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An Analysis of the Relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union: 1959-1990

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION: 1959 - 1990

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To my parents, Philip and Dawn Goldman, for their unwavering support. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Cuban-Soviet relations from 1959 to the present and demonstrates that there has been no consistent move toward homogeneity of Cuban and Soviet foreign policy aims as a result of Soviet manipulation of Cuba. Although the two nations have cooperated and supported one another on several occasions, there have also been many occasions when Cuban and Soviet objectives and ideologies were in direct conflict, especially concerning support for armed communist struggle in the Third World and the need for significant economic restructuring in communist nations. Citing specific examples of Cuba's autonomous foreign policy and divergence of Cuban and Soviet foreign policy goals, this thesis argues against popular theories which maintain that Soviet influence and economic control over Cuba has allowed the Soviet Union to dominate Cuban foreign policy.

This thesis divides the evolution of Cuban-Soviet relations into five distinct eras. Chapter one examines relations from Castro's victory in 1959 to Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964. Chapter two explores the breakdown of Cuban-Soviet relations from 1964 to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Chapter three examines renewed accommodation in Cuban-Soviet relations beginning with Castro's support of the Soviet invasion and continued improvement through the middle of the 1970s as a result of shared foreign policy concerns. Chapter four reviews Cuban-Soviet relations from 1975 to the beginning of Gorbachev's rule in 1985. Chapter five examines the dramatic changes in Cuban-Soviet relations which have taken place during the first six years of Mikhail Gorbachev's administration, particularly the sweeping reforms that Gorbachev has proposed for Soviet economic and foreign policies. These changes threaten to destroy the Cuban-Soviet rapprochement that was built over the past two and a half decades. The chapter will examine changes in Soviet strategy, particularly those changes which were directly influenced by the Soviet Union's relationship with Cuba, Castro's reaction to these changes, and possible directions for the future of Cuban-Soviet relations.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION: 1959 - 1990

Introduction

Since Lenin consolidated power in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Soviet foreign policy has followed a two-track course of establishing state-to-state relations while also emphasizing support for revolution and native communist parties.[1] Although state-to-state relations are a standard feature of any nation's foreign policy, support for native communist parties and the promotion of revolutions of national liberation are features which were, in the 1920s, unique to Soviet foreign policy. These antagonistic policies frequently undermined the Soviet leadership's ability to establish normal relations with many nations in Europe and throughout the world. Although more recent Soviet leaders have de-emphasized official Soviet support for international communist parties and Marxist revolutions since they impede the Soviet Union's drive toward peaceful coexistence with other nations, the Soviet Constitution of 1977 clearly affirmed, "The USSR's foreign policy is aimed at ensuring favorable international conditions for building communism in the USSR, protecting the Soviet Union's state

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[1] Eusebio Mujal-Leon, The USSR and Latin America (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), xvi.

interests, strengthening the positions of world socialism, supporting the peoples' struggle for national liberation and social progress, preventing wars of aggression, achieving general and complete disarmament, and consistently implementing the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems."[2]

Despite the relative rigidity of Soviet domestic politics, Soviet foreign policy has demonstrated the ability to adapt to the ever-changing conditions underlying relations with other nations. Soviet leaders since Lenin have stressed the importance of an organic foreign policy able to adjust to the changing nature of the international system, a system which has distinctive characteristics shaped by the goals and actions of competing socioeconomic systems and by the "correlation of forces" among nations.[3] However, it was not until the end of World War II that the Soviet leadership saw any realistic possibility of bringing about international socialist revolutions without provoking dangerous retaliations from the capitalist powers. Although Marxism-Leninism recognizes the importance of revolution, particularly revolution resulting from class conflict, it

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[2] From "The Fundamental Law of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," as quoted in Robert Sharlet, The New Soviet Constitution of 1977: Analysis and Text (Brunswick, OH: King's Court Communications, 1978), 85.

[3] Robbin F. Laird and Erik P. Hoffman, eds., Soviet Foreign Policy in A Changing World (New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1986), xvii.

mandates that tensions should be kept within limits and not be permitted to involve Soviet foreign policy in high-risk military conflicts or in "adventurist" undertakings.[4] As a result, Stalin sought to consolidate within the Soviet camp only those nations which the United States and Britain recognized as falling within the Soviet sphere. He avoided any direct Soviet interference in Western Europe and immediately sought to shield Eastern Europe behind a veil of secrecy in order to conceal the vulnerability and instability of the Soviet Union and its satellite nations. The consolidation of Eastern European nations marked the Soviet Union's first move toward establishing a community of communist nations.

Whereas the Soviet Union has been opposed to engaging in armed conflict with the United States and Western Europe, it was quick to resort to military intervention to prevent the withdrawal of Eastern European nations from the Soviet camp. Moscow authorized the use of military intervention in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as "indirect intervention" in Poland in 1981.[5] Malcom Macintosh argues that Soviet interests in Eastern Europe were founded on military and security motives

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[4] Michael Curtis, Introduction to Comparative Politics, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 382.

