

WHITE HOUSE DIGEST

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Soviet Objectives and Intentions in Latin America

The immediate Soviet objective in Latin America is to enhance the USSR's influence at the expense of the U.S. To that end, Moscow seeks proper surface relations on the state level with most Latin American governments while working covertly with communist parties and front groups to promote causes compatible with Soviet interests.

At the same time, the USSR works directly and through its Cuban client to strengthen radical regimes and Marxist-Leninist movements, particularly in the Caribbean region. Its ultimate objective is the political transformation of existing regimes to communism.

Recent events in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Grenada, Suriname, and elsewhere clearly attest to active Soviet involvement in supporting totalitarian movements in the region. Expanded trade relationships with major South American countries have meanwhile provided Moscow with new footholds and prospects for expanding influence.

Yet distance from the USSR, awareness of traditional U.S. sensitivity to developments in the Western Hemisphere, and the desire to avoid provoking a confrontation with the U.S. have acted, and may continue to act, as constraints on direct Soviet involvement.

The Soviets may also be constrained by a lack of receptivity to their overtures by Latin Americans. Any impression of U.S. weakness or vacillation, however, could cause small, defenseless states to seek accommodation with the Soviets.

Background: Paths to Power

Following the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, Moscow concentrated on strengthening the regime of Fidel Castro through massive injections of military and economic aid, to the point where Cuba became completely dependent on Soviet largesse and eventually a willing accomplice in Soviet political objectives.

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Nonetheless, during the 1960's, Moscow apparently opposed supplying arms to the many small untested Latin American leftist or communist groups which took their cue from the Cuban communist takeover. The Soviets also refused to support Cuban adventures in the area, arguing that the various leftist groups were not ready or able to achieve the success the Cubans had.

Moscow opted instead to emphasize the so-called via pacifica or parliamentary path to power, citing as prototype the emerging Marxist-leftist alliance in Chile. With Salvador Allende's overthrow in 1973, however, Moscow reassessed its doctrine and tactics, and gradually began giving greater emphasis to "armed struggle" as the means for turning the tide in favor of violent revolt, if circumstances were propitious.

Soviet/Cuban military collaboration in bringing Marxists to power in Angola in 1975-1976, and in providing direct military assistance to the Marxist regime in Ethiopia in 1977-1978, set the stage for a revival of the pursuit of government takeovers by violence in the Western Hemisphere.

With the success of the Sandinistas (who had relied heavily on Cuban arms and training) in Nicaragua in 1979, Moscow evidently became convinced that a new communist movement was emerging in Latin America. Soviet media began openly advocating the violent overthrow of regimes in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, as well as of the Pinochet regime in Chile. (Examples of such statements may be found in the attached Supplement.)

Cuba as Surrogate

An important, if not crucial ingredient in Soviet calculations pertaining to the Western Hemisphere has always been to weigh U.S. reactions carefully at each step along the path. Since the missile confrontation in 1962, the Soviets have proceeded, albeit cautiously, in transforming Cuba into a viable base of operations and in allowing Havana to take the lead in dealing with sympathetic groups in third countries.

Meanwhile, the Soviet presence and stake in the Caribbean, anchored in Cuba, has been growing incrementally. Soviet economic aid to Cuba in 1982 amounted to roughly \$4.6 billion, equivalent to one-fourth of Cuba's GNP.

Aid to Cuba, some of which may be intended for other countries, accounts for over 60% of the USSR's global economic assistance program. An additional \$600 million to \$1 billion in military aid was also provided last year. (Deliveries in 1982 exceeded those in 1981 by 2,000 metric tons; annual totals of the last two years have been the highest since 1962.)

Some 2,000-2,500 Soviet military and 6,000-8,000 civilian advisers are currently in Cuba, in addition to the Soviet brigade of 2,600-3,000 men. (The number of military advisers increased by 500 last year.)

The Soviet intelligence monitoring/telecommunications facility in Cuba is the largest such Soviet installation outside the USSR and monitors a wide spectrum of U.S. civilian and military telecommunications.

Long range "Bear" bomber aircraft also capable of reconnaissance and anti-submarine actions are deployed on a regular basis to Cuba. Soviet naval combatants regularly stage joint training exercises with the Cubans.

Nicaragua: Wave of the Future in Central America?

With Cuba serving as a base for operations in all the Caribbean, Moscow sees Nicaragua as a possible door to Central America and clearly hopes to fashion in Managua an instrument with some of the impact, but not the cost, of its Havana surrogate.

