be examined.

Throughout the paper, the terms "Soviet Union," "Soviet leadership," "Moscow," and "Soviets" are used interchangeably to refer to the foreign policy-making elite in the Soviet Union. Although the assumption of a rational, unitary Soviet actor can be questioned, too little is known about differences within the Soviet elite over Cuba and Nicaragua to justify the use of any other approach.5

The author has relied mainly on secondary sources but has also used Soviet sources, namely International Affairs and the translations provided in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press. There is controversy about the extent to which public Soviet statements reflect the actual attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of Soviet policy-makers, and the extent to which those perceptions affect Soviet policy-making.6 However, a careful consideration of statements, noting, for example, changes in ideological formulations and differences in emphasis over time, in combination with actions can give clues to real perceptions.
CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

An understanding of Soviet policy toward the early stages of these two revolutionary regimes requires first an appreciation of the general world outlook of the Soviet leaders at the time of the revolutions and, more particularly, of their assessment of revolutionary possibilities in Latin America. This first corresponds to the Soviet evaluation of the "correlation of forces" which subsumes "all the political, social, economic, and military factors they perceive as involved to some degree in their worldwide competition" with the United States. The assessment of the correlation of forces shapes leaders' perceptions of opportunities for Soviet advancement in the world, and of the likelihood of success if the Soviet Union chooses to pursue these opportunities.

In the late 1950s, the world view of the Soviet leadership—particularly that of N. S. Khrushchev—was buoyant. The succession struggle within the Soviet leadership had ended; problems left by Stalin in the economic sphere appeared to have been solved; the successful Sputnik launch of October 1957 and the development of the first intercontinental ballistic missiles signaled the beginning of the end of American nuclear supremacy. Khrushchev believed that the world distribution of power was shifting in favor of the communist bloc. Economic competition between capitalism and socialism would lead to the withering away of the former and the global victory of the latter without a world war. Khrushchev's report to the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in January 1959 was euphoric: "The socialist world is now stronger, more
united and more indestructible than ever before. It exerts a
decisive influence on the entire course of the development of
mankind." Socialism, he asserted, was entering a new stage in
the economic competition with capitalism, and the Soviet Union
would soon surpass the United States in economic power. 8

The role of the emerging Third World in this unfolding of
events was viewed no less optimistically. Africa and Asia were
seen to be in the throes of a largely self-sustaining
revolutionary movement. Inherently anti-imperialist, the
national liberation groups were thought to be natural allies of
the socialist camp. As competition at the centre was
constrained by the danger of nuclear war and the imperative of
peaceful coexistence, the locus of the struggle between
capitalism and socialism would shift to the Third World. 9 At
the Twentieth CPSU Congress in February 1956, Khrushchev
characterized the postwar "disintegration of the imperial
colonial system" as being of "world historical significance,"
and asserted that the newly independent countries together with
the socialist states created a "vast peace zone" opposed to
Western imperialism. 10 The Soviet leadership assumed that the
former colonies would be attracted to the vigorous Soviet model
and would gradually evolve toward socialism, thus enhancing even
further the correlation of forces in favour of the socialist
bloc.

Although the process leading to global socialist triumph
was perceived to be inevitable, a resourceful Soviet foreign
policy could hasten the outcome. Socialist aid, both military
and economic, to the newly independent countries could help them
break away from dependence on the imperialists. Following Stalin's death, the Soviet leaders embarked on an effort to court the Third World, sending arms to Egypt (September 1955) and Iraq (November 1958), visiting India, Burma, and Afghanistan (1955), and providing military aid to Guinea and Ghana (1959-60). That these states were chosen for their strategic value in the struggle with the West rather than for any internal characteristics or ideological predilections, would seem to portend great Soviet interest in a successful revolution occurring in, as the Soviets call Latin America, the "strategic rear" of the United States.

Despite its overall optimism, the Soviet leadership did not expect major gains in Latin America. Due to Latin America's geographic distance from the Soviet Union, the weakness of pro-Soviet Communist parties in the region, American economic, political, and military hegemony, and the pervasiveness of conservative military dictatorships, the possibility of revolutionary socialist success appeared limited. Latin America was not included in Khrushchev's "zone of peace." The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, a front group founded in Moscow in the 1960s, by definition excluded Latin America. The Soviet Union lacked the resources to support an active policy in Latin America, and American sensitivity about outside involvement in the Western Hemisphere seemed to preclude Soviet influence. The Soviets subscribed to the theory of "geographic fatalism," i.e., a belief in the impossibility of successful revolutions close to the United States. Soviet expectations had been borne out in Guatemala in 1954, where CIA-trained exiles
overthrew the leftist government of Jacobo Arbenz on the pretext of the penetration of international communism. "The primary efforts of the Latin American Communist parties were not to be directed toward the struggle for socialism, but rather toward the struggle to establish and broaden bourgeois democracy."12

A similar combination of a sanguine assessment of global conditions but pessimism regarding Latin America prevailed in the late 1970s. The Politburo could point to a number of factors to corroborate the unwavering thesis that the correlation of forces was shifting in Soviet favour. In the twenty years since the Cuban revolution, the Soviet Union had attained strategic nuclear parity with the United States as well as increased its conventional force projection capabilities. The Soviet Union had used the latter to advantage, undertaking a policy of unprecedented activism in the Third World beginning in the mid-1970s, and had achieved successes, most notably in Angola and Ethiopia. A succession of coups by pro-Soviet groups in Afghanistan (April 1978), South Yemen (June 1978), and Grenada (March 1979) in addition to the January 1979 overthrow of the shah of Iran and the Vietnamese victories in South Vietnam (May 1975), Laos (1975), and Kampuchea (January 1979) further bolstered Soviet spirits.

Suffering the aftermath of Watergate and the Vietnam War, and labouring under a vacillating president, the United States appeared unable to counter these trends. During the 1970s, the United States had regularly cautioned the Soviets to refrain from a number of specific actions, including the interventions in Angola and Ethiopia and naval entry to Cam Ranh Bay, without
any immediate and specific political or military consequences. With new Congressional and public fears and restraints on American foreign policy, it appeared less likely that the United States would use military force directly to counter Soviet activities in the Third World. The Soviets were also aware of Western assessments that American global influence was falling in tandem with the rise of Soviet power.13

This is not to ignore Soviet setbacks during the 1970s. Sino-Soviet tensions increased while Chinese relations with the West improved. A hoped-for improvement in relations with Japan failed to materialize. Egypt and Somalia terminated their Friendship Treaties with the Soviet Union and aligned with the West. Stirrings of independence in Eastern Europe and the emergence of Eurocommunism in Western Europe undermined Soviet authority over the international communist movement. However, particularly as far as Third World trends were concerned, the United States appeared to be losing more than the Soviet Union. As Bruce Porter writes, referring to the December 24, 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: "It seems improbable that the Soviet leadership would have dared to undertake such a radical and risk-laden step had the experience of the preceding decade not convinced them of the reality of a new world political and military balance."14

The Soviet perspective vis-à-vis Latin America had changed since 1959. Between the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, Soviet interest and involvement in Latin America had grown. By the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations with nineteen Latin American countries compared to only three in
1959, and enjoyed a military presence in the Caribbean via Cuba. Prompted by events in Cuba, an Institute for the Study of Latin America was established in 1961, which provided a body of theory, albeit habitually unsophisticated, about the region. Latin America was no longer separated from the rest of the Third World, and growing importance was attached to the region in the East-West balance of power. Because Latin America had reached a more advanced stage of socio-economic development than the states of Asia and Africa, in Soviet theory it was actually better-placed to begin the transition to socialism. The survival of the Castro regime, the emergence of friendly leftist governments in Jamaica, Grenada, and Guyana, and the nationalization of American economic assets in several Latin American states were taken as signs of a weakening of the American hold over its "backyard" and of the strength of anti-imperialist sentiment among Latin Americans.

Nonetheless, as in 1959, revolutionary success was not anticipated in Latin America, which the Soviets still treated as an American preserve. Soviet perspectives on the region were conditioned by the 1965 American intervention in the Dominican Republic, the failure of Cuban-backed guerrilla revolutionaries in the 1960's in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Peru, and Venezuela, and by the CIA-instigated overthrow of socialist Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973. This induced caution in Soviet dealings with Latin American socialist revolutionaries.

In neither Cuba nor Nicaragua was the Soviet Union involved in the revolutionary cause until immediately prior to the revolution, and even then, only indirectly. Both Fidel Castro's
26th of July Movement and the FSLN were indigenous, autonomous movements drawn from all classes, inspired by distaste for a repressive dictator and his American sponsors. Soviet involvement in these countries was limited to its links with the local Communist parties: the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) in Cuba and the tiny Socialist Party of Nicaragua (PSN); in general the views expressed by these parties can be assumed to coincide with Moscow’s.

Although Raul Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara were sympathetic to Marxism, Fidel Castro and the PSP shared a reciprocal antipathy. The PSP described Castro’s failed attempt to take the Moncada military barracks in Santiago de Cuba in July 1953 as “putschist methods characteristic of bourgeois political factions.”16 The PSP insisted that only a popular, communist-led uprising of Cuban workers could overthrow Batista; even when offering limited support for Castro, the party did not anticipate his victory. Only two months before the revolution, in November 1958, a PSP commentator wrote: “the tyranny has failed in its attempt to dominate the struggle of the masses, but it would be wrong to suppose that this alone implies the imminent possibility of its overthrow.”17 Even Khrushchev, in a discussion with a Brazilian journalist on October 3, 1958 about the “heroic but unequal struggle of the Cuban people,” expressed no hint that he foresaw impending victory.18

The Communists boycotted the general strike called for by Castro in April 1958. By July of that year, however, the PSP modified its stance in light of the guerrillas’ efficiency and agreed to collaborate with Castro, but only as a temporary
tactic. The reestablishment of democracy promised by Castro would pave the way for a later socialist revolution which only the PSP could bring about. There was no intimation that Castro himself would implement such a revolution. His movement was not a proletarian one; between sixty and seventy-five percent of the rebel army were peasants, and the majority of the leaders of the guerrilla forces and July 26th Movement came from the petty and middle bourgeoisie. Nor were communist sympathizers predominant; many in the movement were ardently anti-Communist. Prior to the victory, Castro’s program was a vague mix of agrarian reform and support for the reestablishment of the 1940 constitution. In Jacques Levesque’s words, “the revolution was made with a minimum of theory.” Moreover, at that time Soviet doctrine did not allow for the possibility of a national bourgeois leader creating a socialist state; it held that both the transition to, and the building of, socialism could only be attained under the leadership of the most advanced elements of the working class, i.e., the local communist party. Although ideology does not play a paramount role in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy, it cannot be completely discounted. “Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism shapes the lenses through which Soviet leaders and decision-makers view the external world.” Also, Soviet leaders must justify their behaviour in terms of ideological requirements.

The Nicaraguan revolution was similarly unanticipated prior to the final stages. An analysis in July 1978 by Soviet Latin American experts made no mention of Nicaragua. As in Cuba, the local Communist party was critical of the revolutionary
movement. In the 1960s, the PSN called the FSLN "ultra-left" and its actions "premature." Throughout the 1970s, the Soviets cautioned local Communist parties and radical left groups in Central America and the Caribbean against attempts to overthrow their governments; rather, efforts should be concentrated on building anti-imperialist coalitions.24 Although during the 1970's Cuba was training some Sandinistas and providing the movement with limited arms and finances, it was not until the September 1978 insurrection in five Nicaraguan cities that the Soviets and Cubans began to be hopeful about the FSLN's prospects of success. Soviet press references to the Nicaraguan guerrillas' struggle began around this time.25 Castro encouraged the three Nicaraguan guerrilla factions to unite and, in 1979, sent clandestine shipments of Soviet arms to the rebels. However, Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, and Costa Rica provided more help to the insurgents than did either Cuba or the Soviet Union.26 "Moscow's most direct role probably took the form of forcing the pro-Soviet Nicaraguan Socialist party to switch (April 1979) from rivalry to collaboration with the Sandinistas."27

It is apparent from the above discussion that the Soviets did not anticipate, let alone initiate, the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. Subsequent Soviet involvement was a response to the opportunities presented by indigenous, anti-American revolution in the Caribbean Basin.28 Because the revolutions occurred, in Soviet terms, in the "strategic rear" of the United States, they were enticing to Moscow. A Soviet gain in Latin America, though unexpected, is of greater political and
psychological value than anywhere else in Third World because Latin America is globally regarded as the special preserve of the United States. A primary objective of Soviet policy in Latin America is the undermining of American power and influence and a concomitant increase in Soviet influence. Influence is desired for political, ideological, and prestige reasons. Soviet leaders see foreign successes (the spread of Soviet influence and power) as essential conditions for the preservation of their regime. The Soviet Union is thus interested in any development that will erode the American position and open opportunities for the Soviet Union. A pro-Soviet state in Latin America weakens the American position, enhances tremendously the USSR's reputation, opens the possibility of increasing Soviet military involvement in the region and, as is true anywhere in the Third World, allows the Soviet Union to demonstrate its capacity to promote economic development.

In simplest terms, Moscow sees Latin America as an especially important arena of the global anti-imperialist struggle which the Kremlin seeks to conduct against the U.S. and the West generally. In the Soviet view, the exacerbation of the 'national liberation' process in Latin America aimed at eroding U.S. interests can significantly contribute to a further shift in the 'correlation of world forces' in Moscow's favor, and at the same time lay the foundation for an increasing anti-capitalist orientation in the region, thus preparing the way for eventual Leftist and Communist-led regimes. Equally important, Soviet ability to be increasingly active in the 'strategic rear' of the U.S. is perceived by Moscow as evidence of the growing might and global reach of the Soviet Union. This not only reflects favorably on the Soviet power image but also furthers the Soviet goal, first stated by Brezhnev in March 1970, that 'no question of any importance in the world can be solved without our participation, without taking into account our economic and military might.'
As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Soviet non-expectation of revolution in Latin America and pessimism about a revolution's probable outcome shaped in part the pace and nature of Soviet response to events in Cuba and Nicaragua. Past experience with revolutionary regimes in the Western Hemisphere dictated caution. Yet, although unexpected, the revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua served to corroborate the optimistic interpretation of the correlation of forces held by Soviet leaders in the late 1950s and late 1970s. Particularly in the Cuban instance, this optimistic interpretation imparted a dynamism to Soviet policy that made the Soviet Union acutely disposed to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the revolution to undermine American hegemony in the Caribbean Basin.

Before proceeding with the analysis, a word of caution needs to be inserted lest the events to be examined subsequently are taken out of their proper perspective. In studying Soviet policy in the Caribbean Basin, one must always bear in mind that, for the Soviet Union, Latin America is a distant and traditionally inhospitable area of the world. While the Soviet Union is interested in enhancing its position in Latin America, making gains there is not easy, nor is it as intrinsically important to the Soviet Union as, for example, maintaining the hegemonic relationship with Eastern Europe, or retaining the Soviet position in the international communist movement. Nicaragua has never, and Cuba has only rarely, been anything resembling a priority in Soviet foreign policy. Nurturing a relationship with these two new regimes was subordinate to other
concerns, such as Khrushchev's desire in the late 1950's for a settlement of the Berlin issue, or the preoccupation of the Soviet leadership in the early 1980's with Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, succession issues, and the domestic economy. Although the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions each in their turn heightened Soviet interest in the region, it is still of low priority.
CHAPTER III: SOVIET POLICIES

i. Initial Reaction

Despite being caught somewhat unaware by the speed of developments, Moscow naturally paid attention to events in the Western Hemisphere that appeared unfavourable for its primary competitor. Because they saw Batista and Somoza as American agents, the Soviets perceived both the Cuban and the Nicaraguan revolutions as a humiliating defeat for Washington. The first analytical article in Pravda following the Cuban revolution described it as a victory in "the struggle against the oppression of the Yankee imperialists," not against the oppression of a corrupt dictator. It is in the interests of the Soviet leadership to be associated with progressive developments in the Third World to prove that the correlation of forces continues to shift in Soviet favour. Although a decline in American influence in the Third World does not automatically translate into an increase in Soviet influence, to the extent that it alters the relative correlation of forces it benefits the Soviet Union and does open the possibility of future Soviet involvement.