[5] F. Stephen Larrabee, "Soviet Policy Toward Eastern Europe: Interests, Instruments and Trends," from R. Laird and E. Hoffman, 531.

backed by few, if any, ideological considerations.[6] Eastern Europe created a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, provided space for Soviet military deployment and maneuvers away from Soviet soil, thereby enabling Moscow to launch a lightning offensive against NATO, and supplied the Soviet military with a potential reserve of troops in the event of a large-scale armed conflict.

In addition, Communist Eastern Europe proved an effective diplomatic bloc which customarily supported Soviet initiatives and positions in the United Nations and other international organizations. In order to reward the allegiance of Eastern European nations and ensure their continued loyalty, the Soviet Union developed a complex system of economic interdependence which generally benefitted the client state. Although the early economic relationship between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union favored the Soviets, this trend was reversed in the years following Stalin's death. From the 1960s up until the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was paying an increasingly steep price to maintain its domination over Eastern Europe and other client states.[7] This use of economic assistance and

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[6] Malcom Macintosh, "Military Considerations in Soviet-East European Relations," in Karen Dawisha, ed., Soviet-East European Dilemmas (New York, NY: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 136-137.

[7] Ibid.

trade subsidies proved effective in attracting underdeveloped nations to the Soviet camp and establishing Soviet influence within those nations.

By the 1950s the Soviet Union had begun to see itself as a world power and wanted to increase its influence around the globe. David Albright argues that the Soviet leadership realized that "a superpower does not automatically qualify as a global power ... such a power must be able to demonstrate global reach."[8] Thus, Moscow realized the importance of creating allies among Third World nations in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The Korean War highlighted the ideological struggle being played out in the Third World. The Soviets characterized the competition between capitalism and communism as a zero-sum game, in which advances of one side represented losses for the other. Consequently, the Soviets sought to limit Western influence in the Third World while firmly establishing their own presence in underdeveloped nations.[9]

The Soviet Union faced an additional opponent in the Third World -- the Peoples Republic of China. A rift developed between the Soviet Union and China in the 1950s. Although the two nations had experienced regular clashes as a result of an enduring disagreement over borders, the

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[8] David E. Albright, "Latin America in Soviet Third World Strategy: The Political Dimensions," in E. Mujal-Leon, 12.

[9] Ibid., 15.

confrontation worsened when Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Zedong engaged in an ideological rivalry. Khrushchev sought to liberalize and reform Soviet communism following the death of Stalin. Mao, who was trying to strengthen China's ideological commitment to communism, openly opposed Khrushchev's reforms. The dispute carried over into the international arena, where it developed into a struggle between the two nations to determine which ideology was to guide the formulation of international communist policy, particularly regarding communist movements in the Third World.[10]

China had limited success in attracting Third World allies with its promise of military support for communist revolution. Most underdeveloped nations opted for the economic support offered by the Soviets. However, in reaction to expanding Soviet influence in Africa and Latin America throughout the 1960s and 1970s, China abandoned its earlier effort to cloak itself in the mantle of a militant revolutionary power and attempted to highlight its commitment to economic development.[11] In 1982 the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party asserted that "socialist China belongs to the Third World for it has experienced the same sufferings of most other Third World

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[10] Harry Gelman, "Soviet Policy Toward China," in R. Laird and E. Hoffman, 672.

[11] D. Albright, 17.

countries, and...is faced with similar problems and tasks."[12] Yet despite its attempts to achieve broader appeal among underdeveloped nations, China's influence remained restricted to Asia.

Although China never proved to be a major threat to Soviet influence in the Third World, the United States did. The United States developed considerable interests in Asia and the Middle East, but its most uncontested sphere of influence was Latin America. Indeed, Latin America, as the Third World region furthest from the Soviet Union and nearest to the United States, has traditionally been a low priority area for the Soviet Union. Moscow approached any initiatives in the region with considerable restraint. This was due, in part, to the unwillingness of Soviet leaders to jeopardize Soviet-American relations by instituting Soviet ties with Latin American communist parties. Americans had come to accept the existence of a communist party in the United States, especially since it was relatively obscure and exercised no influence over American policy. However, an actual communist government in the Western hemisphere was not welcome. As a result, the Soviet Union refused to offer overt support to potentially successful communist parties in the region. For example, when the Mexican Communist Party

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[12] Hu Yaobang, "Report to the Twelfth Chinese Communist Party Congress, September 1982," as recorded in "Create a New Situation in All Fields of Socialist Modernization," Beijing Review (September 13, 1982), 29.

had the opportunity to achieve some degree of political influence in Mexico in 1933, the Soviets offered no assistance knowing that it would create tensions with the United States.[13] Even the Soviet press, the mouthpiece for political propaganda of international communism, failed to report fully on the activities of Latin American communists.