To avoid alienating Mexico, Panama, and others in the region, and particularly to avert any U.S. retaliatory actions, the bulk of Soviet assistance to Nicaragua has been channelled mainly through Cuba. (Libya, some members of the communist bloc, and other countries, however, provide some of the Soviet arms arriving in the country.)

Some 6,000 Cuban civilian advisers are in Nicaragua to facilitate the political transformation of Nicaragua to a totalitarian system working to help set up a Nicaraguan secret police system, engaging in ideological indoctrination, transforming the educational system into a vehicle of indoctrination, and helping set up a government-controlled state monopoly of broadcast media.

The Cubans also helped administer the literacy campaign which combined basic education with communist indoctrination of peasants whose illiteracy ordinarily would have made them immune to it.

The Cubans also assist in various economic and technical projects. As part of this overall effort, they are engaged in training and developing Nicaraguan cadres which will join the international communist movement in its work in other Latin American countries.

Another 2,000 Cuban security advisers supervise the transfer of arms, and the development, modernization and expansion of military forces and facilities. They are also actively engaged in support of guerrillas operating against governments elsewhere in the region.

The USSR itself has so far sent about 50 advisers overtly and \$125 million in military equipment and supplies to Nicaragua. In addition there are currently 35 East German, 50 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) members, and some Libyan personnel in the country.

Nicaraguan military pilots and crews meanwhile have trained in Bulgaria and other East European locations. Any transfer of MiGs from Cuba, however, would presumably necessitate Soviet and Cuban agreement that the situation warranted such a move despite the risk of U.S. counteraction.

Grenada: Escalation of the Stakes

The U.S. and Caribbean joint action in Grenada brought the Soviets and Cubans a serious setback in the Caribbean. Moscow's decision to back the Maurice Bishop regime soon after it came to power reflected the then-optimistic communist estimate of revolutionary prospects in the region.

Soviet willingness to supplement political support for the new regime with military assistance over a five-year period attested also to a confidence that the risks involved were few. Nonetheless, Soviet insistence on channeling arms and aid through Cuba demonstrated continuing caution on Moscow's part.

The three secret Soviet-Grenadian treaties recovered in Grenada reveal Soviet willingness, even an eagerness, to be generous with military aid. The agreements, covering the period 1980-1985, provided for delivery of some \$25.8 million in weapons, ammunition, uniforms, trucks, and other logistical equipment -- so long as the regime worked to consolidate its Marxist revolutionary credentials. The treaty stipulated that all arms be shipped through Cuba.

Also in keeping with Soviet practice elsewhere, economic aid was less generous. During Bishop's tenure, the USSR was known to have provided to Grenada some \$10 million in trade credits and economic and technical aid. Included in the known programs were promises for a satellite earth station and for conducting a feasibility study for a deep-water port.

Moscow may also have helped finance the some 700 Cubans on the island, the majority of whom were working on the Point Salines Airport (scaled to accommodate even the largest jet aircraft, it could have been used to facilitate Cuban troop flights to Africa) and constructing a battalion-sized military camp at Calvigny.

Other Cubans were attached to almost every Grenadian ministry, handling political indoctrination and economic projects. Despite the relative newness of their presence in the country, the Soviets had by the end of the Bishop regime made a substantial investment while keeping their involvement with Grenada largely indirect.

Nevertheless, the rescue mission was more important to Moscow's position in Nicaragua and Cuba, given the much larger Soviet investment there, than merely the loss of prestige involved in the demise of the pro-Soviet regime in Grenada. The inability (or unwillingness) of the USSR to come to the aid of the pro-Soviet government was only too apparent.

The Soviets thus have tried to exploit what international and domestic U.S. criticism there was of the invasion in part to deter similar actions against Nicaragua, but more broadly to try to undercut American and international support for what the USSR sees as an increasingly determined U.S. Administration.

The Caribbean: Future Prospects

Since the Grenadian operation, both Cuba and Nicaragua, presumably at Soviet urging, have been showing extreme caution in their dealings with rebel groups lest they provoke the U.S. Presumably there have also been new debates about Third World communist doctrine and possible recrimination between Moscow and Havana.

Moscow nonetheless will continue to be on the lookout for opportunities to generate and exploit differences between the U.S. and the countries of the region but is meeting little receptivity.

Suriname, for example, has decided to scale back its Cuban connections. The day after the U.S./Caribbean action in Grenada, Oscar Osvaldo Cardenas, Cuba's Ambassador to Suriname, was expelled.