The primary attribute of the Soviet response in both cases, however, was circumspection, bordering on ambivalence. Throughout 1959, there was no mention of Soviet support for Cuba in the Soviet press. There were frequent references to the danger of American intervention in Cuba, and the Guatemalan example was often cited. A recurring theme was the denial of any communist involvement in Cuba; Cuba was portrayed as patriotic and independent. The Soviets did not attempt to
establish strong economic ties with the new government. In April 1959, the Soviet Union arranged to buy 170,000 tons of Cuban sugar, which was less than it had purchased from the Batista regime, and the Soviets offered a lower price than the Americans were paying Cuba for the commodity.34

Due to the Cuban precedent, the Soviet Union responded with greater alacrity to the propaganda opportunities provided by the Nicaraguan Revolution. "Within hours of the Sandinistas' occupation of Nicaragua, General Secretary Brezhnev's message congratulating the Nicaraguan people on their victory was broadcast in the city."35 However, press commentary on the FSLN triumph was less than enthusiastic. Bleak warnings of American military intervention, which had surfaced even before the Sandinista victory, predominated:

The fear that Nicaragua will become a 'second Cuba' or that Somoza's overthrow will cause a chain reaction in such states as Guatemala, Honduras or El Salvador could prompt armed intervention in Nicaragua, if not directly by the United States then by the dictatorial regimes of the afore-mentioned countries with American support.36

From all indications, the political 'hawks' in Washington, especially those who were members of the Somoza lobby on Capitol Hill, also do not intend to reconcile themselves to the Nicaraguan people's victory. Already the 'major press' in the United States is full of calls for action to prevent the new government from following an independent path....37

The above, coupled with emphasis on the economic problems faced by the fledgling government, suggests that the Soviets did not anticipate a long lifespan for the revolution.

The death throes of the dictatorship, accompanied by the destruction of the capital and other cities, the killing of civilians and a ruined economy, have left the people a burdensome legacy.38

Somoza left behind him a country in ruins, plundered and devastated. Almost 80% of Nicaragua's economy is shut
down, the state treasury is empty, the banks are closed, trade is paralyzed, and there are no food reserves.39

Yet, while adding mass unemployment to the litany of Nicaraguan difficulties, the same commentators two days later referred to the May 1977 FSLN program wherein "the final goal set for the struggle was the construction of a socialist society in Nicaragua,"40 thus hinting that the new regime would be watched with anticipation. There was scant press attention to Nicaragua during the remainder of 1979. Soviet emergency donations to the new regime were less than those provided by the American, Mexican, and Venezuelan governments.41 Although three days after the FSLN victory Brezhnev expressed Soviet willingness "to develop multifaceted ties with Nicaragua,"42 as in Cuba these ties were slow in developing. Diplomatic relations were formalized October 18, 1979, at which time the Soviet ambassador proposed several long-term economic agreements, but these were not signed until the following year. In 1980, Moscow's exports to Nicaragua amounted to only $100,000 worth of publications.43

There are several explanations for this guarded reaction to what would appear to be golden opportunities for the Soviet Union. First, the Soviet Union was uncertain of the ideological and foreign policy orientation the new regimes would take. Castro had given no indication that he had any more sympathy for communism than he did for capitalism. As Khrushchev writes in his memoirs: "At the time that Fidel Castro led his revolution to victory and entered Havana with his troops, we had no idea what political course his regime would follow. We knew there were individual Communists participating in the movement which
Castro led, but the Communist party of Cuba had no contact with him. The Soviet Union recognized the new government on January 10, 1959, but Castro did not reciprocate. Although Castro legalized the PSP, no members of the Party were invited to join the government. The new government proclaimed the official revolutionary ideology "humanism," defined as "government by the people, without dictatorship and without oligarchy; liberty with bread and without terror." On January 13, 1959, Castro announced that Cuba "would adopt an equidistance between the United States and the Soviet Union," a position he reaffirmed in April 1959. On March 22, 1959, Castro declared that Cuba would be neutral "in the event of a world war." During his April visit to the United States, Castro publicly condemned communism and, on May 21, accused the Cuban communists of "anti-revolutionary" activities. In 1979, the new Sandinista regime appeared similarly ambivalent to communism. The FSLN spanned a broad section of the political spectrum; even those who advocated socialism were vague about the kind of socialism they would like to see. Until 1981, the pro-Cuban/Soviet commandantes on the National Directorate of the FSLN were outnumbered by moderate, pragmatic leaders who favoured nonalignment, a mixed economy, and political pluralism.

Second, the Soviets wanted to avoid giving justification for American military intervention against a regime that, because of its anti-American origins, could be promising for the Soviets in the future, if as nothing more than an embarrassment to the United States. Despite the official belief in socialist power, a favourable correlation of forces and the implications
thereof for the Third World, the Soviet approach was "characterized by extraordinary prudence marked by fear of U.S. military intervention." The Soviet leadership was cognizant of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and the 1901 Platt Amendment, which gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba to preserve independence and maintain a stable government. American fear of Soviet influence would certainly provide a pretext. The first question of a Soviet reporter to Castro following the revolution was, what guarantee did he have that the United States would not invade Cuba as it had Guatemala?48

As can be seen in the quotations above, the Soviet Union harboured similar concerns about Nicaragua. Ever mindful of the Chilean experience, the Soviets did not want to support a government that was in danger of imminent collapse.

Third, the Soviet Union wanted to avoid unnecessarily antagonizing the United States. Since the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev had been cultivating peaceful coexistence with the Americans. In September 1959, he visited the United States, giving birth to the amicable "Spirit of Camp David." Khrushchev was hoping for a resolution of the Berlin issue in Soviet favour, and correctly assumed that apparent Soviet meddling in an area regarded as an American preserve would jeopardize the meliorative Soviet-American relations that made attainment of this goal seem possible. Although the detente of the 1970s was severely frayed by the time of the Nicaraguan revolution, SALT II had been signed in June 1979 and the Soviets did not want to imperil Senate ratification of the treaty by angling for uncertain gains in a region of low priority. Even
after the invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviets hoped that detente, at least in the form of superpower arms control negotiations and an expansion of East-West trade, would continue. Jonathan Steele notes of the Soviet reaction to Allende's 1970 victory that "[o]veridentification with Chile could [have led] to a falling-out with other Latin American nations and the United States, if the Allende government turned out to be too radical." It is probable that the same thought ran through Politburo minds when considering the Nicaraguan revolution.

A fourth factor affecting the Soviet response was the policy pursued by the United States. The Americans adopted an attitude of "malevolent neutrality" toward Castro's regime. Washington did not immediately consider Castro a communist. An April 1959 Nixon memorandum said that Castro was "either incredibly naive about Communism or under Communist discipline," but Nixon thought that his was a minority view in the administration. Although Cuba was routinely attacked in Congress and the press, and there were demands for a cut in the sugar quota, the Americans were ready to enter into loan negotiations when Castro visited the United States in mid-April 1959. In 1959, over two-thirds of Cuba's trade was with the United States; "its value equaled 39 percent of Cuban GNP, with the United States supplying over 70 percent of Cuba's imports and taking 66 percent of its exports." Similarly, upon the Sandinista victory the Administration quickly switched from a policy of trying to prevent the FSLN from dominating the post-Somoza government to a policy of trying to prevent
radicalization of the revolution, using a mix of economic incentives and threats of American hostility. Dependent on American support for the reconstruction of its war-damaged economy and cognizant of the conditions implicit in American generosity, Nicaragua was careful not to appear too friendly with the Soviet Union. During the first eighteen months of the revolution the United States provided Nicaragua with $117.6 million in soft loans and $20.3 million in transfer payments. The Americans also promoted $189.1 million from the Inter-American Development Bank and $102.7 million from the World Bank. Thus a major stimulus for later Soviet rapport with Cuba and Nicaragua, namely American hostility toward the new regimes, was not present.

Soviet hesitation was also conditioned by the general Soviet non-involvement in Latin America, and the non-expectation of revolution mentioned in Chapter II. Time was needed to adjust perceptions and to develop a response to an unexpected event in a region of low salience. In addition, beginning in late 1979, the Soviet Union was preoccupied with events in Afghanistan, and, starting in the summer of 1980, with the situation in Poland. The Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions were not priorities, but the Soviets watched them with interest. They wanted to wait and see whether or not the revolutions would survive, what course they would take, and what the American reaction would be.

ii. Economic Relations

The first notable economic ties with each of the new
regimes were not established until more the year after the revolution. In Cuba, the occasion was the visit of Soviet deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan to Havana with a Soviet trade fair from February 4 to 13, 1960. The Soviet Union agreed to buy 425,000 tons of sugar in 1960, and 1 million tons per year for the next four years; it also granted a $100 million loan at 2.5 percent interest for the purchase of industrial equipment. On February 12, Khrushchev spoke about Cuba for the first time in public. The first shipment of Soviet oil in exchange for Cuban products arrived in Havana on April 19. On May 8, formal diplomatic relations were established. Soviet-Nicaraguan economic relations got underway with the visit of a large delegation from Managua, including Minister of Defence Humberto Ortega, Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge, Minister of Economic Planning Henry Ruiz, and the Minister of Trade, to Moscow from March 17 to 22, 1980. A series of agreements on trade, technical and economic cooperation, civil aviation, consular ties, and cultural and scientific cooperation were signed.

The shift in Soviet policy toward Cuba was prompted in part by the progressive and unexpected (by the Soviets) radicalization of the revolution beginning in the summer of 1959. Cuba metamorphosed from a democratic, reforming regime into a revolutionary dictatorship. In June, Castro reconciled with the PSP. In July, he replaced moderate president Manuel Urrutia with former PSP member Osvaldo Dorticos. He removed anti-Communist leaders from the National Directorate of the 26th of July Movement, from command positions in the Rebel Army, and
began to replace 26th of July members with communists in leading positions in provincial and town administrations. A new economic policy in September signaled the phasing out of a mixed economy by introducing collectivization of agriculture and state control of industry. At the University Student Federation elections in October and the trade union congress elections in November, Castro personally intervened in favour of "unity" (i.e., pro-PSP) candidates against 26th of July members.

A reorientation in foreign policy was concomitant with the domestic changes. Castro abandoned his "equidistant" stance, became stridently anti-American, and made overtures to the Soviet Union. It was the Cubans, not the Soviets, who initiated the rerouting of Mikoyan's Mexican visit through Havana.

While F. Parkinson attributes Cuba's pro-Sovietism to the influence of Che Guevara and Raul Castro, others suggest that Castro aligned with the PSP and embarked on a socialist path to force the Soviet hand in his favour. Castro's revolution was floundering. Although he enjoyed widespread personal popularity, Castro lacked a clearly defined organizational base. The 26th of July Movement was not a political party. The implementation of the May 17 Agrarian Reform law encountered much opposition. Castro turned to the PSP, one of the best-organized parties in Cuba, to help him consolidate power as his reforms increasingly alienated Cuban vested interests. Across the Gulf of Mexico, American tolerance faded as Castro seized American-owned land without compensation, nationalized some U.S.-owned hotels, and, in mid-June, orchestrated a failed expedition to liberate the Dominican Republic. Accusations of
Cuban communism were fortified when, that same month, a commander of the Rebel Air Force defected to the United States and testified about communist infiltration of the Cuban armed forces. Castro wanted weapons. The Americans had refused Cuba’s June 1959 request for the purchase of $9 million worth of arms, leaving Belgium as the sole supplier. Castro’s unsuccessful Dominican invasion had isolated Cuba from many potential supporters in Latin America. In February 1960, the United States placed an embargo on shipments of arms and munitions of war to Cuba. Castro saw Moscow as a promising source of the financial and military support necessary to counter American actions, and to pursue his revolutionary ambitions throughout the Caribbean. His overtures to the Soviet Union were supplemented by PSP pressures on Moscow to extend assistance to Cuba.

A caveat is in order about the thesis that American policy pushed Castro, and later, the Sandinistas, into Soviet arms. Castro began to court the Communists in 1959 when American policy—despite the provocative anti-American rhetoric emanating from Havana—was still one of forbearance. A public statement by Eisenhower on January 26, 1960 reaffirmed the policy of non-intervention in Cuban domestic affairs. Eisenhower did not authorize the training of Cuban exiles to overthrow Castro until March 17, 1960. During his April 1959 visit to the United States, Castro forbade his financial experts to accept Washington’s invitation to enter into discussions about economic assistance. Similarly, incitement of the Soviet-Nicaraguan
relationship came in no small degree from the Third World partner before American policy became punitive. As late as September 1980, Carter certified to Congress that Nicaragua was not exporting violence to El Salvador and thus was eligible for $75 million in economic assistance.64

While later (post-March 1960, post-January 1981) American punitive actions accelerated the development of ties with the Soviet Union, Nicaragua and Cuba did not turn to the Soviet Union solely because of post-revolution American policy. The history of American intervention in Cuba and Nicaragua and of support for Batista and Somoza made it likely that the revolutionaries would try to distance themselves from the United States. Many Sandinista leaders had spent the 1960s in Cuba and the Soviet Union; they were committed to Marxist-Leninist principles and looked naturally to Moscow for support. Some comandantes went so far as to argue that the United States had not intervened militarily against the revolution in 1979 because of the shift in the correlation of forces in favour of the Soviet Union. In their opinion, the dependent nature of Nicaragua’s economy ruled out independent socialism. There was no choice but to integrate a socialist Nicaragua with the Soviet bloc.65 Even moderate leaders felt that the Soviets could assist with the "ideological and pragmatic imperative to develop and equip a revolutionary armed forces" and the "urge to develop enduring revolutionary institutions and a strong centralized state."66 Castro’s objectives for the Cuban revolution, vague though they were, included overcoming political and economic dependence on the United States. Bearing in mind Guatemala,
Castro believed that, ultimately, the United States had no choice but to oppose his revolution. "...Castro's concern during this early period was based not so much on what the United States had done, as on what he feared it was doing or could do." Castro knew that the dependent Cuban economy could not break with the United States without substantial outside support. He concluded that he had no alternative but to ally with the Soviet Union, whose ideology was not incompatible with his revolutionary objectives. In so doing, Castro hastened the American policy he feared.

That the Soviets were still wary of close relations with Cuba until the beginning of 1960 is indicated by the absence of Soviet press coverage of the radical developments in Cuba. The previously mentioned fear of another Guatemala and reluctance to jeopardize a Berlin settlement remained predominant in the Kremlin. In addition, the Soviets may have worried that stronger ties with Castro would adversely affect Soviet efforts to normalize relations with other Latin American states. Brazilian and Chilean trade delegations were due to arrive in Moscow in late 1959 and early 1960.

Yet Cuba's anti-American stance served Soviet interests. In late 1959, the Soviet press began to refer to the importance of the Cuban revolution for the revolutionary movement in Latin America and for the changing world distribution of power. In February, Mikoyan was favourably impressed by the consolidation and internal popularity of the regime. Once the leadership was confident that the new regime would survive, at least over the short-term, the optimistic world view of Khrushchev began to
shape perceptions. The Soviets began to speculate on the unprecedented opportunities opened by the Cuban experience. Events in Cuba were tailor-made to fit Khrushchev's blithe assumptions about the Third World. Evincing as it did the decline of imperialism in its own backyard, the revolution could be of great political, strategic, and ideological value to the Soviet Union. A pro-Soviet Cuba could serve as testimony to the vitality of the Soviet system and the atrophy of American capitalism. It could enhance Soviet prestige at home and abroad. It could serve as a guide to other revolutionary movements. Soviet aid to Cuba would show that Khrushchev was in a position to help Latin American countries who rebelled against imperialism.

Khrushchev was in particular need of a foreign policy success at this time. He was being criticized both at home and in the international communist movement for pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States with no tangible results. "Open defiance of the United States over Cuba may have gone some distance towards deflecting such criticism and in addition diverted attention away from the increasingly chaotic domestic economic situation."70

The state of Soviet-American relations no longer precluded a Soviet-Cuban rapprochement. The May 1960 U-2 incident and subsequent cancellation of the Paris summit meeting meant that Khrushchev no longer anticipated a rapid resolution of the Berlin issue. The Soviet Union had little to lose in other areas by openly supporting the Cuban revolution. Khrushchev may have thought he could bring pressure to bear on the United
States for a Berlin settlement by cultivating relations with Cuba.