Soviet neglect of Latin America continued during the reign of Stalin, who had little interest in establishing diplomatic and economic relations with the remote nations of Latin America.[14] However, as the Soviets began to seek strategic parity with the United States in the 1950s and Khrushchev succeeded Stalin as chairman of the CPSU, Soviet leaders began to reassess the importance of the region to Soviet Cold War strategy.[15] Moscow's attempts to establish relations with Latin American nations proved slow and difficult. By 1960, the Soviets had established ties with only three Latin American governments, in Brazil, Argentina, and Cuba.

Soviet diplomatic, economic, and military activity in the region expanded dramatically throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Relying heavily on Cuba as an ally and, frequently,

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[13] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1973 (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), 645.

[14] Nicola Miller, Soviet Relations with Latin America: 1959-1987 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

[15] Ibid.

a front for Soviet expansionism in the region, the Soviets initiated contacts with several Latin American nations. Many of these nations recognized the immediate benefits of relations with the Soviet Union since even a low-key relationship could be economically and politically profitable in an international system dominated by the two superpowers.[16] In exchange, the Soviet Union advocated the participation of communist parties and other leftist parties in the native governments. Where successfully integrated, as in Mexico and eventually Argentina and Brazil, communist parties helped to ensure strong relations between the Soviet Union and Latin American nations. As a result of improved relations with Latin American democracies, the Soviet Union was afforded a legitimate voice in the affairs of the region and the Third World.

Mark Katz and other scholars have argued that Soviet support for native communist parties was the most effective means for securing Soviet influence in Latin America and the Third World.[17] He asserts that the creation of a disciplined vanguard party along the lines of Marxist-Leninist precepts fulfills the need for a strong centralized government found in many Latin American societies. The communists, when properly organized and established, can

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[16] William H. Luers, "The Soviets and Latin America," The Washington Quarterly, 7, no. 1 (Winter 1984), 9.

[17] See Mark Katz, The Third World in Soviet Military Thought (London, England: Croom Helm, 1982).

replace military and oligarchical governments throughout the Third World. Supporters of this perspective concede that when a communist regime replaces a military regime, the military may remain closely tied to the new communist government. The military helps to ensure the survival of the communist government until mass support for the party can be established. Such was the case with Cuba, the Soviet Union's most visible and enduring ally in Latin America.

This alliance cost the Soviets dearly. By 1989 the Soviet Union was spending an average of $50 billion per annum to secure Cuban friendship, Cuban-Soviet trade, and Soviet military installations on the island.[18] This amount was guaranteed through direct Soviet economic assistance to Cuba, Soviet subsidies of Cuban exports, and Soviet military shipments to Cuba. In order for the Soviet Union to agree to such a high cost for relations with a small island nation, the Soviets must have expected meaningful benefits in return.

In the early 1960s, the Soviets were most concerned with establishing strategic parity with the United States. Cuba was the first nation in the region that publicly sought Soviet cooperation in liberating itself from American dominance. Although Khrushchev was attentive to the maintenance of stable U.S.-Soviet relations, he decided to

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[18] George Black, "Fidel Holds Fast," The Nation (January 1, 1990), 5.

take advantage of the inherent opportunities to be derived from positive relations with Cuba. The island occupied the perfect location for maintaining a constant threat to the United States and its hegemony in the region. Castro's position seemed stable and his celebrated charisma ensured popular support for the regime. The revolutionary government was vocally "anti-imperialist" from the beginning and later claimed a strong commitment to "internationalist duty and solidarity."[19] Each of these qualities encouraged Soviet interest in Cuba.

Khrushchev and subsequent Soviet leaders saw Cuba as fulfilling three significant roles: first, as an anti-imperialist sounding board committed to the erosion of the United States' historical predominance in the region; second, as a base for support of future communist movements in Latin America; and third, as the Soviet Union's primary spokesman for and contact with other Third World nations.[20] As the relationship progressed, the Soviet Union began initiating military agreements with Cuba which were intended to strengthen the Soviet threat to American security along the southern coast of the United States. The Soviets also recognized Cuba as an eager ally in military operations

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[19] W. Raymond Duncan, The Soviet Union and Cuba: Interests and Influences (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 191-192.

[20] Timothy Ashby, The Bear in the Back Yard: Moscow's Caribbean Strategy (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1987), xi.

throughout the Third World. But it was Cuba's role as a source of antagonism for the United States and a source of influence in the Third World that the Soviets most wanted to maintain. However, the Soviets were committed to maintaining a strong alliance with Cuba only as long as it did not jeopardize their fundamental relationship with the United States. Soviet foreign policy stressed the primacy of peaceful coexistence with the United States and its Western European allies. Therefore, any relationship that threatened to undermine this peace was unacceptable to the Soviet leadership.