South America: Trade, Aid and Covert Activity

While the USSR is interested in access to needed South American goods, such as foodstuffs and raw materials, the penetration of regional markets which have historically been dependent on Western suppliers remains an important objective.

The 1979 partial U.S. grain embargo stimulated Moscow to greater activity here; trade with Argentina, Brazil and Mexico grew dramatically. Large Latin American trade surpluses, a result of the USSR's inability to provide durable export goods, limit the effectiveness of trade as a tool of influence, however, as do the regional suspicions of Soviet motives.

While, for example, fishing port rights granted in return for technical aid to Ecuador and Peru have led to some increase of Soviet prestige in these countries, evidence that Soviet vessels have engaged in intelligence collection and complaints of overfishing prevent translation of that presence into political leverage.

In Argentina, one of the USSR's major grain suppliers, the Soviets are pressing Buenos Aires to buy more to reduce the \$1.7 billion 1982 trade deficit. Hopes that they could sell military equipment in the aftermath of the South Atlantic conflict have not come to fruition. The Soviets are, however, seeking to expand their planning and construction role in Argentine energy development with more sales of hydropower and other equipment.

Peru purchased aircraft and other military equipment from the USSR during an earlier period of leftist military rule and still hosts between 100-125 Soviet military trainers and technicians. The Soviets would like to make further military sales and are pushing for greater participation in major civilian construction projects involving Soviet goods. Lima has just succeeded in rescheduling its over \$1 billion military debt with Moscow.

The Soviets have not followed the same policy of promoting state-to-state and trade relations with Chile. Since 1981 Moscow has overtly backed the Chilean Communist Party's (PCCH) dual policy of "armed struggle" coupled with attempts to work together with the non-violent opposition to the Pinochet regime. (See Supplement)

A new party line of unity and violence (in fact, a unity molded by combat) was enunciated in December, 1980. In January, 1981, the communists signed a unification agreement with seven other Chilean leftist political organizations. Within two weeks, Moscow began broadcasting PCCH explanations of the new policy and calls for armed insurgency.

Recently, Moscow underscored its endorsement of this tactic by publishing in the Soviet press a new PCCH "Manifesto" which called for Pinochet's violent overthrow.

Long-Term Investment: Ideological Penetration

Perhaps the Soviet program in Latin America with the greatest long term potential is that of educational exchange, i.e. scholarships to third world students to study in the USSR. These are designed to serve as the initial thrust of any Soviet political influence operations in such Third World areas.

The number of Soviet Bloc academic grants offered annually to Latin American students jumped from 400 in the 1960's to over 6,000 today. . Seven thousand Cubans were studying in the Soviet Union in 1979. Last year, 700 Nicaraguans were reported to be enrolled there and an additional 300 scholarships were being provided to Managua. There are also smaller groups from many other Latin American countries.

Soviet scholarships include free room, board, tuition, transportation, medical care and a small stipend. Since the programs began in the mid-1960's, some 6,800 Latin American students have utilized them.

About 3,000 Latin American students, including 1,600 Nicaraguans, are also studying in Cuba. Cuba has constructed 17 schools for foreigners, (each reportedly costing about \$2 million) and spends \$600,000 annually to operate them.

This process also includes the systematic effort to recruit Latin students to serve as Soviet agents. Playing the percentages, the Soviet can always rely on recruiting a small but steady percentage of these students to serve the KGB when they return to their homeland.

Altogether, this investment in "education," indoctrination and recruitment over time succeeds in producing ideologically and politically dedicated cadres which serve as the local spearhead of communist takeovers in the region.

Conclusion

The Soviets view Latin America as the "strategic rear" of the U.S. Effective projection of American power to Western Europe, the Middle East or the Far East is dependent on a secure southern flank. In the event of a European crisis, a significant number of NATO reinforcements and half the NATO resupply material would originate at Gulf Coast ports.

The Soviets, therefore, can be expected to try to turn Latin America, and especially Central America and the Caribbean, into an area of insecurity for the U.S. They hope to do this by supporting anti-American movements and then using their support as leverage to turn revolutionary currents in a pro-Soviet direction.

It is a strategy of opportunism, of patience, of indirect attack, and of attrition. Working with Fidel Castro, the Soviets strive to exacerbate existing problems in the Western Hemisphere. In general terms, Moscow seeks to reduce U.S. options incrementally and increase the amount of men, attention, and materiel the U.S. must commit to the Caribbean region. By focusing on the Caribbean, Moscow hopes to bring pressure on the U.S. to change its traditional policy of concentrating on European security.