The ideological challenge of China provided an incentive for the development of Soviet-Cuban relations. The festering Sino-Soviet dispute seeped into the open in April 1960 when the Chinese published their first systematic critique of Soviet foreign policy. China was accusing the Soviet Union of being soft on imperialism. Soviet aid to Cuba would vindicate Soviet policy by demonstrating that peaceful coexistence did not entail a betrayal of the revolutionary imperative of Marxism-Leninism. Direct competition with China for Cuban allegiance accelerated the development of Soviet-Cuban ties. Castro's rural-based guerrilla revolution had more in common with Mao's strategy than Lenin's, and Cuba and China each evinced interest in the other. At the end of April 1960, Mao for the first time offered Chinese support to the Cuban revolution and an inspector-general of the Cuban Rebel Army visited Peking. In July, the Cubans signed a commercial, technical, and cultural agreement with the Chinese, and openly supported some of the Chinese views in the Sino-Soviet conflict. In September, Cuban-Chinese diplomatic relations were established. Guevara spent October and November of 1960 in the Soviet Union, pleading in vain for further support. After he emerged from China, however, with a communique of November 30 stating that the Chinese would buy one million tons of Cuban sugar in 1961 and would grant 60 million dollars assistance to Cuba, the Soviets on December 19 agreed to purchase 2.7 million tons of sugar the following year.71

Soviet economic ties with both Cuba and Nicaragua
multiplied as the new regimes were denied access to American markets and funds. In April 1960, American oil companies refused to refine Soviet oil in Cuba. Moscow began to send refined oil, thus enabling Castro to expropriate the Texaco refinery on June 29 and the Shell and Standard Oil refineries two days later. After the United States responded by suspending its Cuban sugar quota on July 6, the Soviet Union offered to purchase the 700,000 remaining tons. On October 19, 1960 the United States imposed a trade embargo on Cuba. From less than $100 million in 1960, the total volume of Soviet-Cuban trade grew to $550 million in 1961 and $750 million in 1962. The Soviet-Nicaraguan economic agreement of March 1980 was signed after an American aid package to Nicaragua was much smaller than requested and carried with it strict conditions. Soviet aid to Nicaragua increased in 1982, the year the contras were introduced, following an amplification of hostile American actions the previous year. The United States halted economic aid to Nicaragua on January 22, 1981 and the following month "delayed" a $9.6 million wheat sale to the country. Beginning in November 1981, the United States voted against all loans to Nicaragua in the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. In 1979, Nicaragua received $179 million from these institutions; by 1983 the total had dropped to $30 million. Soviet support rose from $110 million in credits and aid in 1980-81 to approximately $150 million in 1982. According to Soviet Trade Ministry figures, trade between the two jumped from a value of 10.4 million rubles in 1981 to 42.5 million rubles in 1982, with the great majority of the increase due to increased
Soviet exports.76

However, Soviet economic relations with Nicaragua did not develop as rapidly or to the same extent as they did with Cuba. There were indications at the March 1980 rendezvous in Moscow that Nicaragua was of more than passing concern to the Soviets. The Soviet side was led by Politburo member Kirilenko and the head of the International Department of the Central Committee (which oversees relations with the Third World), B. Ponomarev. An agreement on cooperation in planning was concluded, which opened the possibility of closer economic relations than are normal with a non-communist country. In addition, talks were conducted between the FSLN and the CPSU as well as through government channels, even though the FSLN was not officially a party. A party-to-party agreement of the type generally reserved for "states of socialist orientation" was signed between the CPSU and FSLN, suggesting Soviet expectations that the latter would become a vanguard party. However, after these early intimations of interest, Nicaragua appeared to lapse back into obscurity. At the Twenty-Sixth CPSU Congress in February 1981, Central Committee spokesman Leonid Zamyatin had "tangible difficulty" in remembering whether Nicaraguans spoke Spanish or Portuguese.77 Brezhnev made no mention of Nicaragua in the section on "The development of relations with the liberated countries," in his report to the Congress.78 At the Congress, Brezhnev met with the leaders of Ethiopia and Angola, but denied an audience to Carlos Nunez Tellez, president of the governing council of Nicaragua.79 Eighty percent of all aid to Nicaragua in 1981 came from Western sources.80 Despite the
above-mentioned increase in Soviet-Nicaraguan trade in 1982, total East bloc trade accounted for only 6.2 percent of Nicaraguan exports and 11.5 percent of Nicaraguan imports during that year. In 1983, Soviet trade rose only slightly to a total turnover of 51.9 million rubles. According to Pravda, only twelve percent of Nicaragua's 1983 imports came from socialist countries.

The Soviet leaders have established cordial personal relations with the Sandinista leaders and are strong on symbolic gestures of support for Nicaragua. Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov welcomed Ortega at the airport on his May 1982 visit; Brezhnev gave a banquet in his honour and promised to visit Managua soon. "Some of the Front leaders insisted that the more significant fact was that Comandante Ortega stayed overnight in the Kremlin itself, while Nixon...in 1972, had slept only in the outskirts of Moscow." The Soviets appear willing to assist with long-term development projects. In September 1981, a fisheries agreement was signed, and over the next two years a number of agreements concerning water power resources, mining and geological surveys, communications and scientific and cultural cooperation were completed. In May 1982, Nicaragua became affiliated with Intersputnik, the Soviet-sponsored telecommunications organization, and the Soviets assisted in building a ground station as part of the system. As in Cuba, Nicaraguan students were sent to the USSR for technical training. In 1982, an estimated 700 Nicaraguan students and 15 teachers were in the Soviet Union.

However, the Soviet Union has not been as forthcoming as
the Sandinistas desire in other areas. On his May 1982 visit to Moscow for the conclusion of a series of economic agreements, junta coordinator Daniel Ortega obtained a promise of $166.8 million in ruble credits for farm machinery and other technical aid from the Soviet Union to be distributed over a five-year period, but no help for Nicaragua's desperate short-term foreign exchange needs. Given that by mid-1982 Nicaragua was facing drastic reductions in Western economic assistance, constriction of its traditional American market, hostile rhetoric from Washington, increasing border tensions with Honduras, and counterrevolutionary attacks, this assistance does not look spectacular.

Unlike its earlier policy toward Cuba, the Soviet Union did not pick up the American sugar quota after it was reduced in May 1983. Where the Soviets have made tangible contributions, it has been, as one observer noted, when "propaganda dividends were conspicuous." This was the case with a shipment of 20,000 tons of wheat worth approximately $4 million in the spring of 1981, after the Americans ended government financing of wheat sales to Nicaragua, and with the Soviet oil deliveries of January 1984 to offset an anticipated shortfall. On September 16, 1983, Nicaragua became an observer in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), but Nicaraguan requests for full membership were reportedly denied. Tass excluded Nicaragua from a list of "developing states of socialist orientation" with whom cooperation through CMEA "is most intensively developing." By the fall of 1983, the Soviets claimed to have put a hold on concessionary trade credits to Nicaragua, the
major means of financing Soviet imports, despite Nicaraguan requests for more.89

The picture continues to be mixed. On the one hand, there are signs that Nicaragua's status has been upgraded. Soviet-Nicaraguan trade, excluding military aid, rose from $60 million in 1983 to $165 million in 1984.90 This means that Nicaragua has surpassed Brazil as the second most important recipient of Soviet goods in Latin America, following Cuba. The Soviet Union has replaced the United States as the primary supplier of chemical fertilizer, machinery, motor vehicles, and other capital goods to Nicaragua. In February 1984, Konstantin Chernenko met privately with Daniel Ortega following Yuri Andropov's funeral; Andropov had denied a similar audience following Brezhnev's death.91 On the other hand, Ortega returned empty-handed from his June 1984 pilgrimage to Moscow where he sought massive Soviet assistance. "The absence of the customary communique (a sharp departure from Soviet protocol) suggested sharp differences between Ortega and Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko."92 The Soviets sent only a lower level delegation (headed by a deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) to Managua for the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution in July 1984.93 Soviet shipments to Nicaragua in 1984 were still little more than one-thirtieth the level of exports to Cuba.94

In general, the Soviets appear less than enthusiastic about getting involved in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union will provide limited economic assistance for specific projects, but is not interested in underwriting the Nicaraguan economy. This
restraint is in keeping with general Soviet aid policy in the Third World. Since the mid-1970s, the Soviets have asserted that, under new international conditions, "material aid on the part of the socialist states has ceased to be a factor directly promoting the transition to a non-capitalist path." Instead, the main factor was "the political, military-strategic, and moral influence of the states of the socialist community." No doubt this stems from the fact that the rate of Soviet economic growth has been declining since the mid-1970s while the war production and military strength of the Soviet Union has increased, making the Soviets relatively stronger militarily and weaker economically than during the early 1960s. The disappointing results of Khrushchev's efforts to woo the Third World with economic assistance have also convinced his successors to place greater reliance on military means as a channel of political influence. Soviet military assistance to developing countries during the Khrushchev period (1955-64), at an average of $375 million per year, was surpassed by the approximately $425 million per year given in economic assistance. Since 1972, an average of $3,553 million in Soviet military equipment and supplies has been delivered to the developing world each year, almost sevenfold the average $515 million in economic assistance. Moscow has cautioned countries such as Nicaragua not to place excessive hopes on economic support from the Soviet Union, and has encouraged the Sandinistas to diversify their trading partners and aid donors. In a June 15, 1983 address to the Central Committee plenum, Andropov said:
It is one thing to proclaim socialism as one's goal and another thing to build it. A certain level of productive forces, culture and social consciousness are needed for that. Socialist countries express solidarity with these progressive countries, render assistance to them in the sphere of politics and culture, and promote the strengthening of their defense. We contribute, to the extent of our ability, to their economic development as well. But, on the whole, their economic development just as the entire social progress of these countries, can be, of course, only the result of the work of their peoples and of a correct policy of their leadership.97

However, one should not draw conclusions about Soviet willingness to provide aid to Third World countries, or lack thereof, simply from the state of the Soviet economy.

Predictions of constraints on Soviet ability and readiness to furnish large-scale aid to Third World countries have in many instances proved wrong in the past. While there are clearly limits on Soviet economic capabilities to aid other countries, it is also evident that political considerations have guided Soviet policy in this sphere and that Moscow is capable of assuming significant economic burdens where these appear justified by prospects of significant political gains.98

Even in Cuba there were indications of Soviet reservations about assuming the economic burden of the revolution. As mentioned above, the Soviets did not bother to increase their Cuban sugar quota until prodded by the Chinese purchase, even though the one million tons the Soviet Union had agreed to purchase up to that point far from compensated for the five and one half million tons Cuba had produced for the now lost American market. The December 1960 communiqué signed by Guevara and Mikoyan indicated that, "If the United States buys a certain quantity of Cuban sugar, the Soviet Union will cut its sugar purchases by a corresponding amount," and that the Soviet Union would supply Cuba with "vital and essential products" only "when they cannot be purchased from other countries."99 The Soviets
viewed with concern Castro's nationalization of the Cuban private sector and expropriation of Cuban-owned land in the autumn of 1960. They feared that too rapid economic change would threaten Cuba's internal stability and increase the Soviet costs of supporting the revolution. On the basis of experience with other socialist countries, the Soviet Union "considered it indispensable for a private sector to be preserved for an indeterminate period of time while the state sector and planning system were being established and organized, in order to facilitate transition and limit economic imbalance." Given that in 1960 the Soviets held the same concern about the burden on the Soviet economy entailed in greater support of the revolution and the additional concern about unwise Cuban economic policies, why did they underwrite the Cuban revolution but not the Nicaraguan?

One must look first to differences in the circumstances and personality of the Soviet leadership. Khrushchev was personally committed to the Soviet Union's Third World policy. He eagerly anticipated a socialist victory, and needed one to justify his optimistic interpretation of the correlation of forces and his Third World strategy to his colleagues. In terms of the international communist movement (as opposed to Soviet domestic fortunes), the 1950s had been bleak with the strengthening of Yugoslav independence, the development of the Sino-Soviet split, Albania's alignment with China, and unrest in East Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Suddenly an anti-American leader on the threshold of the United States was allying with the local Communists, implementing socialist reforms, and asking for
Moscow's support. Khrushchev could not pass up the opportunity. The Brezhnev Politburo was inherently more cautious and its reputation was not tied to immediate success in the Third World. By 1980, the Soviet Union had had a number of experiences with Third World clients, not all of them pleasant. Khrushchev was more willing than Brezhnev to stake Soviet prestige on the fledgling regime. The Chinese challenge, which hastened Soviet involvement in Cuba is not present in Nicaragua. The FSLN retained relations with Taiwan until late 1985. In addition, the Soviets in the early 1980s were preoccupied with events in Afghanistan and Poland. The Brezhnev Politburo could afford to relegate the Nicaraguan revolution to low priority status.

A second factor explaining the variation in pace and extent of Soviet involvement with the new regimes is the different policies pursued by the Cuban and Nicaraguan governments. The Nicaraguan revolution did not radicalize to the same degree as the Cuban. The Sandinistas still tolerate some private enterprise, some private agriculture, and a limited political pluralism. Castro lost his American markets within two years of the revolution and faced the Soviet Union with almost all of Cuba's produce needing a buyer. Nicaragua has not cut all ties with the West, and the American withdrawal of access to markets has been much more gradual. By the time the Americans imposed a complete trade embargo in May 1985, Nicaragua had already shifted eighty percent of its trade to other markets. The Sandinistas presumably realize that at least lip service must be paid to liberal democracy and non-alignment if they want Western aid to continue. Moreover, Nicaragua probably does not want to
become "another Cuba," with a troublesome economy and depressed standard of living, highly dependent on a single crop (sugar) and a single trading partner (the Soviet Union). Castro has counselled the Sandinistas against revolutionizing society too rapidly and against cutting ties with Western economies.

The presence of Cuba in the region lessens the need for a larger Soviet role in Nicaragua. The Cubans have been the most active foreign supporters of the FSLN government, assisting particularly in the fields of education and health care. By the end of 1979, there were an estimated 3000 Cuban teachers and medical personnel in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union and Cuba share an interest in encroaching on the American sphere in Central America. Cuban aid to the Sandinistas promotes Soviet objectives in the area, and it is much easier for Cuba, with its shared language, culture, and geography, to find a sympathetic hearing in Managua. Cuban credits and aid to Nicaragua totalled approximately $150 million between 1980 and 1982.

The existence of Castro's Cuba militates against extensive Soviet financial support for Nicaragua in yet another way. While Cuba has provided many political benefits to the Soviet Union, it has been an economic liability. The Soviet Union's subsidy (direct and indirect) to Cuba is approximately $8 million per day or $3 billion per year, which is roughly five times the total American aid to Latin America. Given the present problems with the Soviet economy, the Soviet Union is not anxious to replicate this burden. Viktor Volsky, Director of the USSR's Institute for Latin America, noted in a 1984 interview in London that the Soviet Union had spent a great deal
"to send oil to Cuba--two tankers a day for twenty years" and that "we would not like to have to repeat that on a larger scale." With existing obligations in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, and Cuba, among others, the Soviet Union wants to avoid costly new client states.

Goure and Rothenberg argue that the "lessons" of Cuba are not clear.

The actual cost to the Soviet Union (of Soviet aid to Cuba) may be considerably smaller if account is taken of the quality and priority of goods delivered to Cuba, the prices charged for them by Moscow, and some of the returns from the importation of Cuban produce. If support of Cuba has proved to be expensive for the Soviet Union, it has also demonstrated a Soviet ability to provide aid to a distant country on a large scale, and beyond that its willingness to increase this aid from year to year despite Cuba's growing trade deficit.

Nicaragua, with its population of just under 3 million, would not be as great a burden as the 10 million inhabitants of Cuba.

Although Moscow is clearly capable of making substantial economic commitments where it feels the political benefits are worthwhile, it is apparent that, thus far, the Soviets do not feel that Nicaragua merits the investment. As shall become even clearer in the next section, the Soviet Union judges the benefits of greater support of Nicaragua not worth the probable costs.
iii. Political and Military Support

In the Cuban case, the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations was followed by expressions of Soviet political and military support. On July 9, 1960 in an address to the all-Russian Teachers' Congress in Moscow, Khrushchev announced:

It is clear to everyone that the economic blockade of the American monopolies may prove to be the beginning of preparations for intervention against Cuba. We must therefore raise our voice in Cuba's defense and give notice that these are no longer the times when the imperialists plundered and carved up the world as they wished.... It should not be forgotten that the United States is not so inaccessibly distant from the Soviet Union as it used to be. Figuratively speaking, in case of need Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire if the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to launch an intervention against Cuba.107

Far from being a cautious move, this was an open challenge to the United States. The Soviet leadership was no less aware of Cuba's vulnerability than previously. Since the February trade agreements, Soviet-Cuban economic ties had grown in tandem with the deterioration of Cuban-American relations. In addition, no later than June 1960 Castro made arrangements for large arms deliveries from the East bloc, and the first shipment (from Czechoslovakia) arrived shortly after Khrushchev's statement.

The greater the Soviet involvement in Cuba, the more prestige would be lost if the Americans chose to crush Castro. Now that the Soviet Union could no longer claim non-involvement in Cuba, it was in need of a fresh tactic for deterring the authentic danger of American intervention against that country. Khrushchev's speech can be viewed as an example of the new tactic: threaten direct Soviet response to American military
action against Cuba. The American decisions to arm a Cuban counterrevolutionary force and to cut the sugar quota enabled Castro to persuade the Soviet Union to support him. Prior to these sanctions the Soviet Union was hesitant to underwrite the revolution or to assume strategic risks on its behalf. Cuba could not long survive without an alternative market for its main export, and Castro was powerless in the face of American military might. If the Soviet Union wanted the Cuban revolution to survive, it had to step in. American sanctions made the Soviet Union ready to give Castro the support he sought. They drove the Soviet Union into Castro's arms rather than vice versa. The Soviet Union was not a reluctant partner: "the Soviet attitude toward Cuba was dominated by enthusiasm and active support, at least until the latter half of 1961." But American sanctions forced the Soviet Union to take a stand on Cuba earlier than it would have preferred.