Immediately following Fidel Castro's revolutionary victory over Fulgencio Batista it was not evident in which direction Castro was planning to take Cuba. Castro inherited an island whose fate had been closely guarded, since 1898 by the United States to maintain regional stability and protect extensive American business interests on the island.[21] Cuba's foreign policy was also dominated by the United States. American hegemony made it difficult for Batista to establish strong relations with most other

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[21] The United States won Cuba's independence from the Spanish in 1898. In 1989, a treaty between Spain and the United States made the island an independent republic under U.S. protection. The U.S. occupation, which ended in 1902, introduced large-scale American investment in Cuba.From 1906 to 1909 invoked the Platt Amendment, amendments to the Cuban constitution that gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba's domestic affairs. The United States also intervened in Cuban internal affairs in 1912, 1917, and 1933 to restore order and protect American interests.

nations, particularly with nations unfriendly to the United States. Most of Cuba's relations were based upon the sale of sugar, the island's primary export. Cuba sold sugar to the United States, most Latin American nations, several European nations, and the Soviet Union.[22]

Castro's primary goals upon seizing power from the U.S.-backed dictator were to ensure his government's and the island's security. Edward Gonzalez identifies four "minimum interests" which guided Castro's early actions as head of the revolutionary government.[23] First, Castro sought to enhance his political power base in Cuba by placing loyal supporters in key governmental positions and gaining the support of the military and major political parties. Second, he worked to assure his regime's security vis-a-vis the United States. Because of his fear of U.S. intervention against his government, Castro encouraged Soviet strategic interest in the region. Third, Castro tried to develop Cuba's role as an independent actor, despite its close relationship with the Soviet Union. Although Castro welcomed opportunities to support Soviet foreign policy strategy, he was not willing to blindly follow nor applaud Soviet policies which proved contrary to Cuba's own

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[22] Jorge I. Dominguez, To Make the World Safe for Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.

[23] Edward Gonzalez, "The Cuban and Soviet Challenge in the Caribbean Basin," Orbis (Spring 1985), 75.

interests. And fourth, Castro wanted to obtain sufficient levels of economic assistance to promote the island's development. Castro worked hard to ensure sufficient Soviet financial assistance to furnish Cubans with an elevated standard of living and high education and literacy rates as compared to those of other Third World nations.

Gonzalez also argues that the relationship that developed between Cuba and the Soviet Union has encouraged Castro to establish a "maximalist strategy" of foreign policy. Contained in this strategy are nationalist foreign policy objectives which encouraged Castro to establish strong ties with the Soviet Union to help secure these objectives. They include: promoting the Third World struggle against "imperialism" in order to erode the global power of the United States; extending Cuba's influence in the Third World through an active diplomatic, political, technical, and military-security presence in the region; promoting the rise of radical-left or Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Caribbean Basin through armed struggle in order to form a core of radical states closely aligned with Cuba; and increasing Cuba's power potential, politically and militarily, through the infusion of higher levels of Soviet military and economic assistance.[24] As Gonzalez points out, these objectives could only be achieved through active political, military, and economic collaboration with the

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[24] Ibid.

Soviet Union.

There are several theories of Cuban-Soviet relations which argue that Castro's Cuba is merely a proxy of Soviet foreign policy. Both the "Surrogate Thesis of Cuban Globalism"[25] and later the "Sovietization of Cuba Thesis"[26] argue that Cuban dependency on Soviet economic and military assistance has eroded Castro's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy. Many scholars have argued that the Soviet Union dictates Cuban domestic and foreign policy and slowly has been transforming Cuba into a society more compatible with Soviet society. While it is true that Castro has become dependent on direct Soviet assistance and favorable trade agreements with the Soviet Union, he has proven himself an independent actor in international affairs.

The purpose of this paper is to examine Cuban-Soviet relations from 1959 to the present and show that there has been no consistent move toward homogeneity of Cuban and Soviet foreign policy aims as a result of Soviet manipulation of Cuba. Although the two nations have cooperated and supported one another on several occasions,

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[25] See James Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in R. Barry Farrell, ed., Approaches to Comparative and International Politics (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 63-71.

[26] See Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Cuba in the 1970s (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1974) for a detailed explanation of the theory.

there have also been many incidents when Cuban and Soviet objectives and ideologies were in direct conflict, especially concerning support for armed communist struggle in the Third World. Most recently, Castro has vocally opposed Gorbachev's call for economic reforms and Soviet reevaluation of foreign policy objectives.