SUPPLEMENT: SOVIET STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF
COMMUNISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Nicaragua

- 3/17/82 Soviet Ambassador to Mexico Rostislav Sergeyeve warned that if the situation in Nicaragua gets worse, his government will help the Central American nation politically and diplomatically. (Cited by Mexico City NOTIMEX)
- 3/25/83 TASS on Andropov/Ortega Meeting:
"Yuri Andropov noted that the Soviet Union regarded with great sympathies the effort of the friendly Nicaraguan people to ensure economic and social transformation of their country, and rendered to them the political support and material assistance in that dream of seeing their motherland free. For the sake of this bright goal and the happiness of their people, they are fully determined to fight on to complete victory."

Chile

- 6/16/81 Radio Moscow, (in Spanish to Chile):
"Against the entrenched fascism which plans to continue oppressing the people until the end of the twentieth century, the Communist Party advocates the so-called people's holy right to rebellion."
"The rebellion will be woven with violent and nonviolent actions and its main characteristic will be the refusal to accept the legitimacy of fascism and to deny it any right to existence."
- 6/7/82 Radio Moscow in Spanish to Chile, broadcasting text of Chilean Communist Party Communique:
"The Political Committee of the Communist Party of Chile, PCCH, made a study of the current situation in the country and considered the urgent need to develop a mass struggle and common actions by all the forces who are against Pinochet's tyranny."
- 9/13/82 Radio Moscow in Spanish to Chile, quoting the Proclamation issued by the Chilean Communist Party on September 11:

"Everybody is expecting something to happen. Chileans: We, the Communists, tell you: Don't wait; get organized and fight. Nothing will be achieved without fighting."

1983/No.21 New Times: A Baryshev: "Pinochet on a Volcano"

"The recent events (May riots in Chile) testify to a new upsurge of the resistance movement against the fascist dictatorship." "All this confirms the conclusion drawn in the Communist Party document circulated in Santiago in April that the conditions have emerged for 1983 to become a year of decisive struggle for the Pinochet."

1983/No.29 New Times: "Igor Rybalkin: "Democracy Now!"

"The Communists are in the vanguard of the fighters for the restoration of democracy in their country. The Communist Party is consistently encouraging the mass struggle against the fascist regime and is working to bring about the unity of the Left forces and of the opposition as a whole for the sake of the common goal -- the overthrow of the dictatorship."

Cuba

2/26/81 Brezhnev-Castro bilateral in Moscow:

"In present conditions, when the United States imperialists launched another anti-Cuban campaign, the USSR, as before, is siding with socialist Cuba and expressing full support for its principled policy of peace and friendship between peoples."

2/27/81 The Soviet Ambassador to Mexico:

"We will always support our friends and will never abandon them."

4/7/81 Brezhnev speech to the Czech Party Congress:

Cuba is an "inseparable part" of the socialist community.

9/15/81 Brezhnev in Moscow:

"The Cuban revolutionaries have traversed a long and difficult path. They have encountered and continue to encounter all sorts of challenges and provocations on the part of imperialism. But Cuba has proved that it is able to stand firm in the defense of its interests. Using this occasion, I would like to stress that the Soviet Union has been, is, and will be in solidarity with socialist Cuba."

11/6/81 Marshal Ustinov at the annual revolution ceremony:
"The United States must consider the consequences of its actions against Cuba."

2/9/82 Brezhnev greeting to 10th World Federation of Trade Unions Congress in Havana:

"The people of Cuba know that they have on their side the Soviet Union and the entire international working class, and they have on their side the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist community... This solidarity is a reliable guarantee that no imperialist power will be able to throw it (Cuba) from its chosen path."

El Salvador

7/83 International Affairs, V. Krestyaninov: "Quiet Aggression against El Salvador"

"The Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community, all the forces of peace and progress the world over, side with the people of El Salvador in the struggle and strongly denounce the actions by the imperialists seeking to destabilize the situation and build up tensions in Central America."

Grenada

4/9/82 TASS on Tikhonov message to Bishop on Grenadan national day:

"The Soviet people solidarise (sic) with the people of Grenada waging the struggle for social progress, for the ensurance of independence and sovereignty of their country."

8/1/82 Pravda on USSR-Grenada Communique issued during Prime Minister Bishop's visit to Moscow:

"The Soviet side expressed solidarity with the Grenadan people in their efforts to overcome the grim colonial legacy and develop the country on a free, democratic basis. Support was expressed for the Grenadan people's inalienable right to build their own lives without any outside pressure or interference."