It was unclear how far the Soviet Union would actually go to defend Cuba. The Soviet Union lagged drastically in the strategic balance and was completely eclipsed in conventional capabilities in the Caribbean. Soviet inaction during the Bay of Pigs adventure and its behaviour during the Cuban Missile Crisis suggest that the rocket threat was a bluff; certainly the Americans thought so. The prime purpose of the statement may have been to reassure Castro of Soviet support. This speech, and other statements to the same effect, were vague enough to leave the Soviet Union with room for flexibility should the tactic fail. Khrushchev indicated the possibility, but not the certainty, of response. Apparent boldness disguised genuine
fears. The speech had much to do with Khrushchev's penchant for the grand, dramatic gesture (witness his Berlin ultimatums), his missile deception strategy, and the fact that he had staked his personal reputation on Soviet success in the Third World. He may have overstepped his authority. Later Soviet statements in support of Cuba were much more general, with no specific reference to rockets. For example: "The Soviet people will not stand aside if military intervention is undertaken against Cuba.... The Soviet Union, relying on its own might, will give the necessary aid to Cuba."111

The primary goal in Soviet policy toward Cuba through the remainder of 1960 and into 1961 was to prevent a reversal of the revolution. The Soviet Union was not confident that Khrushchev's "rocket rattling" alone could guarantee the survival of the Castro regime. The Soviet press continued to point to American pressure on Cuba and to stress the possibility of American intervention, hoping to focus international attention on the peril.112 Although the Soviets frequently proclaimed Soviet readiness to come to Cuba's aid, they emphasized the importance of other factors in the defense of Cuba. The November 1960 issue of World Marxist Review credited Cuban firmness and unity and Latin American solidarity ahead of Soviet bloc support as reasons why Cuba had not yet been invaded.113 Beginning in the summer of 1960, the Soviet Union instructed all Latin American communist parties to make the defence of the Cuban revolution their first priority, even if it meant cooperating with bourgeois governments that supported Cuba.114
Because of the perceived Cuban vulnerability, the Soviet Union viewed with misgiving certain Cuban developments. Castro was calling for anti-imperialist revolution and armed struggle throughout Latin America. Although events in Cuba had led to a reassessment of the revolutionary potential in the Western Hemisphere, the Soviet Union continued to believe that broad communist-national bourgeois fronts working for peaceful change would be more effective than guerrilla activity on the road to socialism. Castro's actions were in opposition to the Soviet-proposed model for Latin America, which suggested a long period of transition to socialism; Moscow felt it was prudent to consolidate the revolution in Cuba first. Castro was taking unnecessary risks and alienating potentially sympathetic Latin American governments.

Moscow perceived the severance of Cuban-American diplomatic relations at the beginning of 1961 as another step toward possible American invasion of Cuba. Soviet fears regarding Cuba's security proved to be justified when, on April 17, 1961, a group of CIA-trained Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs in an attempt to topple Castro. Needless to say, the Soviets did not fire rockets in support of Cuba. They did not react until the day after the invasion, at which time Khrushchev sent a message to President Kennedy noting that "military technology and the world political situation are such today that any so-called 'little war' can give rise to a chain reaction in all parts of the globe. As for the Soviet Union...we will give the Cuban people and their government every assistance necessary to repulse the armed attack on Cuba." The Soviet response
appears even more delayed given that on April 15 American planes disguised as Cuban aircraft and piloted by exiles had bombed Cuba, causing Castro to anticipate imminent invasion.\textsuperscript{117} The invasion was crushed in three days. Although Castro in a speech on April 23 credited the victory to the heroism of the Cubans and the stupidity of the United States, in the Soviet view, the fact that the United States did not directly intervene to save the attempt exemplified the shift in power in favour of the socialist camp. Khrushchev’s message—which Castro did not even mention in his speech—was said to have deterred the United States. B. N. Ponomarev wrote: "The world socialist system is a reliable shield for the independence of the liberated nations."\textsuperscript{118} According to James Reston, as a result of the Bay of Pigs, "Khrushchev decided he was dealing with an inexperienced young leader who could be intimidated and blackmailed,"\textsuperscript{119} leading to an even greater Soviet involvement in Cuba.

There has been no similar Soviet commitment to the defence of the Nicaraguan Revolution. The nearest approximations have been a December 7, 1981 statement by the Soviet Ambassador to Nicaragua that "the Soviet people have supported Nicaragua since the war against Somoza’s dictatorship, will support it in its fight for peace, the defence of its country, and the reconstruction of the nation,"\textsuperscript{120} and the avowal of Yuri Fokin, general secretary of the Soviet foreign ministry, on August 3, 1983, that the Soviets "will support Nicaragua politically in every way" in the event of a direct aggression against Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{121} The bold Khrushchevian strategy of threatening a
direct Soviet response to an American attack on the new regime does not appeal to the more cautious current Kremlin inhabitants, even though they are in a much better position to carry out such a threat. Whereas Khrushchev perceived Kennedy to be a weak leader easily dissuaded by such a bluff, the Soviet leadership sees Reagan as bellicose and unpredictable.

The Soviet strategy in Nicaragua is akin to that practiced in Cuba before and after Khrushchev's rocket threat: to deter American intervention through a propaganda campaign detailing American pressures on the new regime and the danger of American military action in Central America. The October 29, 1981 issue of Pravda referred to "Operation Orion," a supposed American plot "designed to destabilize the situation in Nicaragua and to put a stop to the revolutionary process in that country at all costs, including direct military intervention." Just as Guatemala was cited as the precedent for United States' plans vis-à-vis Cuba, American action toward Nicaragua was compared with that preceding "the fascist coup in Chile," and incursions of American-funded counterrevolutionaries (contras) from Honduras were considered reminiscent of the Bay of Pigs. The Soviet Union hopes to generate international opposition to American pressure on Nicaragua and to play on fears in Europe and Latin America about the American use of force. This is to counter an American political offensive aimed at isolating Nicaragua from Latin America and Western Europe.

The Soviets have also focused on the virtues of a political settlement to regional conflict. They publicly support Mexican and Contadora efforts to show that they support peace and to put
pressure on the United States not to use military intervention. However, the Soviets emphasize Cuban and Nicaraguan peace proposals as well, to indicate that they will not "sell out" the Nicaraguans, and they "carefully avoided endorsing [Mexican President Portillo’s] call for steps to allay the apprehensions of neighboring countries about Nicaragua’s military buildup." Moscow probably welcomes peace talks insofar as they deter the United States from taking military action and complicate United States-Latin American relations, but is apprehensive about how far Managua will go. The Soviets do not want the Sandinistas to jeopardize their monopoly of power. "A 1983 Soviet article argued against demands that Nicaragua hold Western-style elections." 

Moscow’s public position is that the Sandinistas are handling the contra situation successfully on their own. In a March 25, 1983 meeting between Andropov and Nicaraguan junta coordinator, Daniel Ortega, the latter "stressed that Nicaragua’s revolutionary government possesses the necessary capabilities to defend the homeland and crush the interventionists," and the former "expressed confidence that Nicaragua would succeed in defending its freedom and independence." In their July 19, 1983 anniversary greetings to Nicaragua, the Soviets noted that the Nicaraguans are "courageously defending their revolutionary gains" against "U.S. threats and crude pressure," but did not express support for that effort. They added that "the Soviet people are satisfied" with their relationship with Nicaragua. When Nicaragua’s waters were mined by the CIA in the spring of 1984, Pravda said
only that "the Soviet people are on Nicaragua's side."130

If Cuba has not yet been able to get a treaty commitment from the Soviet Union for its defence, it is highly unlikely that Nicaragua will be able to do so. Viktor Volsky, Director of the USSR's Institute of Latin America, indicated the limits of Soviet support for Nicaragua. "Volsky carefully contrasted the USSR's 'feeling of solidarity' for Nicaragua with the 'principles of internationalism' that applied to Soviet relations with 'the countries of the world socialist system, which of course includes Cuba.' In response to a question about 'what happens' when 'solidarity' is not enough, Volsky replied: 'Well, the struggle is a long one. There have been defeats before. Sandino himself was defeated.'"131

The greatest reason for lack of Soviet committal is realism about the relative military-strategic position of the superpowers in the Caribbean, coupled with recognition of Washington's perception that the Sandinistas pose a threat to America's vital interests that must be removed. As one Soviet official told visiting journalists in March 1981, "If the Americans invaded Nicaragua, what would we do? What could we do? Nothing?"132

In the Third World, the Soviet Union tends to moderate its behaviour in response to its evaluation of inherent risk. Although the United States responded with as much hostility to Cuba as to Nicaragua,133 Khrushchev was optimistic about the correlation of forces and the possibility of peaceful coexistence. Kennedy's inaction over the Bay of Pigs, his lackluster performance at the Vienna summit in June 1961, and
American acceptance of the construction of the Berlin Wall the following August led Khrushchev to think that the United States was unwilling to use force to defend its interests. The actions of the Reagan Administration have given Brezhnev and his successors a very different perception. The Soviet Union does not want to make a military commitment it might have to follow through on. Nicaragua is not worth a Soviet-American war, and abandoning a commitment to Nicaragua's defence in the event of an American invasion would lead to a loss of Soviet prestige.

The Reagan Administration views Central America as the latest front in the global East-West struggle. In this interpretation, the Sandinistas are not noble patriots concerned with rebuilding a country devastated by years of dictatorship, economic exploitation, and civil war, but "carriers of a revolutionary virus that came from the Soviet Union by way of Cuba, and with which they will surely attempt to infest the rest of Central America." The "domino theory" has been resurrected and transported across the Pacific to Central America. Having taken the situation in Central America as a test of American resolve to oppose Communist expansionism in the Third World, the Administration in 1982 began providing arms, money, and training to Nicaraguan exiles (contras) based in Honduras. Originally presented as an attempt to halt the flow of Soviet and Cuban arms through Nicaragua to Salvadoran insurgents, by 1985 this covert war was openly admitted to have as its objective the overthrow of the Sandinista regime as presently constituted. The United States also contributed to a massive military buildup in Honduras and engaged in war
games in Honduras and military manoeuvres off the Nicaraguan coast of unprecedented scale and duration.\textsuperscript{138} Exercises during the summer of 1984 bore the title Grenadero I in more than a coincidental resemblance to the name of the island invaded by United States marines in October 1983.

American failure at the Bay of Pigs emboldened Khrushchev; he did not expect that greater Soviet involvement in Cuba would lead to a military confrontation, as is indicated by the emplacement of missiles in Cuba in the fall of 1962. The October 1983 American invasion of Grenada had the antipodal effect on the Soviet leadership. Grenada was a setback for Soviet policy in the Caribbean; it showed the limits of Cuban and Soviet power in the region and "revealed the unwillingness of Cuba and especially the USSR to risk a direct military confrontation with the United States in order to save a client regime in the Basin."\textsuperscript{139} Soviet press commentary warned that the Grenadan invasion was simply a prelude for similar American action against Nicaragua. "The cowboy assault on tiny Grenada...has called to mind the CIA's criminal, undeclared war against Nicaragua...."\textsuperscript{140} \textit{International Affairs} referred to Western observers who "surmise that the operation Grenada could be a dress rehearsal of a direct American aggression against Nicaragua."\textsuperscript{141}

Moscow is also concerned about a perceived American threat to Cuba arising out of events in Central America.\textsuperscript{142} Early in 1980 candidate Reagan suggested a naval blockade of Cuba as a response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{143} In February 1981, Secretary of State Alexander Haig implied that the United
States was contemplating military options against Cuba when he warned that the United States would "go to the source" of the aggression in El Salvador. The State Department published a series of reports with such titles as "Cuba's Renewed Support for Violence in Latin America" (December 14, 1981) and "Cuban and Nicaraguan Support for the Salvadoran Insurgency" (March 20, 1982). Although Cuba is a costly dependent, it is an important adjunct of Soviet political, military, propaganda, and intelligence activities. Moscow has an enormous stake in the perpetuation and success of Castro's regime; it is not willing to risk Cuba for the survival of the Nicaraguan revolution. Since the Reagan administration came to power, the Soviet Union has stepped up its military aid and reaffirmed its security commitments to Cuba. In a February 1981 speech, Brezhnev elevated Cuba to membership in the "socialist community," an honour previously limited to Eastern Europe and occasionally Mongolia. In November 1981, Moscow warned the United States about the "serious consequences" of punitive action against Cuba.

The fact that the Soviets want to avoid a military confrontation with the United States does not mean that they have shied away from a military relationship with Nicaragua. Since 1981, the Soviets have made cautious arms transfers to the Nicaraguans. "Soviet postmortems on Chile emphasize that ... revolutions must be able to defend themselves, both by seizing control of a country's armed forces and by obtaining all the military aid they can." Beginning in the fall of 1979, the Soviet Union sent boots, packs and rifles to the Nicaraguan
The first heavy Soviet bloc weaponry arrived in the spring of 1981, and deliveries over the next two years included smaller transport planes, helicopters, and trainers. In 1982-83 the Soviets sent tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, and aircraft. In late 1984, Soviet ships delivered helicopter gunships, capable of defensive, but not offensive action. As in Cuba, Soviet military aid to Nicaragua grew as Managua was denied Western military assistance.

As with economic aid, military aid has increased, but has not reached excessive levels. The volume of deliveries of Soviet bloc military equipment totalled 10,000 metric tons in each of 1981 and 1982. This doubled to 20,000 in 1983 with the increase in contra activity, but fell back to 18,000 tons in 1984.147 This is low in comparison with the 250,000 metric tons of Soviet weapons sent to Cuba in 1962, 40,000 in 1963, and 20,000 in 1964.148 The total appears even more frugal in light of the civil war in Nicaragua and the increase since the 1960s in the Soviet ability to provide its clients with military aid. Similarly, the Soviet military presence in Cuba, which began in the summer of 1962, has not been duplicated in Nicaragua. By the end of 1982, there were only 98 Soviet security and military advisors in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union appears to be relying on Cuba to take up the slack; there were 3,000 Cuban advisors at the same time.149 "Moscow provides only enough military aid to make United States military intervention costly and save the Soviet 'revolutionary' reputation, not enough to guarantee survival or risk confrontation."150 This aid does not come cheap; payment is sometimes made in hard currency.
The increase in military aid to Nicaragua also corresponded to a decline in detente. By 1982, the Soviet Union had concluded that detente with the United States was impossible. This was due to such measures as the tightening of American sanctions on the Soviet Union as a result of the imposition of martial law in Poland, the American attempt to convince Western European companies not to build a Soviet natural gas pipeline, the lack of progress in arms control talks, an increased American defence budget, and continually strident American rhetoric. In September 1982, Leonid Zamyatin, the Kremlin’s chief spokesman, called the Reagan administration "the most militaristic and reactionary" American government since World War Two. There was little incentive for restraint in Nicaragua.

The Soviet Union has taken pains to reduce the risks of incurring American retaliation as a result of its Nicaraguan involvement. The Soviet Union has never publicly acknowledged military aid to Nicaragua and usually relies on Cuba to transfer the arms to Nicaragua. The Soviet Union has accelerated arms shipments to Cuba, presumably to help cover this, as well as to raise the island’s self-defense potential and as reimbursement for Cuba’s African adventures. Soviet arms deliveries to Cuba during the 1970s were approximately 15,000 tons per year; at 63,000 tons, the deliveries to Cuba in 1981 were the largest since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Not only Soviet allies such as Bulgaria, East Germany and Cuba have delivered arms to Nicaragua, but seemingly more neutral shippers, like Algeria, have been pressed into service. By relying on third parties to deliver weapons, the Soviets are able to disclaim direct
military involvement in Nicaragua, giving their calls for Central American peace more credibility in international eyes and lessening the necessity of supporting Nicaragua should the United States decide to intervene.