This paper divides the evolution of Cuban-Soviet relations into five distinct eras. Chapter one examines relations from Castro's victory in 1959 to Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964. During this period both nations worked to establish positive economic and diplomatic relations and to define particular goals. Chapter two explores the breakdown of Cuban-Soviet relations from 1964 to 1968. During this period the Soviet Union sought improved relations with the United States and moved away from direct support for armed struggle in the Third World. Castro, however, desired a stronger communist presence in Third World activities and criticized the Soviet Union for its acquiescence and lack of interest in Third World affairs. Chapter three examines renewed accommodation in Cuban-Soviet relations beginning with Castro's support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and continued improvement through the middle of the 1970s. This period was marked by renewed foreign policy agreement between the two nations and a build-up of Soviet military installations on Cuba. Chapter four reviews Cuban-Soviet relations from 1975 to

1985. During this period, Cuban and Soviet foreign policy converged and resulted in active support for national liberation movements in Africa and Latin America. It was during these years that Castro's role in determining Cuban-Soviet cooperation was most evident. Chapter five examines the dramatic changes in Cuban-Soviet relations which have taken place during the first five years of Mikhail Gorbachev's rule in the Soviet Union. The sweeping reforms that Gorbachev has proposed for Soviet economic and foreign policies threaten to destroy the Cuban-Soviet rapprochement that was built over the past two and a half decades. The chapter will examine changes in Soviet strategy, Castro's reaction to these changes, and possible directions for the future of Cuban-Soviet relations.

Chapter One

The Formation of Cuban-Soviet Ties: 1959-1964

Following World War II, the Soviets were eager to encourage communist revolutions and establish influential footholds in many regions of the Third World, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. The political elite during Nikita Khrushchev's regime sought to couple the technical, economic, and military strength of the Soviet Union with the desire of many African and Asian states to become independent nations. Khrushchev appeared convinced that these nations would eagerly adopt Soviet-style communism in exchange for Soviet aid and military assistance, thereby spreading communist doctrine and expanding Soviet influence.[27] Latin America, however, was generally disregarded by Khrushchev as a potential site for communist revolution since most regimes in the region were either democratic, supported by right-wing military officers, or securely under the influence of the United States. Even Cuba during the revolution was seen as firmly controlled by American interests and ties.

It was clear that the United States had no strong

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[27] W. R. Duncan, 27.

desire to see Castro's revolutionary movement, known as "the 26th of July Movement," secure power from Fulgencio Batista. Through a memorandum issued by United States Ambassador Earl Smith shortly before the Cuban elections of 1958, the United States made clear its position regarding the revolution. Smith wrote: "Our [U.S.] interests and those of Cuba will best be served by the continuation in office of the present [Batista] government, ... by the holding of free, open, and honest elections, and by the emergence of an administration that would have the support of a majority of the people and be able to maintain law and order, and fulfill Cuba's international obligations."[28] Although Castro denied that the communists had any significant influence within his movement, the United States continued to denounce Castro's revolution as anti-democratic and made regular arms shipment to Batista's forces to continue their fight against Castro. American support for Batista reflected the United States' concern that American interests in Cuba would be less secure under Castro.

When Castro took control of the government in January 1959, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States was eager to initiate warm ties with his revolutionary government. The Soviet Union had no reason to expect that

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[28] Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?," in Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., Cuban Communism (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 30.

Castro would declare himself and his government communist. As Castro and his followers began their fight against Batista, they were quick to align themselves with the pro-democracy capitalists who also sought an end to Batista's rule. As that support base began to falter, Castro was equally willing to seek the support of the People's Socialist Party (PSP), as the Cuban Communist Party was then known. However, the PSP was distrustful of Castro's sudden goodwill and was reluctant to embrace the regime too eagerly. Similarly, the Soviet Union was opposed to immediate diplomatic ties with Castro's government since such ties could imperil Soviet-American relations.[29] In fact, the Soviet Union did not grant Castro's Cuba formal diplomatic recognition until June 1960, over one year after Castro instituted his revolutionary government.[30]

Poor relations between Cuba and the United States began when Castro initiated a war of words with the United States almost immediately after he took control of the island. In March 1959 Castro agreed to visit the United States at the invitation of the American Association of Newspaper Publishers. Following an address to the organization in Washington, DC, Castro was asked about the future direction of Cuban foreign policy. Avoiding a precise statement, he

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[29] Cole Blasier, The Giant's Rival: The USSR and Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 103.

[30] J. I. Dominguez, 22.

stressed that he was not concerned about aggression that might come from "other continents," but about attacks by "mercenary bands" that could come from the beaches of Florida or from Santo Domingo.[31]

Castro's preoccupation with the island's security and fears of intervention from the United States were legitimately founded. In December 1823 James Monroe warned European powers that the United States "should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this [Western] Hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety."[32] The Monroe Doctrine served as the basis for U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America until 1947 when all American nations, including the United States, signed the Rio Treaty which called for "immediate consultation" in the event of an aggression against any American state.[33] However, since 1898 when the United States secured Cuba's independence from Spain as a result of the Spanish American War, the island has occupied a unique position in U.S. foreign policy. Under the Platt Amendment, a series of clauses incorporated into the Cuban Constitution of 1902, the United States retained the legal right to intervene, at its discretion, in Cuba's internal affairs. Before the

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[31] Andres Suarez, Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959-1966 (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), 47.

[32] "Is Castro's Cuba A Soviet Base?," U.S. News and World Report (September 10, 1962), 44.

[33] Ibid.

amendment was repealed in 1934, the United States deemed it necessary to intervene on several occasions. The United States occupied Cuba from 1906 to 1909, landed troops in 1917, and took temporary control of the nation's economy in 1933.[34]

Castro's fear of intervention by the United States induced him to seek discreetly protection and assistance from anti-American nations, particularly communist nations. As a result, he sought stronger ties with the Soviet Union, the only communist nation that could provide both military protection for the island and economic assistance to ensure the continued social and economic progress of the revolution. He realized that any significant alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union must be founded upon ideology, as well as reciprocal economic and strategic advantages. Castro, however, had no strong ties to the communists in Cuba. During most of the revolution, the PSP condemned the 26th of July Movement, including the movement's first major act, an attack against the Moncada Army Barracks in July 1953, which the communists viewed as "putschist" and "bourgeois" in nature.[35] Although the PSP was outlawed in 1953 by Batista, it opposed any violent acts

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[34] J. I. Dominguez, 8.

[35] T. Ashby, 21.

designed to bring about the collapse of the Batista regime.[36] The PSP sought to effect democratic reforms employing non-violent, legal, and semi-legal tactics.

Although Castro was not a devout communist, his two most important lieutenants in the movement, his brother Raul Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, had well-established ties to communist groups. Prior to the revolution Raul Castro had attended communist youth festivals, rallies, and meetings in Cuba and Eastern Europe. During a trip to Eastern Europe in 1953 it is believed that he visited the Soviet Union and established contacts with Soviet agents before returning to Cuba.[37] Che Guevara, a leftist revolutionary from Argentina, met Raul Castro in Mexico and agreed to return to Cuba with the expedition to overthrow Batista. Raul Castro was named Minister of the Armed Forces and Guevara was named president of the Central Bank and Minister of Industries.[38] Later, both men would prove essential in lending legitimacy to Castro's declaration that his revolution was socialist in nature.

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[36] It is interesting to note that the Communist party in Cuba enjoyed its greatest influence under Batista in the late 1930s. Batista, hoping to legitimize his dictatorship through national elections, encouraged the Communists (then the Revolutionary Union Party) to mobilize the masses behind his regime. Batista later outlawed the PSP to win favor with the Eisenhower administration.

[37] Rafael Fermoselle, Cuban Leadership After Castro: Biographies of Cuba's Top Generals (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1987), 33.

[38] J. I. Dominguez, 19-20.

Although Castro did not declare his conversion to Marxism-Leninism until December 1961, he immediately sought two commitments from the Soviets: first, military protection from the United States and its allies throughout Latin America, and second, direct economic assistance to begin the dismantling of Cuba's economic dependence on the United States and American businesses on the island. Although the Soviet Union was apprehensive about undermining American economic and political interests in Cuba, it seized upon Cuban initiatives to develop bilateral trade agreements.

The first Cuban-Soviet economic agreement was signed in April 1959. Although its terms were hardly advantageous to the Cuban economy, Castro recognized the importance of formalizing trade with the Soviet Union in the hope that Cuban-Soviet trade would lead eventually to Soviet diplomatic recognition of Castro's revolutionary government. The United States saw no significant threat posed by the agreement since the terms were considerably less favorable to Castro's Cuba than earlier Soviet agreements had been to Batista's Cuba. For example, it called for the Soviet Union to purchase 170,000 tons of Cuban sugar (Cuba's chief export), considerably less than it had purchased the previous year from the Batista government. Moscow would be required to purchase an additional 330,000 tons, but only if payments could be made in Soviet merchandise rather than currency. When Castro refused to accept Soviet merchandise

in place of desperately needed currency, the Soviet Union agreed to purchase the additional sugar outright.[39]

In a further attempt to improve relations with the Soviet Union, Castro invited a high level delegation of Soviet officials to visit Cuba in February 1960. The Soviet delegation, headed by Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan, was met with full honors. During the visit Castro took every opportunity to praise the political and economic accomplishments of the Soviet Union.[40] Many high-level discussions took place regarding Cuban-Soviet relations. These discussions resulted in the signing of the first commercial agreement between Castro's government and the Soviet Union. The Soviets committed themselves to purchase 425,000 tons of sugar in 1960 and extended $100 million in credit to Cuba for the purchase of industrial equipment.[41] Yet although Castro was pleased with this strengthening of Cuban-Soviet economic ties, he sought an expression of Soviet support before finalizing plans to dismantle all American economic interests in Cuba.