Also in deference to America's regional military might and Reagan's apparent inclination to utilize it, Moscow seems to be observing tacit limits on its military aid to Nicaragua. The weapons delivered thus far are more suitable for combatting insurgents than for launching attacks against professional troops. Although with East bloc aid, the Sandinistas have transformed the Nicaraguan army into the largest in the region, the combined forces of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala are twice as large as Nicaragua's and possess superior fire power. The Soviets have not yet granted Managua's persistent requests for the modern jet bombers and fighters that would permit the Sandinistas to contest Honduran air supremacy. The Bulgarians have trained Nicaraguan pilots on Soviet MiG-21 fighter aircraft, Nicaraguan airfields have been expanded to accommodate the planes, and MiGs have been delivered to Cuba, but they have not been deployed in Nicaragua, presumably because the Soviets conclude that this would invite retaliation from Washington, which has warned that any offensive weapons in Nicaragua would be "unacceptable." The Soviet leadership also muted its reaction to Reagan's July 1983 statement that Soviet military aid to Nicaragua "cannot be allowed to continue," and protested quietly when American warships halted Nicaragua-bound Soviet freighters to question them about their cargo.
To summarize, following the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations, the Soviet Union provided the new Cuban and Nicaraguan governments with military assistance, both as a means of increasing Soviet influence with the regime and as a means of augmenting the revolution's potential to defend itself. As is the case in the economic sphere, the Soviets have not given Nicaragua as much military and political support as they did Cuba. The declaration that the Soviet Union would come to the defence of Cuba if necessary has not been repeated for Nicaragua because, given that the Reagan administration has signaled its resolve to overthrow the Sandinistas, such a move would draw the Soviet Union into unmanageable risks. The Soviet Union nonetheless continues to provide Nicaragua with military aid sufficient to continue the contra battle. The danger of Soviet-American crisis is minimized by keeping involvement indirect and by avoiding measures deemed unacceptable to the United States.

iv. Ideology

On April 16, 1961, Fidel Castro publicly proclaimed the socialist character of the Cuban revolution. The Soviet leadership did not officially acknowledge Cuban socialism until it received passing mention in a joint communique of September 21, 1961, probably at Cuban insistence. There was a similar delay between Castro's December 1, 1961 self-proclamation as a Marxist-Leninist and the Soviet recognition of the fact in mid-April 1962. It was not until 1963 that Cuba was clearly recognized as a member of the socialist camp and Soviet writings celebrated the new socialist state, in some instances with
unrestrained hyperbole:

Four and a half years ago a second Columbus discovered America--Fidel Castro who discovered Socialist America to the joy of its working people. The compass of Marxism-Leninism had guided him through the fierce storm of battle, the death-bearing hail of imperialist provocations and the hurricane of economic difficulties caused by the United States. Fidel Castro rallied millions of Cubans around the flag of the Socialist revolution--and each of them became the first discoverer of his transformed native land. One may boldly say that today seven million Cubans are seven million Columbuses and their feat is wondrous and noble.159

Soviet reluctance to recognize socialism in Cuba stemmed primarily from security concerns. Admitting Cuba to the socialist camp would obligate Moscow to protect the Cuban revolution. Concentrated in a bloc around the Soviet Union, the current socialist camp was relatively easy to defend. A socialist state within one hundred miles of the coast of Florida would pose unprecedented strategic problems. American intervention against Cuba would reveal Soviet impotence in the Caribbean. Loss of a "national democratic" Cuba, while a blow to Soviet plans and prestige, would be tolerable; loss of a socialist Cuba would be a disaster. Khrushchev makes this point in his discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis in his memoirs:

I knew [loss of Cuba] would have been a terrible blow to Marxism-Leninism. It would gravely diminish our stature throughout the world, but especially in Latin America. If Cuba fell, other Latin American countries would reject us, claiming that for all our might the Soviet Union hadn’t been able to do anything for Cuba except to make empty protests to the United Nations.160

The Soviets were also worried that Castro’s proclamation would occasion a further reduction in Cuban security. The lesson of Guatemala was that the United States would not permit a radical Latin American regime to survive, particularly if communism was thought to be the governing ideology. A common
Soviet theme had been denial of the communist threat in Cuba, in the hopes of averting such a possibility. Soviet fears were justified; the foreign ministers' conference of the Organization of American States (OAS) held at Punta del Este in late January 1962, unanimously adopted an American-proposed resolution stating that: "the present Cuban government which has officially proclaimed itself a Marxist-Leninist government is incompatible with the aims and principles of the pan-American system." Cuba was expelled from the OAS, and all member-states' arms traffic with Cuba was suspended. As part of its commitment to peaceful coexistence, the Soviet Union desired to avoid sudden shifts in the international system that might lead to war. Castro's actions represented a dangerous—and, in Soviet eyes, unwarranted—provocation of the United States.

Although a socialist Cuba was a long-term goal, the Soviet Union would have preferred to postpone its achievement until it...
had derived maximum benefit from the then-current Cuban situation. The Cuban revolution had demonstrated that change could take place in the global distribution of power, that the Soviet Union was sympathetic to the cause of national independence movements, and that the Soviet Union could protect nationalist leaders who wanted to break out of the imperialist system. Castro’s declaration of socialism lost him sympathy in Latin America, so the expected benefits of his revolutionary example did not have time to take full effect. In November 1961 Venezuela broke diplomatic relations with Cuba; Peru and Colombia followed suit shortly thereafter. A socialist Cuba could provide few immediate advantages, but many more responsibilities. Once the revolution was more solidly entrenched and the United States had abandoned the aim of overthrowing Castro, Cuba could take slow, gradual steps toward socialism. As Khrushchev writes in his memoirs:

Before the forces of invasion had been entirely crushed, Castro came out with a declaration that Cuba would follow a Socialist course. We had trouble understanding the timing of this statement. Castro’s declaration had the immediate effect of widening the gap between himself and the people who were against Socialism, and it narrowed the circle of those he could count on for support against the invasion. As far as Castro’s personal courage was concerned, his position was admirable and correct. But from a tactical standpoint, it didn’t make much sense.163

Castro forced the Soviet Union’s hand. He was attempting to gain security, in the form of a Soviet military guarantee, and greater Soviet economic support now that the United States had abandoned him.

There has been a similar Soviet reluctance to admit Nicaragua to the socialist camp, despite the fact that the
Marxist-Leninist credentials of several Sandinista leaders are less questionable than Castro's were. They had spent the 1960s in Cuba and the Soviet Union, and they admired the socialist system. The "72-Hour Document," a record of a special three-day presentation by the Sandinista Directorate to FSLN cadres from September 21 to 23, 1979, "shows the Sandinistas speaking of their intention to eject their non-Marxist allies at a suitable opportunity and to build a Marxist-Leninist system under the protection of the Soviet Union." In September 1980, Interior Minister Tomas Borge Martinez said: "We propose to create an organized revolutionary party, leading on the basis of scientific principles, realizing its leadership role, the guardian of high morals, a party with a clear political strategy, which does not limit itself to the struggle for partial reforms."164

Cognizant of how the Soviets increased their commitment to Castro after his socialist declarations, in 1981 even more moderate FSLN leaders began to proclaim their fealty to Marxism-Leninism. In a speech much relished by the Reagan administration, on August 25, 1981, Directorate member Humberto Ortega equated Sandinism and Marxism-Leninism: "without Sandinism one cannot be Marxist-Leninist, and Sandinism without Marxism-Leninism cannot be revolutionary. Because of this they are indissolubly united, and therefore our moral force is Sandinism, our political force is Sandinism and our doctrine is Marxism-Leninism."165 In April 1982, the FSLN adopted the "construction of socialism" as an official objective of the revolution.166
The Soviets presumably look favourably on Nicaragua’s Leninist inclinations, which make it easier to justify to constituencies at home and abroad the aid to Nicaragua. Theodore Schwab and Harold Sims claim to see a link between Nicaraguan claims of socialism and Soviet grants of aid:

It is worth noting that Hugo Torres, Head of the Political Leadership of the Popular Sandinista Army, made such claims [of Marxism-Leninism] most vigorously on the eve of the major trek to Moscow of May 1982, during which the Soviets granted Nicaragua sizable aid.... Consider...the $50 million of trade credits of September 1981 that followed the August 1981 proclamation, and the $166.8 million pact...that followed a similar proclamation in April. This pattern suggests that Soviet aid may have been facilitated by the Nicaraguan commitment to socialism.167

Certainly Castro’s pronouncements prompted a strengthening of the Soviet economic commitment. On May 14, 1962, one month after the Soviets recognized Castro as Marxist-Leninist, the Cubans were able to secure Soviet assent to the commercial agreement for 1962 which had been languishing in negotiations since the previous September.168

The party-to-party agreement between the FSLN and CPSU of March 1980, and the admission of Nicaragua as an observer to CMEA in September 1983 indicate closer relations than is customary with a noncommunist country. In 1982, the Soviets began to refer to the Nicaraguan revolution as a "people’s democratic revolution," a term previously reserved for Eastern Europe. However, with the sole exception of a June 13, 1983 Pravda article that included Nicaragua on a list of socialist-oriented countries, the Soviets have studiously ignored Sandinista pretensions of socialism. No Soviet source has called the revolution irreversible, Leninist, or socialist, and
no source has categorized the FSLN as a revolutionary democratic movement, i.e., as a state that is building the necessary prerequisites for socialism. In 1983, Nicaragua regressed to the more neutral "democratic" or "progressive" category, while "by 1984, Soviet sources had begun to stress that 'the people of Nicaragua' were 'defending their revolution' without adding any of the more esoteric qualifying terms that usually accompany Soviet ideologically oriented commentaries."

As in Cuba, the disinclination to recognize Nicaragua as a socialist state stems from concerns about the revolution's stability, about the probable American reaction to such a move, and about the implied increase in economic and political responsibility for Nicaragua. Unlike the early 1960s, the Soviet Union is not presently in need of a great Third World socialist victory, especially not one that is the object of American-backed counterrevolutionary attempts. Given Nicaragua's economic disarray and low level of development, a direct transition to socialism would be premature and quixotic. At the moment, Nicaragua can still secure financing from Western and Latin American sources; this would likely dry up if Nicaragua became a recognized Soviet client. As mentioned earlier, at the moment the Soviet Union is not interested in acquiring a large economic burden.

More importantly, a socialist state falls under the Brezhnev Doctrine. If the revolution is supposedly irreversible, Soviet armed might must be committed to upholding it. The Soviets continually stress that local wars can lead to world wars. A Soviet Union committed to the preservation of the
Nicaraguan revolutionary regime would be on a collision course with a United States committed to the destruction of the same. Avoiding direct military confrontation with the United States is a far higher priority than admitting a second Latin American member to the socialist camp. Soviet retreat in such a situation would be an incredible blow to Soviet prestige. The reluctance of the Soviet Union to commit large economic and military resources to Nicaragua suggests that the Soviet Union would prefer to keep Nicaragua in this pre-socialist limbo for a time, deriving the propaganda benefits without overly antagonizing the United States and without increasing Soviet responsibilities.

v. Summary

Soviet policy toward the early stages of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions followed a similar pattern. Initially, the Soviet Union eschewed a significant commitment to the support of the revolution; it adopted a "wait and see" attitude while the orientation of the new regime, its stability, and the reaction of the United States were established. Once it became apparent that the regime was not in danger of immediate collapse and could be amenable to Soviet influence, the Soviets established economic and diplomatic relations. This was not a unilateral move; Castro and the FSLN junta both sought Moscow's support. Soviet relations with the revolutionary governments strengthened as American hostility toward these governments became more pronounced. The Soviet Union responded to Cuban and Nicaraguan requests for military aid, and, in the Cuban case,
proclaimed its willingness to defend the revolution. The Soviet
goal was the nurturing of an anti-American, pro-Soviet regime
which would validate the revolutionary claims of Soviet
ideology, testify to the vitality of world socialism, strengthen
Soviet influence in Latin America and the Third World, support
Soviet foreign policy in international forums, act as a counter
against the Chinese in the international communist movement,
offer the Soviet Union a strategic foothold in the Caribbean,
and generally act as a thorn in the American side. This goal
was subordinate to other foreign policy concerns, such as
Khrushchev's desire in the late 1950s for a settlement of the
Berlin issue, or the preoccupation of the Soviet leadership in
the early 1980s with Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, and the
domestic economy.

Several factors have shaped Soviet policy toward the Cuban
and Nicaraguan revolutions. These include: 1) the relative
military-strategic position of the Soviet Union in the Caribbean
and the desire to avoid military confrontation with the United
States; 2) the policies pursued by the United States; 3) the
policies pursued by the revolutionary governments; 4) the state
of Soviet-American relations.

The distance of Latin America from the Soviet Union, which
makes military operations in the region difficult to conduct and
support, and the proximity of the United States with its
overwhelming military power, do much to explain the conspicuous
caution in Soviet policy toward the Cuban and Nicaraguan
revolutions. Soviet activity in the region is conditioned by
the overwhelming desire to minimize the likelihood of direct
military confrontation with the United States. The Soviet Union recognizes the strategic and psychological importance attached to the Caribbean Basin by policy-makers in Washington and the consequent limits to Soviet activity in the region. Different opportunities and constraints exist there than elsewhere in the Third World. The Soviets have been much more circumspect and indirect with arms transfers to Nicaragua than, for example, to Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Despite assertions that the might of the socialist camp deters the United States from using force in Latin America, in neither Cuba nor Nicaragua has the Soviet Union explicitly said it would meet American use of force in kind. Even Cuba does not have a formal defence treaty with the Soviet Union.

Soviet policy has striven to preclude not only American-Soviet military confrontation but also American intervention against the new regime. Interested from the beginning in the potential of the revolutions for undermining American influence in the Caribbean, the Soviets refrained from any activity that would have provided an excuse for American intervention. They sustained a propaganda campaign designed to create a climate of opinion unfavourable to such intervention. They looked askance at Castro’s premature avowals of socialism and his obstreperous promotion of armed insurgency in Latin America. They encouraged the FSLN to maintain ties with Western nations. After the Bay of Pigs, the Soviets even pressured Castro to seek a modus vivendi with the Americans. Witness this broad hint by Khrushchev in a speech at Yerevan on May 6, 1961:

Cuba and the U.S. are neighbors, and they should live like good neighbors. Some level-headed people in the
U.S. are appealing that actions be guided by the 'live and let live' principle. ... That approach would be to the mutual profit of Cuba and the U.S., without causing anyone to lose face.172

Once the Soviets had verbally committed themselves to Cuba's protection, American intervention would have caught Moscow between Scylla and Charybdis. A move to defend the regime would entail risking nuclear war with the United States; inaction or retreat would mean loss of Cuba and humiliation before actual and potential allies.

Because the Soviet Union wants to avoid military confrontation with the United States, Soviet policy toward Cuba and Nicaragua has been guided to a large extent by American policy toward the revolutionary governments. Moscow did not invest Soviet prestige or material resources in the new regimes until reasonably certain that the United States was not going to immediately crush the revolutions. The Soviets followed a strategy of incremental involvement, adjusting their behaviour according to their perception of what degree of Soviet activity the Americans would find tolerable. The delay in acknowledging Cuba and the failure to acknowledge Nicaragua as socialist stem in part from concern for the American reaction. Qualitative limits on military aid to Nicaragua betoken respect for American warnings.

American policy affected the degree of Soviet involvement in another, indirect, fashion. Although Cuba and Nicaragua had their own reasons--history, sympathies, aspirations--for seeking ties with the Soviet Union, American policy accelerated the development of these ties. In both Cuba and Nicaragua, American actions designed to punish the revolutionary government caused
that government to seek assistance from the Soviet Union. Cut off from their traditional market and source of financial and military aid, Havana and Managua turned to the only other power able to fill the gap. At the same time that the Americans denied weapons to Castro and the Sandinistas, they heightened the new governments' need for military assistance by sponsoring counterrevolutionary attempts, thereby increasing Cuban and Nicaraguan dependence on the Soviet Union.

The strategy of the revolutionary government influenced Soviet policy. In neither case did the Soviet Union initiate the relationship; Moscow responded to overtures from the Caribbean partners. Castro's pursuit of Chinese friendship caused the Soviet Union to extend more assistance to Cuba. In general, Soviet support increased as the regimes adopted socialist reforms, and as their leaders proclaimed devotion to Marxism-Leninism.

The state of Soviet-American relations affected Soviet willingness to respond to Cuban and Nicaraguan requests for assistance. Greater Soviet involvement in both Cuba and Nicaragua corresponded with a decline in detente. A notable increase in economic aid to Cuba, socialist bloc arms deliveries, and Khrushchev's rocket threat all followed the crash of an American spy plane in the Soviet Union and the cancellation of the Paris summit meeting. As Soviet-American relations worsened in 1961 with the unproductive Vienna summit, Khrushchev's Berlin ultimatums, the construction of the Berlin Wall, and announced increases in both the Soviet and American defence budgets, the Soviet Union had little incentive to
moderate its behaviour towards Cuba. There has been a similar tendency for the Soviets to increase aid to Nicaragua as Soviet-American relations sour. It is worth noting that at the same Party Congress that Brezhnev ignored the Nicaraguans' plight (February 1981), he deliberately took a conciliatory stance on arms control and offered a summit meeting to the new American president. By 1982-83, Reagan's "evil empire" rhetoric, his containment policy, the increased American defence budget, and lack of progress on arms control had notably removed this reason for Soviet restraint.

While the pattern of Soviet involvement in Cuba and Nicaragua has been similar, the level of involvement has been less in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union has not taken on the burden of the Nicaraguan economy as it did the Cuban, has not verbally committed itself to Nicaragua's defence in the event of an invasion, has not given Nicaragua as much military aid as Cuba, and has failed to recognize Nicaragua as socialist.