In 1960, Soviet foreign policy did not emphasize increased political activities in Latin America, beyond

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[39] Jacques Levesque, The USSR and the Cuban Revolution (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 13.

[40] Luis E. Aguilar, "From Immutable Proclamations to Unintended Consequences: Marxism-Leninism and the Cuban Government, 1959-1986," in I. L. Horowitz, ed., 167.

[41] J. Levesque, 14.

continuing to pursue stronger relations with Cuba. Except for a few pro-Soviet communist parties, the Soviet Union had little encouragement for greater involvement in the region. The only three armed revolts by pro-Soviet communists were defeated and, until the Cuban revolution, Latin America seemed securely guarded within the American sphere of influence.[42] Although Khrushchev did not wish to antagonize U.S.-Soviet relations by overtly accepting Cuba into the Soviet camp, he recognized the potential benefits from establishing stronger ties with Cuba, particularly using Cuba as a base for anti-American rhetoric in the region, as a camp for fostering communist activities in the region, and as a liaison between the Soviet Union and the Third World.[43]

On February 12, 1960, Khrushchev for the first time publicly stated his support for the Castro government in a speech before the Indian Parliament in New Delhi. Khrushchev, expressing satisfaction with Latin American people's struggle for independence said, "Our sympathies have always been and will always be with countries like Cuba who defend their national and economic independence through arduous struggle.... The Soviet Union has always given and will continue to give disinterested aid and support to all

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[42] The three armed revolts by pro-Soviet revolutionaries include: El Salvador in 1932, Brazil in 1935, and Guatemala in 1944.

[43] T. Ashby, xi.

countries in their struggle for freedom and independence, in their struggle against economic backwardness."[44]

Following this sign of overt Soviet support for Cuba's break with American economic oppression, Castro initiated a battle with American businesses in Cuba. On June 29 and 30, 1960, Cuban authorities seized oil refineries owned and operated by Texaco, Esso, and the Shell Oil Company following their refusal to process crude oil purchased from the Soviet Union.[45] Castro then authorized the expropriation of all property in Cuba owned by United States citizens and businesses. The United States responded by cutting U.S. purchases of Cuban sugar by 95 percent for the remainder of 1960.[46] The Soviet Union later agreed to purchase all sugar earmarked for sale to the United States. This incident served to usher in an era of Cuban-American hostilities that would contribute to the solidification of Cuban-Soviet ties.

President Eisenhower began planning covert and diplomatic maneuvers against Castro's government. In late 1960 Cuban intelligence learned that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) was training Cuban exiles to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro. By 1961 the United States

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[44] Pravda (February 15, 1960) as quoted in J. Levesque, 15.

[45] J. Levesque, 15.

[46] J. I. Dominguez, 24-25.

had imposed an economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba, and initiated procedures which would exclude Cuba from membership in the Organization of American States (O.A.S.).[47] In February 1961, the Cuban government uncovered a C.I.A. plot to assassinate Castro. And on April 17, U.S.-backed Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs to initiate an unsuccessful coup d'etat. With Cuban-American relations officially severed and Castro's suspicions of American hostility justified, Castro sought to implant Cuba firmly inside the Soviet military camp. He realized that the open acceptance of Marxism-Leninism would encourage and justify full-fledged Soviet military protection for Cuba.

Castro's "conversion" to communism was a careful and deliberate plan intended to secure the Soviet Union's acceptance of Castro and his revolution. Castro began by encouraging stronger ties between the revolutionary government and the PSP. This proved easy since the post-revolutionary communists were eager to form an alliance with the Castro government in order to insure survival of the party. Raul Castro and Guevara, whose ties to communist ideology were long established, became active in the leadership of the PSP.[48] Finally, on April 2, 1961, Castro publicly proclaimed the socialist character of the Cuban revolution. Following Castro's remarks a key advisor

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[47] W. R. Duncan, 35.

[48] A. Suarez, 151.

explained that the revolution had completed the stage of national liberation and Cuba had definitely embarked upon the construction of a socialist state.[49] By mid-1961 Pravda and other Soviet publications had begun referring to Cuba as a Marxist-Leninist state.

In July 1961, Castro created the Integrated Revolutionary Organization which united into one body the 26th of July Movement, the PSP, and the Revolutionary Directorate, a student group active in the movement against the Batista government. Castro then created a new communist party, the United Party of the Socialist Revolution and defended its creation in a five hour speech to the nation on December 1, 1961. It was during this speech that he celebrated his "conversion to Marxism-Leninism."[50]

Castro's plans seemed to work as intended. The Soviet leaders resolved that the conceivable benefits gained from a constructive alliance with Cuba, particularly a potentially stronger and influential presence in Latin America and the Third World, outweighed the negative effects the alliance would have on Soviet relations with the United States. As the Soviet Union began to recognize Castro's commitment to communism, arms shipments to the island were increased. The Soviet Union bolstered Cuba's physical security by providing

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[49] J. Levesque, 30.