The first factor affecting the different level of support is Khrushchev's need for foreign policy gains and his predisposition to search for such in the developing world. The Cuban Revolution corresponded perfectly to the global vision and strategy espoused by Khrushchev. As the first state outside of Eurasia to voluntarily choose socialism, and the first advance of communism since the Chinese revolution, Cuba represented a major triumph for the Soviet Union. Khrushchev became committed to the Cuban cause and had to defend it against his rivals. The greater the Soviet investment in Cuba, the more Soviet prestige depended on the revolution's continued success,
requiring the Soviet Union to invest even further to prevent failure. That the Soviet Union continued to support Castro despite his imprudent economic policies, his advocacy of guerrilla warfare, and his dislodging of old guard communists indicates how politically important Cuba became to the Soviet Union. By 1962, Cuba was Khrushchev’s only tangible gain in foreign policy. Investments in other developing countries had not translated into positions of influence for the Soviet Union. Soviet assistance did not prevent Lumumba’s defeat in the Congo in 1960. Peaceful coexistence had failed to provide the expected returns in the form of a Berlin settlement. Khrushchev was experiencing domestic economic difficulties and challenges to his rule. The Chinese were highly critical of his foreign policy. The Soviet Union was falling behind in the strategic nuclear competition as the United States moved to close the illusory “missile gap” by beginning the Minuteman and Polaris programmes. When Castro offered himself on the Soviet Union’s doorstep, Khrushchev could not afford to kick him off.

The less ebullient geriatric leadership of the early 1980s did not need a Third World victory in the same sense, nor were they inclined to take great risks on behalf of one, especially in a distant area dominated by the United States. The Soviets have met the difficulties of the 1980s by retrenchment, not search for gains, e.g., Gorbachev’s emphasis, at least verbally, on domestic economic reform. “In the 1980s, Moscow has evaded new Third World commitments. Instead of new military facilities or clients, it has sought to consolidate and defend ‘the gains of socialism’...”174
In attempting to secure greater Soviet support, the Sandinistas do not have as much leverage as Castro did. Cuba was the first Third World gain for international communism, and the first country to have a Marxist-Leninist revolution without a Communist party vanguard. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Khrushchev was probably excited by the doctrinal possibilities, which could be applied to other Third World states that the Soviets wanted to court. "Cuba proved an important experiment in the problems of controlling, sustaining, and protecting a self-proclaimed Communist regime in a country geographically remote from the USSR, as well as a test of Soviet theories concerning the feasibility of rapid transformation of an essentially agrarian society into an industrial one."175 Since 1959, the Soviets have had a number of experiences with Marxist-Leninist allies in the Third World. They know that "socialist-oriented" states cannot be relied on--witness Egypt, Somalia, the Sudan--and that developing states "cannot easily be turned into permanent Soviet allies except at considerable cost."176 A socialist Nicaragua would provide a smaller increment of benefits than Cuba while adding to Soviet costs, and would not supply essential testimony to the correctness of contemporary Soviet strategy.

The Chinese challenge is less pressing in the 1980s as the Sino-Soviet dispute is not as acrimonious and China has not displayed much interest in Nicaragua. Insofar as the Sino-Soviet dispute has affected Soviet policy toward Nicaragua, it has probably worked against Soviet-Nicaraguan relations because the Soviet Union has sought American cooperation in curbing the
Not only was Khrushchev in greater need of a foreign policy victory than his successors of the 1980s, he also held a different perception of the risks inherent in pursuing such a victory in the American domain. The Soviets were testing the waters of the Caribbean with Cuba. The revolution itself was so unexpected that it led the Soviets to believe former pessimism about American control over the Basin was unjustified. American failure at the Bay of Pigs emboldened Khrushchev; he did not expect that greater Soviet involvement in Cuba would lead to a military confrontation, as is indicated by the emplacement of missiles in Cuba in the fall of 1962. Ever since the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union has accepted tacit limits on its military activities in the Western Hemisphere. While Washington has begrudgingly refrained from overt military intervention against Cuba, it will not allow a comparable Soviet involvement elsewhere. Reagan’s unflagging campaign against Nicaragua coupled with threats to Cuba and the invasion of Grenada had an opposite effect from the Bay of Pigs on the Soviet leadership.

The presence of Cuba in the region obviates the need for a larger Soviet role in Nicaragua. Castro’s early revolutionary accomplishments and his defiance of the United States make Cuba an attractive hemispheric model, and Havana has greater experience in building socialism in Latin American conditions. Thus far Cuban policy toward Nicaragua has not been contrary to Soviet interests, and Cuba shelters the Soviet Union from the risks of direct involvement in Nicaragua.
In addition, Cuba’s existence makes the need for a second Soviet client-state in the Caribbean less pressing. Nicaragua can add little that Cuba does not already provide. A socialist Nicaragua would not be a notable strategic asset. Cuba already satisfies most Soviet military needs in the Caribbean, providing a convenient location for the servicing of Soviet submarines, surface vessels, and long-range aircraft, the tropical training of the Soviet military, and the surveillance of the southeastern United States and the Atlantic. It has enabled the Soviet Union to establish a "presence" in the area. However, Cuba is virtually indefensible should the United States determine to take it, and Nicaragua is less defensible than Cuba. The economic costs of Cuba have also made the Soviets hesitant to assume a second burden in the Caribbean.

The more subdued response to Nicaragua is explained also by differences in Caribbean leadership and strategy. The Soviets were drawn into Cuba faster than they would have preferred because of Castro’s audacious actions. There was also, no doubt, a personal attraction between Castro and Khrushchev, both "flamboyant and unrestrained politicians." The Sandinistas have no strong, charismatic caudillo comparable to Castro and have not been as skillful at manipulating Soviet sensibilities. The Soviets have learned from their experience in Cuba and will not be as quick to embrace Nicaragua.
CHAPTER IV: DOCTRINAL AND REVOLUTIONARY IMPLICATIONS

i. Doctrine

The rapid radicalization of the Cuban revolution under the leadership of members of the petty bourgeoisie required a rethinking of Soviet ideology, which held that both the transition to and the building of socialism required the leadership of a communist party guided by Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The Soviet model was that of Lenin's two-stage revolution: after the initial colonial revolution the alliance of the bourgeoisie and Communist party would end, and conflict between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie would begin. At a 1959 conference in Leipzig sponsored by the World Marxist Review, "Soviet and foreign communist specialists stressed the vacillating and exploitative character of the national bourgeoisie, its unwillingness to involve the masses in the revolution, and, consequently, the necessity for the proletariat to retain its organizational independence and to assume the leadership of the national liberation revolution." Yet Castro, a member of the national bourgeoisie, was undertaking radical socialist-style reforms and in 1961 called the revolution socialist. Optimistic Soviets began to think that national bourgeois leaders could lead their states to socialist paths of development. In March 1962, a researcher at Moscow's Institute of World Economy and International Relations wrote:

The experience offered by the development of the Cuban Revolution has shown how representatives of the radical petty bourgeoisie, during the process of a truly national revolution, can adopt working class positions
and socialist positions and become active fighters for the socialist reconstruction of society.\textsuperscript{181}

An initial attempt to repair the shoddy fit between doctrine and practice was made at the November 1960 Communist and Workers' Parties conference in Moscow. The concept of a "national democratic state," a stage between precapitalism and socialism of which Cuba was an example, was introduced. This implied a transition toward socialism which did not require Communist party leadership. This was "a rather shaky compromise between the CPSU and the CCP on the one hand and between orthodox and opportunist perspectives within the CPSU on the other."\textsuperscript{182} The Chinese distrusted the national bourgeoisie and saw the national democratic state as a Soviet "revisionist" excuse to sacrifice local communist parties to short-term Soviet interests. The Soviet leadership itself appeared to be divided on the question of socialism in Cuba. Mikoyan and Khrushchev had alluded to Cuba's "socialist aims" before Castro declared himself Marxist-Leninist, but other leaders and \textit{Pravda} did not take up the theme.\textsuperscript{183} Khrushchev's readiness to embrace an unorthodox form of socialist transition was due in part to his need for a new socialist state to attest to the dynamism of the Soviet Union.

At this time, the Soviets carefully avoided saying that socialism could be achieved by non-proletarian groups. Such a statement would undermine the position of Third World communist parties and draw into question the legitimacy of CPSU leadership in the Soviet Union. Rather, it was conceded that non-proletarians could begin the transition to socialism.\textsuperscript{184} The 1961 CPSU programme emphasized that proletarian revolution and
dictatorship of the proletariat were necessary to complete the transition to socialism. Thus the Soviet Union was able to justify support for radical, non-proletarian, anti-Western Third World leaders—for whose favour the Soviets were competing with the Chinese—instead of the Communist parties, while still insisting on the necessity of proletarian leadership at a later stage in the revolution.

In Cuba, power was not passed from the national bourgeoisie to the PSP for the completion of the transition to socialism. At the end of March 1962, Castro denounced several Old Guard Communists affiliated with Moscow, including Anibal Escalante (PSP Executive-Secretary and editor of the Communist daily, Hoy), and ousted them from key positions. Moscow was in the awkward position of having either to censure the purge and thus disassociate itself from Cuban socialism, or to condone the demotion of Communist party members and recognize Cuban socialism as Marxist-Leninist. The fact that it chose the latter course indicates the extent to which Moscow wanted to maintain its ties with Cuba. The economic aid given to Cuba, the verbal commitment to the revolution's defence, and the consequent Soviet prestige invested in Cuba gave Castro leverage in his dealings with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev could not afford to let the Cuban revolution slip out of his hands.

Similarly, Moscow accepted the fusion of the PSP with the 26th of July Movement in 1960-61, even though this was a radical departure in the practice of communist parties. Ever since the disastrous results in China in 1927, communists had kept their organizational integrity in cooperative and united fronts.
Castro's self-appointment as the leader of Communist party was unusual. The Soviet Union was accepting a radical reduction in the role of communists in creating socialist states. There was a "strong impulse to celebrate the victory of communism in the backyard of the strongest imperialist state without close scrutiny of what kind of communism it was."185

Doctrinal loose ends were tied up in the December 1963 formulation of "revolutionary democracy." The ambiguities of the "national democratic state" were removed; with the Soviets providing support, the transition to socialism could occur under bourgeois nationalist leaders. According to Khrushchev, a "revolutionary democrat" was a leader who "sincerely advocated non-capitalist methods for the solution of national problems and declared [his] determination to build socialism."186 How could the transition to socialism be guaranteed without a Communist party vanguard? According to Soviet theorists, "during the current period, the world socialist system, in a material, moral, and political context, plays the role of proletarian vanguard,"187 thereby preserving the necessary role of the CPSU and other Communist parties.

In short, Castro's steering of the Cuban revolution in a socialist direction caused the Soviets to modify their doctrine. Khrushchev's elevated hopes for the Cuban revolution, both in its own right and as an example for the rest of the Third World, made him eager to give his blessings to this unorthodox form of socialist transformation. Yet, the adoption of doctrinal postures consistent with close collaboration with non-communist Third World regimes should not be viewed solely as a cynical
attempt to court Third World leaders, or to justify foreign policy initiatives to the Soviet people. In part, it represented "a sincere attempt to square theory with new perceptions of the changing reality that doctrine was meant to explain." Castro was the first example of a non-communist ruler leading his people down the socialist path. Soviet ideologists were still fashioning theory about the newly independent states. With its unexpected socialist twist, the Cuban revolution provided a fertile testing-ground. The Nicaraguan revolution has led to no comparable revision of doctrine on non-proletarian transition to socialism. Since the mid-1970s the Soviets have again held a more orthodox view of national forms of socialism; only a proletarian dictatorship can complete the socialist revolution. This reflects the defection to the West of such important non-Communist Soviet Third World clients as Egypt and Somalia, and the appearance of several self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist regimes (Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen). The Soviet Union is confident that it need not adjust doctrine to attract potentially fickle recruits.

ii. Revolution in Latin America

Both the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, and their survival despite American pressure, altered the Soviet Union's assessment of the American ability to maintain hegemony in Latin America, of the revolutionary possibilities in the Western Hemisphere, and of the Soviet ability to capitalize on those opportunities. Prior to the Cuban revolution, national
liberation movements had affected only the empires of declining European powers. Cuba touched the most powerful capitalist power in its own sphere.

The overthrow of Batista's dictatorial regime in Cuba was a major milestone in the history of the national-liberation movement of Latin America. ... It is the first popular and anti-imperialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere, directed against 'neocolonialism' in all the forms in which it exists in Latin America.190

The Cuban revolution dealt a death blow to "geographic fatalism." It indicated that the United States could no longer prevent revolutionary social and political change in Latin America. On July 12, 1960, three days after his rocket speech, Khrushchev declared that the Monroe Doctrine had died "a natural death."191 In mid-August 1960, B. N. Ponomarev, head of the International Department of the Central Committee, in charge of relations with nonruling Communist parties, admitted Latin America to the zone of peace.192

The fact that United States failed to extinguish the revolution was taken as confirmation of a change in the correlation of forces.

The Cuban Revolution has proved that at the present day, when a mighty Socialist system exists, there is no force in the world capable of checking the peoples' advance to socialism and that even the close presence of the strongest imperialist power is unable to prevent the building up of a new, radiant life under socialism.193

The revolution demonstrated that the socialist bloc could provide invaluable aid to countries struggling for independence from the imperialists.

The experience of the Cuban revolution provides striking evidence that the existence of the world socialist system can ensure the success of the struggle waged against imperialism by the peoples of colonial and dependent countries. The support given to Cuba by the
Soviet Union and the other socialist countries has enabled the Cuban people to come through with flying colours in their fight against the economic blockade imposed by the United States and other imperialist states and has helped them to develop their national economy successfully.\(^{194}\)

Coming after a decade and a half of revolutionary frustration in Latin America, the Nicaraguan revolution was similarly hailed as a breakthrough for progressive forces. Commentaries on the revolution immediately recognized Nicaragua's geographic importance, e.g., "this 'hot spot' is in direct proximity to the citadel of world imperialism."\(^{195}\) Taken in conjunction with other developments around the globe, this evidence of declining American ability to control events in the Western Hemisphere substantiated the Soviet belief in an improved correlation of forces. According to a 1983 Soviet pamphlet on Nicaragua: "the Sandinista revolution, being an integral part of the world revolutionary process, serves as yet one more convincing confirmation of the helplessness of imperialism to restore its lost historic initiative and to turn back the development of the modern world."\(^{196}\) A November 1980 article in Kommunist by B.Ponomarev included the "victory of the people" in Nicaragua along with the collapse of the Portuguese empire, Zimbabwean independence, the strengthening of the "liberation struggle" in Namibia and South Africa, the victory of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Kampuchean "patriotic forces," and the revolutions in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Iran as events that demonstrated that the age of classic imperial colonialism was ended and a dynamic, postcolonial age was commencing.\(^{197}\)

The Soviet Union heralded both the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions as harbingers of revolutionary ferment in Latin
America. Cuba was to provide a "contagious example" to the rest of the continent.

It is not without reason that the cause of heroic Cuba...has today become the banner of all Latin America, which is proclaiming its solidarity with the ideas of the Cuban revolution and its support of the Cuban people. 'Cuba, yes! Yankees, no!' This mighty shout is resounding today throughout Latin America, from the Gulf of Mexico to Tierra del Fuego.198

The December 1960 declaration of 81 Communist parties in Moscow stated that: "The victory of the Cuban revolution has powerfully stimulated the struggle of the Latin American peoples for complete national independence" and opened up "a front of active struggle against imperialism" in the entire region.199

Similarly, even before the Soviets extended support to the new regime, the Nicaraguan revolution led the Soviet Union to anticipate an imminent surge of revolutionary change to sweep Central America. "Immediately following the victorious revolution in Nicaragua, political observers unanimously agreed that El Salvador would be the next Central American country to be enveloped by the flames of the anti-dictator struggle. This is no coincidence."200 The revolution refocused Soviet attention on the region. "Prior to 1979, Soviet writers had consigned most of the region to the 'reactionary and pro-imperialistic' bloc within the hemisphere." Only approximately sixty-eight Soviet articles and four books were published on Central America between 1970 and 1975. In the two years following the Nicaraguan revolution, the figures jumped to 267 and seven respectively.201 Commentators noted the worsening socio-economic conditions and growing anti-American nationalism in the isthmus. Since the 1960s, the American military and
economic presence in Central America had declined sharply, while that of the Soviet Union and Cuba had increased. The preconditions for successful revolution appeared unmatched.

High party officials echoed the academicians' optimistic beliefs in Central America's revolutionary potential. An October 20, 1980 speech by B. Ponomarev included the states of Central America for the first time with those expected to undergo revolutionary changes of "a socialist orientation." In the November 1980 issue of Kommunist, Ponomarev acclaimed the Nicaraguan revolution as an event comparable to developments in Angola and Ethiopia. According to a March 10, 1983 memorandum found among captured Grenadan documents, then Soviet army chief of General Staff, Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov, told the Grenadans that whereas only Cuba had existed two decades ago, "today there are Nicaragua, Grenada, and a serious battle is going in El Salvador." "The existence of regional and international conditions favoring revolutionary advance was the underlying theme at an international conference on revolutionary strategy hosted by Havana in the spring of 1982." Pedro Ramet and Fernando Lopez-Alves conclude that by 1982 Moscow expected revolution in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Bolivia.

The type of revolutionary example to be provided by the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions was, however, quite dissimilar. Although they endorsed the anti-imperialist aspects of the Cuban revolution, the Soviets did not advocate the Cuban path of armed struggle. At the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, the CPSU had adopted the strategy of "peaceful transition to socialism," and
this remained in place despite the Cuban experience. Comments on the changed correlation of forces notwithstanding, the Soviets did not feel that violent revolutionary attempts in Latin America would succeed. Rather, they stressed that the possibility of peaceful socialist revolution in Latin America "is now increasing in view of the radical change in the relation of world forces and the greater striving of the masses for Socialism." Cuba's example lay in her economic and social changes, not in her revolutionary path: "The ideas of the Cuban revolution are exerting a steadily growing influence on the popular masses of Latin America. They see in the Cuban revolution an example of how to solve urgent economic and social problems." The Cuban revolution stimulated "a radical reappraisal of ways of solving Latin America's basic problems through non-capitalist development" and showed the possibility of advancing rapidly from a pre-capitalist stage of development to socialism. The Soviets feared that Cuban calls for guerrilla activity would alienate those Latin American governments friendly to Cuba and thus lessen the pressure on the United States not to intervene against Cuba.

Unlike its Cuban predecessor, the Nicaraguan revolution led to a revision in Soviet strategy in Latin America. For the first time, the Soviets endorsed the Cuban notion of armed revolutionary struggle as a means of change, to be adopted by Marxist insurgent groups and by Communist parties in Latin America. In the March 1980 issue of Latinskaya Amerika, Boris Koval wrote: "the Nicaraguan experience [has] demolished the previous simplisitic interpretation of guerrilla actions,
confirmed the justice of many of Che Guevara's strategic principles, and crystallized his idea of creating a powerful popular guerrilla movement. "210 Editor Sergo Mikoyan pointed out that "up to now only the armed path has led to revolutionary victory in Latin America" and N. Leonov concluded that "the armed road... is the most promising in the specific conditions of most of the Latin American countries."211 This was not a blanket sanction of armed struggle in Latin America; strategy was to be determined by "objective conditions" in each country. In general, countries of greater economic development such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, required policies of peaceful transition; those of low economic development required armed struggle.212 It is no coincidence that the countries suited for armed struggle are, without exception, those with which the Soviet Union does not have good relations.

The Soviets were also struck by the broad base of support for the Sandinistas; both Marxist and non-Marxist civilian political opposition supported the guerrilla struggle. "Neither the earlier Cuban foco strategy of guerrilla struggle in the 1960s ... nor the nonviolent political strategy of the Moscow-oriented Communist parties during the 1970s, had been able to attract broad-based civilian support. For the first time since the Cuban revolution, guerrilla movements under Marxist or Marxist-Leninist leadership were creating popular front-type alliances with civilian sectors, cutting across class, ideological, generational and urban-rural lines."213 Soviet commentators concluded that such military-political fronts as the July 26 Movement or the FSLN could, in certain
cases, substitute for proletarian political parties as a revolutionary vanguard.

The political activity of these fronts, operating with close links to the masses, on the basis of military and military-organizational power, turned out to be so effective that they, being at first purely military organizations, gradually acquired in fact the functions of political parties. And on the contrary in both cases, not a single political party, including the Communists was able even to come close to them in their potential as a vanguard.214

In Latin American dictatorships not friendly to the Soviet Union (e.g., El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, Paraguay), communists were counselled to join the radical nationalists.

These doctrinal changes were signalled in Latinskaya Amerika and echoed in Kommunist and World Marxist Review. "It is arguable, of course, whether Soviet academicians writing in Latinskaya Amerika, International Affairs, and other Soviet publications influence the policies of the CPSU, KGB or other organs of the Soviet government.... Still, such authoritative commentators as Sergo Mikoyan, editor of Latinskaya Amerika, presumably carry weight with Soviet policy makers, and their public pronouncements thus form part of the evidence that outside analysts must sift and weigh in analyzing Soviet policy."215

The Soviets encouraged the emulation of the Nicaraguan experience elsewhere in the region. Viktor Volsky called the armed victory in Nicaragua a "model" to be followed in other countries.216 In January 1980, the pro-Soviet Communist party of El Salvador (PCES) declared that armed struggle was the only path to power, "the first absolute endorsement of guerrilla struggle by a Latin American Communist party," and soon after
adopted a program calling for the forcible overthrow of the government and the subsequent introduction of "profound social transformations" on the Leninist model. In May, the PCES formally endorsed violent revolution at its 7th National Congress. In 1980, Cuba helped to unify the fragmented extreme left factions in El Salvador, much as it had done in Nicaragua the previous year. Cuba and Nicaragua provided the Salvadoran insurgents with propaganda support, money, sanctuary, arms, supplies, training, communications, intelligence, and logistics. Cuba increased its aid to Salvadoran leftist insurgents until their failed offensive of January 1981.

Soviet optimism about revolution in Central America reached a peak during the winter of 1980-81. By 1983, pessimism governed Soviet assessments of Central America's revolutionary potential. The Cuban arms flow to El Salvador dwindled following the failure of the guerrillas' "final offensive" in January 1981 and the assumption of office by the Reagan Administration. There was no more on the Salvadoran struggle in the Soviet media and no mention of El Salvador or Central America in Brezhnev's "assessment of the world situation" at the Twenty-sixth CPSU Congress. With the harsh Reagan rhetoric, the increase in American military spending, and the covert war against Nicaragua, the Soviets concluded that the United States could no longer be regarded as impotent in the Caribbean Basin. This was reinforced by a negative shift in the correlation of forces brought about by the war in Afghanistan, the rise of Solidarity, and the NATO decision to deploy cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. Third World allies in Kampuchea, Ethiopia,
Angola, and Mozambique were under attack by guerrillas. Iraq, India, and Algeria were turning to the West for aid and trade.

By 1983, Soviet commentators were divided in their assessment of whether guerrilla triumph in El Salvador could be expected in the near or distant future.\textsuperscript{219} In the summer of 1983, Moscow and Havana urged the Salvadoran guerrillas to negotiate with the United States in order to decrease the likelihood of a substantial American military buildup in the region.\textsuperscript{220} The Soviets have toned down their advice to revolutionaries, particularly in Honduras and Costa Rica; they are to concentrate on preventing attacks on Nicaragua, not on fomenting revolution.\textsuperscript{221}

The American invasion of Grenada in October 1983 cemented Soviet pessimism. Prior to this, the Soviet Union had perceived domestic limits on direct American military action in Central America and the Caribbean. The Soviet \textit{New Times}, in connection with the debate on covert operations in Nicaragua, had written: "there is resistance to a policy of intervention in Central America even among the military."\textsuperscript{222} Now the Soviets assert that the United States will go to almost any extent to keep its imperial relationship with the states of the region.

Not only is the U.S. administration inspiring and making material provision for these subversive actions against Nicaragua and other countries, it has now actually made such actions a part of its policy. President Reagan's recent statement on the 'right' to conduct covert operations against independent countries was seen even in the U.S. as claiming freedom to conduct a policy of 'state terrorism.'\textsuperscript{223}

'Operation Grenada' is not just another link in the long chain of Washington's aggressive actions. What we have here is a new twist. ... With its brazen invasion of Grenada, the White House cynically shows that, for the sake of achieving its goals, it is prepared to try
anything -- from covert CIA operations to overt armed invasion.224

To summarize, for the Soviet Union, the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions confirmed convictions that the correlation of forces sat in Soviet favour, and led to the assumption that the United States could no longer effectively prohibit revolutionary sociopolitical change in Latin America. Moscow expected further revolutionary upheavals in the Western Hemisphere to follow on the heels of the revolutions, but these expectations were quelled by American demonstrations of force during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the invasion of Grenada. While the Cuban revolution was thought to be sui generis, the Nicaraguan revolution prompted a reevaluation of the utility of armed struggle on the path to socialism, and led to a change in the policy instructions for Latin American Communist parties.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

As discussed in Chapter II, a primary goal of Soviet policy in Latin America is the undermining of American power and influence. The examination of Soviet policy toward the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions in Chapter III has shown that the Soviets manifest a strong desire to avoid a military confrontation with the United States in the course of achieving this objective. The combination of these two considerations gives rise to a Soviet policy in the Caribbean Basin best characterized as "prudent opportunism."

Soviet policy toward the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions does not corroborate the thesis that there is a "Soviet grand strategy," carefully contrived in Moscow, aimed at outflanking the United States by subverting preselected targets with long-term objectives in mind. Although the Soviets hope, in general, to project their power into an American-dominated area, policy has not followed a preconceived plan. Specific goals and tactics in Cuba and Nicaragua underwent a change as each revolution progressed; strategy was moulded to fit the opportunities presented. The Soviet Union neither expected nor aided the revolutions in their initial stages, yet heralded their occurrence as a stunning blow to the United States. More than cursory involvement with the new regimes came only at the instigation of the Caribbean partners. Particularly in the Nicaraguan case, Moscow was initially more interested in applying the lessons of the revolution to the rest of Latin America than in cultivating a relationship with the revolutionary government. Moscow was happy to reap the benefits
of the deterioration of the client's relations with the United States. It modified doctrine in order to take advantage of the Cuban situation. Yet the Soviet Union displayed prudence in its preference for cautious, incremental moves, in its concern for the revolutions' stability and survival, and in its attempts to avoid crisis or direct conflict with the United States. Soviet assistance was calculated with an eye to what Moscow believed would avoid provoking a punitive American response. The Soviet Union takes advantage of Central American turmoil, but, respecting American power and geographical advantage in the region, proceeds with caution.

A notable feature of Soviet policy toward Cuba and Nicaragua has been the tendency to seek maximum benefits for minimum risks. Thus the Soviet Union exploited the anti-American propaganda value of the revolutions while shunning ties until the regimes were stable. Belying Khrushchev's previous boasts, Moscow delayed a response to the Bay of Pigs invasion until it was apparent that there would be no need for Soviet intervention, then took credit for the invasion's outcome. The Soviet Union garners the influence inherent in providing Nicaragua with long-term economic aid, but refuses the financial drain of underwriting the Nicaraguan economy. Despite American warnings, Moscow provides the Sandinistas with military aid to repel the contras, but does so indirectly and refrains from giving Managua the power to take the offensive in the isthmus. The Soviets cultivate a cordial relationship with the Nicaraguans, but offer no public commitment to the preservation of the regime. The Soviet Union was reluctant to take up the
responsibilities implicit in accepting the revolutions as socialist, and still refuses to do so for Nicaragua.

Several factors have determined the relative balance of prudence and opportunism in Soviet policy. Moscow has been more prone to take advantage of circumstances when it perceives that the United States is unable or unwilling to respond, when American policy has left gaps that the Soviets can fill, when the revolutionary government has adopted a pro-Soviet foreign policy and Marxist-Leninist domestic reforms, and when the state of Soviet-American relations is such that there are few incentives for moderation. Conversely, the Soviet Union has not been keen to take up the revolutionary cause when the United States has demonstrated its resolve to prevent Soviet-Caribbean ties, when the United States has been moderate toward the new regimes, when the revolutionary governments have displayed ambivalence to communism, and when the Soviets want to foster amicable Soviet-American relations. Competition with China for Third World support fuels Soviet adventurism; preoccupation with problems in other clients and at home does not.

Is Nicaragua another Cuba? If, by another Cuba, is meant a Soviet outpost in the Western Hemisphere, a client-state ready to do Moscow’s bidding, fostering anti-American revolution throughout Latin America, the answer is no. In the seven years since the overthrow of Somoza, the Soviet Union has not chosen to support Nicaragua economically, politically, and militarily to the same extent that it did Cuba within the first four years of the revolution. Aside from a small number of advisers, the Soviet Union has not established a direct military
presence in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan aid to regional insurgents—arguably a product more of Cuban policy than of Soviet—has declined substantially since 1980-81. The congenial Soviet-Nicaraguan relations in no way approach the close Soviet-Cuban ties. Comparative restraint up to the present does not mean that the Soviet Union is not interested in a larger role in Nicaragua in the future. As Robert Leiken points out, there was an uneasy detente between Cuba and the Soviet Union during the 1960s; the full relationship to which the Administration alludes did not develop until the mid-1970s.227

Like the Cuban Revolution, the Nicaraguan Revolution has dealt a blow to "geographic fatalism" and increased the perception of declining American ability to counter revolutionary activity in the Caribbean Basin. Cuba gives the Soviet Union a communist outpost in the Western Hemisphere; it is an example of "a noncontiguous socialist state amenable to pro-Soviet orientation without gross coercion" and "the most successful instance to which the Kremlin may point as proof that Soviet Marxism-Leninism and economic aid has relevance to the economic and social growth of developing nations."228 A socialist Nicaragua would prove that Cuba was not an anomaly and would strengthen Soviet influence in the Third World and non-aligned movement. Significant Soviet military and economic aid to Nicaragua would set a precedent for future involvement in another Central American country, just as Cuba has set a precedent for Nicaragua. Like Cuba, Nicaragua has potential utility as a military facility and listening post within the American defense perimeter. It could provide new basing
facilities for Soviet power projection in the Caribbean Basin, South America and South Atlantic. Soviet bloc naval deployment in the Caribbean with bases in Nicaragua could endanger logistic support for American allies in Europe in the event of a conventional war, and the delivery of oil and strategic materials to the United States. The Soviet Union has an interest in reinforcing revolutionary leftist tendencies in the Basin; there is a greater potential for exporting and sustaining guerrilla movements from mainland Nicaragua than from island Cuba, and the Cubans are currently training guerrillas there.

However, while possibly anticipating Nicaragua's eventual inclusion in the socialist camp, the Soviet Union is in no hurry to see it happen. In the short term, more rewarding than any increase in Soviet influence in Nicaragua are the unearned dividends of the continuing American effort to remove the Sandinistas. This diverts American attention and resources from other Soviet activities (e.g., in Afghanistan), reduces the credibility of American accusations that the Soviets are the sponsors of global violence, heightens American foreign policy divisions, and creates tensions between the United States and its allies in Europe and Latin America. "Indeed, from the Soviet perspective, a manageable threat to Nicaragua is probably considered a useful tool for rallying the population of that country around the Sandinista leadership. The Soviet press is replete with reports from its correspondents in Nicaragua along just those lines."229 There has been, up to the present, little risk of the FSLN being defeated (an undesirable outcome), due to Congressional constraints on the Administration's policy. The
Boland Amendment of August 1982 prohibited American aid to paramilitary groups "for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras," and Congress has regularly restricted and diluted administration requests for contra funds.

It is highly improbable that the Soviet Union would intervene in support of Nicaragua should the United States decide to use direct military force to overthrow the Sandinistas. Even Castro has not been able to translate heightened Soviet concern about American military action in the Caribbean into an explicit security guarantee. Castro apparently tried hard to get Moscow to sign a treaty of friendship and cooperation (tantamount to a treaty of mutual military assistance if both partners are full members of the "socialist commonwealth") at the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the CPSU in February 1981, but failed.230 Gromyko, Ustinov, and others have warned the United States against establishing a blockade, but have neglected to spell out the consequences. And, although the Soviet Union continues to document American subversive activity against Nicaragua, it has been reticent with verbal support. An *International Affairs* article of April 1986 details American actions against Nicaragua and warns of the likelihood of direct armed aggression, but offers no encouragement beyond: "Elimination of the dangerous hotbed of tension in Central America, struggle against the escalation of the U.S. interference in the affairs of the region's countries are an important task of all the peace supporters of the world."231 The Soviet Union recognizes that the United States
possesses both a military and economic advantage in Central America, that a Soviet involvement so extensive that it would pose a direct threat to American security will not be tolerated, and that the Reagan administration is bound and determined to unseat the Sandinistas. To the Soviets, Nicaragua is not worth a conflict with the United States; in addition, the Soviet Union does not wish to jeopardize Cuban security in a general Central American war.

The Soviets continue to cultivate an economic relationship with Nicaragua. The Economist reported in February 1985 that the Soviets supply Nicaragua with almost two-thirds of its petroleum imports and that Soviet bloc subsidies run at over $300 million per year.232 "Looking back on their experience in Cuba, the Soviets may view growing economic ties as a pragmatic way of strengthening their position and influence in Managua and one that would not undercut Moscow's desire to maintain a generally low profile on military aid."233 Given past experience, one can conclude that the May 1985 embargo on American-Nicaraguan trade will push Nicaragua closer to the Soviet Union. Still, the Soviet Union remains unwilling to underwrite the Nicaraguan economy, which is in a state of chaos. By 1985, Nicaragua was bankrupt, with a foreign debt of $4 billion, $220 million in losses from the guerrilla war, inflation running at 100 percent, and a great shortage of consumer goods.234 Cuba's failing economy makes the Soviets pessimistic about the road to socialism in Latin America. In 1980 for the first time, Cuba had to import sugar rather than export it. The Nicaraguans have consistently failed to receive
the level of aid sought from Moscow. The Soviet Union sees the potential for another Cuba and does not want it.

 Nicaraguan nationalism puts a limit on how far the Nicaraguan-Soviet relationship will go. Although each side has done its part to cultivate a friendly relationship, "the political clout of the Soviets in Nicaragua today is more a result of the legacy of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations and underlying distrust than of any real mutual commitment between the Soviet Union and Nicaragua."235 The Nicaraguans are going to the Soviet Union because they need outside help to survive. They do not want to be another Cuba. As one FSLN junta member remarked in 1980, "We didn't go through all this to exchange American domination for Soviet domination."236

One should be hesitant in deriving conclusions about the Soviet commitment to Nicaragua from Cuban activity there. Nicaragua is a higher priority for Cuba, and Castro has his own interests in supporting the Sandinistas. A strong socialist regime in Nicaragua would reduce Cuba's isolation in Latin America, assist Cuba as a revolutionary base, and, if dependent on Havana, demonstrate Cuba's strength as a patron and model for development. It is likely that Havana and Moscow differ on the extent of material aid and security guarantees to be offered Managua. "[T]he Soviets probably see the Nicaraguan and Grenadian governments as Fidel's 'offspring' rather than their own and are less certain of their survivability and therefore more reluctant to commit Soviet prestige."237 Cuba has complicated Soviet relations with the United States and other Latin American countries in the past. Moscow may not be eager
to give Castro a hemispheric ally.

One is left with the picture of an older, wiser Soviet Union, who has learned from past experiences in Cuba and elsewhere in the Third World to avoid overcommitment and to be selective in choosing its clients.

In the future, we are likely to see a continuation of "prudent opportunism": i.e., the Soviet Union will gradually cultivate greater influence in Nicaragua, explore the limits of American tolerance, but keep involvement as indirect as possible, and limit risks. The Soviets want to increase their presence in the "strategic rear" of the United States, but are in no rush to do so. The desire of the Sandinistas for closer ties with Moscow enables the latter to pursue a low-cost policy. The Soviets do not want a socialist Nicaragua until the United States decides to leave it be, and the revolution is better able to take care of itself. Nicaragua has to make itself look more attractive before the Soviets will step in. The Soviets have not gone out of their way to promote the development of a Cuban-like relationship. To the extent that this is happening anyhow, it is due to the need of the Sandinistas for a counterweight to the Americans. Soviet inaction is even more striking given the increase in Soviet capabilities since 1959. The Soviet Union will move with supreme caution as long as the United States indicates its resolve to oppose Soviet incursions in the hemisphere. The preceding analysis would suggest that there are more constructive ways to do this than bankroll a contra war against Nicaragua which only increases the Sandinistas' dependence on the Soviet Union. A return to a policy of carrots
and sticks--for both the Soviet Union and Nicaragua, or, at the opposite extreme, a full-scale American invasion of Nicaragua would be more likely to achieve the desired results; needless to say, the latter course would present a new set of difficulties in terms of American domestic politics and relations with Latin America and NATO.

What do the factors influencing Soviet policy in the Caribbean presage? If the United States comes to accept the Nicaraguan presence in the Hemisphere, one can expect to see an increase in Soviet activity. Other developments which might lead to greater Soviet involvement in Nicaragua would be an improvement in the Soviet economy or a greater emphasis by the Politburo on the revolutionary purposes of international communism. Conversely, an improvement in Soviet-American relations should cause the Soviet Union to mute its support for Nicaragua. The Soviets showed in Cuba that they will make trade-offs in the Caribbean to satisfy higher priority desires. The Soviets would probably be willing curtail support for Nicaragua in exchange for concessions in another area of Soviet-American relations.

Despite all its rhetoric about the impossibility of 'linkage,' the Soviet leadership has never been indifferent to the prospective payoff in bilateral benefits that might, in principle, flow from selective acts of restraint calculated to conciliate the American elite.238

Soviet withdrawal from Nicaragua could be exchanged for an end to American assistance to Afghan rebels. Andropov acknowledged the situations' similarities in an April 1983 interview:

It is...far from being a matter of indifference to us what is happening directly on our southern border. Washington even goes so far as arrogating for itself the
right to judge what government must be there in Nicaragua since this allegedly affects United States interests.... But Nicaragua is over one thousand kilometres away from the U.S.A. and we have a rather long common border with Afghanistan.239

Other possible trade-offs include greater security for Cuba or progress on arms control.

In the immediate future, however, the Soviet Union will continue to bide its time, keeping a low profile and taking advantage of opportunities as they present themselves while avoiding crisis. While desirous of the political and ideological benefits of "another Cuba," the Soviets would prefer to avoid duplication of the economic and security burdens of the original.
FOOTNOTES

Throughout the footnotes, the following abbreviation has been used:
CDSP for Current Digest of the Soviet Press

3. A discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis is beyond the scope of this paper. Though not denying its significance, I believe that a meaningful comparison of Soviet policy toward the two revolutions can be made without reference to it.
5. Ibid., pp. 17-24, discusses various sources of perceptions of the developing world in the Soviet Union.
6. See Ibid., Preface, for a discussion of this problem.
17. Luis E. Aguilar, "Cuba and the Latin American Communist


20. Ibid., p. xix.


22. "It rarely, if ever, serves as a motivating factor when other state interests and objectives are not at stake, but always must legitimate actions that are taken." Ibid., p. xi. See the later Soviet reaction to Castro's socialism.


28. The Caribbean Basin, or, henceforth, the Caribbean, includes the Caribbean archipelago (the English-speaking islands, Guyana, Suriname, French Guinea and Belize), Mexico, the five Central American republics, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela.


30. For example, Batista was called the "henchman of America" (V. Levin, "Cuba is Fighting, Cuba will Win!" Pravda, January 3, 1959, translated in CDSP 11, no. 1 (1959), p. 30.) and "Wall Street stooge" (L. Kamynin, "Concerning Fidel Castro's Visit to the USA," Izvestia, April 26, 1959, translated in CDSP 11:17 (1959), p. 25); Somoza was "the U.S. imperialists' chief henchman and policeman in Central America." (S. Losev, "A New Life for Nicaragua," International Affairs, February 1981, p. 114.)


32. For example: Pravda, February 9, 1959; Izvestia, April 10, 1959; Pravda, May 12, 1959; Izvestia, August 5, 1959; Pravda, August 12, 1959.

33. For example: Pravda, January 3, 1959; Izvestia, April 10, 1959; Izvestia, April 26, 1959.

34. Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, p. 13. In August and September, the Soviets agreed to purchase 270,000 tons of Cuban sugar in 1959 and and 230,000 tons in 1960. In
1955, the Soviet Union had purchased 442,000 tons and in 1957, 351,000 tons. "The 1959 agreements...appear to have been routine commercial transactions with little political significance." Edward Gonzalez, "Castro's Revolution, Cuban Communist Appeals, and the Soviet Response," *World Politics* 21, no. 1 (October 1968), note, pp. 56-57.


38. Ibid., p. 9.


50. The phrase is Levesque's, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, p. xxii.


55. "Great Victories to You, Cubans," *Pravda*, February 16,
58. Parkinson, Latin America, p. 73. See Gonzalez, "Castro’s Revolution," pp. 49-53, for measures taken by Castro to reorient his domestic and foreign policies to attract Soviet support. Suarez also holds this latter view.
60. Parkinson, Latin America, p. 74.
61. Gonzalez, "Castro’s Revolution," pp. 61-66. At the time that Cuban-Soviet diplomatic relations were restored, Blas Roca, leader of the PSP, was in Moscow. Conversations with Roca may have encouraged Khrushchev to strengthen ties with Cuba. Suarez, Cuba, p. 91.
62. For example, William M. LeoGrande writes that "Washington’s hostility drove Cuba into the arms of the Soviet Union," and that, "as hostility between Nicaragua and the United States escalated, the Sandinistas were pushed even further into the arms of Cuba and the Soviet Union for lack of any alternative." "Cuba and Nicaragua: From the Somozas to the Sandinistas," in Levine, The New Cuban Presence in the Caribbean, pp. 50, 56.
63. There are indications that this was a matter of pride and Castro intended to accept American aid later on. On his way to the United States in April 1959, Castro told his finance minister, Rufo Lopez-Fresquet, "Look Rufo, I don’t want this trip to be like that of other new Latin American leaders who always come to the U.S. to ask for money. I want this to be a good-will trip. Besides, the Americans will be surprised. And when we go back to Cuba, they will offer us aid without our asking for it. Consequently we will be in a better bargaining position." Blasier, The Hovering Giant, p. 181.
65. Cruz Sequeira, "The Origins of Sandinista Foreign Policy," in Leiken, Central America, pp. 102-03.
69. Ibid., p. 57.
71. Information on the development of Sino-Cuban relations in this paragraph comes from Suarez, Cuba, pp. 91, 103, 116-118.
73. MacFarlane, Superpower Rivalry and Soviet Policy in the Caribbean, p. 45.
75. The 1980-81 figures are from Valenta and Valenta, "Soviet

76. In 1981, Soviet exports to Nicaragua were worth 4.7 million rubles, compared to 5.7 million rubles of imports; the corresponding figures for 1982 are 36.6 million and 5.9 million rubles respectively. Vneshnaya Torgovlya, March 1984.


82. 42.4 million rubles worth of exports were sent to Nicaragua; 9.5 million rubles worth of imports were received in the Soviet Union. Vneshnaya Torgovlya, March 1984.


84. Cruz Sequeira, "The Origins of Sandinista Foreign Policy," in Leiken, Central America, p. 106.

85. Valenta and Valenta, "Soviet Strategy and Policies in the Caribbean Basin," in Wiarda, Rift and Revolution, p. 217. This figure is low compared to the estimated 1500 Cubans studying in the USSR in 1962, in addition to 1000 Cubans finishing a course in agriculture. Clissold, Soviet Relations with Latin America, p. 269.

86. "Fraternal is Frugal," p. 52.


88. Ibid., p. 344.

89. Schwab and Sims, "Relations with Communist States," in Walker, Nicaragua, p. 454.


97. Rothenberg, "The Soviets and Central America," in Leiken,
Central America, p. 141.

98. Goure and Rothenberg, Soviet Penetration of Latin America, p. 133.


100. Ibid., p. 22.


Levesque suggests that given the slowness of bureaucracies and their reluctance to become involved in risky situations, the Soviets actually adjusted rapidly to Cuban events in 1960-61.

110. Castro insisted in an interview on July 10 that the Soviet missile offer was "absolutely spontaneous" and that the rockets offered were real, not "figurative." Suarez, Cuba, p. 93.

111. "The Monroe Doctrine is long since dead and will no longer be of help to the imperialist colonialists," Tass statement, Pravda, July 17, 1960, translated in CDSP 12, no. 29 (1960), p. 17.

Even in a supposed clarification of the rocket threat in a conversation with Cuban journalist Carlos Franqui on October 22, 1960, Khrushchev did not give a definitive commitment.

Franqui: The imperialists are claiming that the Soviet government's statement on the possibility of using rocket weapons in the event of armed aggression against Cuba is of purely symbolic significance. What do you think about this?

Khrushchev: I should like such a statement being made by the enemies of the Cuban revolution to be really symbolic. This requires that the imperialists' threat of intervention against Cuba not turn into military operations. There would then be no necessity of testing the reality of our statement on armed aid to the Cuban people against aggression. Is that clear?

Franqui: We too shall use it as a figurative expression in the event they hold off attacking us?

Khrushchev: Right."

Franqui: But if the threat does exist, if the threat materializes, there are ample rockets in readiness for this?

Khrushchev: No question about it. Your understanding is correct. It would be good if there were no aggression. And we're doing our utmost to avoid launching combat rockets, because the main thing is that people not be destroyed ....

Pravda, October 30, 1960, translated in CDSP 12, no. 44 (1960),


114. Ibid., p. 23.


117. Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, note, p. 28.

118. Dinerstein, The Making of a Missile Crisis, p. 137. The Soviets also pointed to the internal solidarity and popularity of the Cuban regime and the sympathy for Cuba throughout Latin America. Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, p. 29.

119. Quoted in Suarez, Cuba, p. 164. Khrushchev obviously changed his mind following later developments; he neglects to mention his ultimatum when discussing the Bay of Pigs in his memoirs.

120. Cleto Di Giovanni, Jr. and Mose L. Harvey, Crisis in Central America (Advanced International Studies Institute, 1982), p. 92.


129. Clement, "Moscow and Nicaragua," p. 79. The Soviets sent only a low level delegation to the anniversary celebrations.

130. Ibid., p. 80.


133. A White Paper on Cuba issued by the State Department in early 1961 on the "grave and urgent challenge" of Castro's Cuba bears striking resemblance to many official documents on
Nicaragua:
The challenge results from the fact that the leaders of the revolutionary regime betrayed their own revolution, delivered that revolution into the hands of powers alien to the hemisphere, and transformed it into an instrument employed with calculated effect to suppress the rekindled hope of the Cuban people for democracy and to intervene in the internal affairs of other American Republics.


135. Ronald Reagan: "I think we are seeing the application of the domino theory ... and I think it's time the people of the United States realize ... that we are the last domino." International Herald Tribune, October 13, 1980. Quoted in Wolf Grabendorff, "The Internationalization of the Central American Crisis," in Political Change in Central America: Internal and External Dimensions, eds. Wolf Grabendorff et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), note, p. 170.

136. On February 21, 1985 Reagan confirmed that it was the Administration’s goal to remove the Sandinista government if it remained communist. "Reagan wants Nicaragua’s Sandinista rulers to say ‘uncle,’” The Globe and Mail, February 22, 1985, p. 8.

137. American military aid to Honduras rose from $3.9 million in Fiscal Year 1980 to $78.5 million in FY 1984, while the number of American military personnel went from 26 to 346. William M. Leogrande, "The United States and Nicaragua," in Walker, Nicaragua, p. 437. The development of airstrips in Honduras large enough for American troop transports to land on, and the installation of a sophisticated radar and electronic surveillance system for use in the area suggest that the Americans are preparing for the eventuality of direct American participation in the conflict.

138. Operation Big Pine in February 1982 involved 1,600 American personnel; Big Pine II, which began in the summer of 1983, included a total of nineteen American warships engaging in manoeuvres off the Nicaraguan coast and 6,000 American troops participating in war games in Honduras.


142. Soviet references to American provocations against Cuba: Pravda, April 18, 1980; Pravda, April 29, 1980; Izvestia, May 9, 1980; Pravda, November 9, 1981.


151. Steele, Soviet Power, p. 68
157. "Cuba has achieved its revolution independently and has freely chosen the path of socialist development, which is best suited to ensure its rapid and effective development and the highest material and spiritual living standards for its people." Quoted in Clissold, Soviet Relations with Latin America, p. 264. Pravda and Izvestia did not mention this nor speak of socialism in Cuba. Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, p. 30.
158. An April 11 Pravda editorial said Cuba was "at the stage of socialist transformation." Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, p. 37.
161. Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution, p. 32.
164. All quotes in this paragraph are from Ramet and Lopez-Alves, "Moscow and the Revolutionary Left in Latin America," p. 353.
165. DiGiovanni and Harvey, Crisis in Central America, p. 93.
166. MacFarlane, Superpower Rivalry and Soviet Policy in the Caribbean, p.44.
183. Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, p. 35.
187. Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, p. 64.
188. MacFarlane, *Superpower Rivalry and Third World Radicalism*, p. 137.
189. Ibid., p. 166.
192. "Now socialism rather than imperialism has become the decisive force of world policy.... The cause of peace is also being upheld by the peace-loving states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which occupy an anti-imperialist position and, together with the socialist countries, form an ever-expanding zone of peace." B. Ponomarev, "Peaceful Coexistence is a Vital Necessity," *Pravda*, August 12, 1960, translated in *CDSP* 12, no. 32 (1960), p. 4.
194. G. N. Shevyakov, Member of State committee of the council of ministers of the USSR on external economic relations, "Soviet Cooperation with Cuba," *International Affairs*, March 1962, pp. 74-75.
199. Di Giovanni and Harvey, *Crisis in Central America*, p. 43.
204. Ibid., p. 81.
205. Ibid., p. 79.
209. "The Cuban Revolution and Latin America," International Affairs, December 1963, p. 45. It was also felt that the revolution united anti-imperialist forces in Latin America and led to a leftward swing amongst the Latin American middle classes, p. 48.
211. Ibid., p. 352.
226. It is neither the intention nor within the scope of this paper to comment on the internal characteristics of Nicaragua which may lead one to conclude that it is, or is not, "another Cuba."


BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Books and Journal Articles


*International Affairs.* Moscow. 1960-63; 1978-86.


Papp, Daniel S. *Soviet Perceptions of the Developing World in*


Valenta, Jiri. "The USSR, Cuba, and the Crisis in Central America." Orbis 25, no.3 (Fall 1981), 715-46.


Walker, Thomas W., ed. Nicaragua: The First Five Years. New


ii. *Newspaper and Magazine Articles*


"Raising the Stakes." *Time*, May 13, 1985, pp. 32-34.