[50] Theodore Draper, "Castro's 'New' Communists," The New Leader (April 16, 1962), 3.

most of the equipment for the island's armed forces, an amount estimated at $933 million between 1961 and 1975.[51] Khrushchev clearly wanted to take advantage of the strategic importance of Cuba as a bridge to establishing stronger political and economic ties with other Latin American nations. The Soviet government began to declare its confidence in the possibility of other successful communist-led national liberation movements in the Western Hemisphere. A major Soviet foreign policy paper, published by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1961, declared:

> The triumph of the revolution in Cuba dispelled the myth of the omnipotent power of American imperialism in Latin America. It showed that the United States of America in the present international situation cannot undertake armed intervention in the countries of Latin America with her former ease.... The Cuban Revolution...became the model of national liberation movements in the Western Hemisphere.[52]

Although both sides were comfortable with the relationship which had developed between Cuba and the Soviet

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[51] W. R. Duncan, 38.

[52] F. G. Zuev, I.V. Ivashin, and V. P. Nikhamin, eds., International Relations and Foreign Policy of the USSR, 1917-1960 (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Higher Party School of the CPSU Central Committee, 1961), 506-518, as quoted in T. Ashby, 30.

Union, the military aspect of the relationship quickly and unexpectedly assumed greater significance. In 1962, Khrushchev decided to deploy nuclear missiles on Cuba in response to a U.S. statement that disclosed an American advantage over the Soviets in tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.[53] Khrushchev's decision was precipitated by attacks by leading members of the CPSU who questioned Khrushchev's ability to maintain Soviet parity with the United States and called on Khrushchev to prove his leadership. In response to the American boast and dissension within the party, Khrushchev decided to take advantage of his new relationship with Castro. The deployment of nuclear missiles on the island would help to equalize Soviet deficiencies in the balance of nuclear strategic weapons. Khrushchev, however, sought to have Castro initiate the missile agreement and sent a special envoy to convince Castro of an imminent threat of another invasion by the United States.[54] Castro was convinced and decided that the only way to defend against American aggression was to accept deployment of Soviet missiles.

Khrushchev received approval for nuclear arms shipments to Cuba in April 1962 and the mission was begun by late July. In August, thirty-seven Soviet dry-cargo ships arrived at Cuban ports, at least twenty of them carrying

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[53] T. Ashby, 33.

[54] Ibid.

arms shipments. By the end of the month the Soviets had sent surface-to-air missiles, cruise missiles, guided missile boats, and tons of support materials. The first medium-range ballistic missiles arrived on September 8, hidden in the hold of a Soviet lumber ship. Delivery systems, including Soviet bombers and fighter jets, followed. By the end of September the island was a functional, tightly guarded nuclear installation. The bases were under complete Soviet control and even Castro's most trusted military officers were denied access to the bases.[55] In September 1962 Castro seemed assured of the Soviets' commitment to Cuba and the protection of the island.

Yet the weakness of Soviet dedication to the military defense of Cuba was revealed in October 1962 following the Cuban Missile Crisis. On October 14, President John Kennedy was presented with proof of a Soviet nuclear arms build-up on Cuba. A direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union began when the United States presented its proof before the United Nations and demanded that further nuclear arms shipments to Cuba be halted and current nuclear arms be removed from the island. On October 22, Kennedy imposed a naval blockade of Cuba. The following day, in an attempt to create a pacific settlement of the crisis, Castro told the United States that the Soviet

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[55] Ibid., 34-35.

military hardware would not be necessary if the United States would give Cuba "effective and satisfactory guarantees with respect to [Cuba's] territorial integrity and ... cease in its subversive and counterrevolutionary activities against [the Cuban] people."[56] On October 28, Khrushchev agreed to dismantle offensive armaments under United Nations supervision.

Castro was dissatisfied with the resolution since the United States was not made to publicly agree to respect the sovereignty of Castro's communist government and the territorial integrity of Cuba. The missile crisis clearly proved to Castro that the Soviet Union was more committed to avoiding nuclear confrontation with the United States than it was to encouraging the growth of communism in Cuba and other Latin American nations. This revelation encouraged Castro's eventual break from Soviet-style communism and adoption of a Marxist system more suited to his control over Cuba.

Despite the crisis' disclosure of the true political relationship between the Soviet Union and Cuba, Castro had sound economic reasons for sustaining ties with the Soviet Union. In 1961 and 1962 the Soviet Union had provided Cuba with subsidized oil and purchased nearly half the sugar the island produced at inflated prices. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe also provided Cuba with substantial economic

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[56] J. I. Dominguez, 37.

aid.[57] However, even this relationship was strained when the Soviets called for economic reforms in Cuba. In May 1962, Khrushchev addressed a group of Cuban students returning to their homeland and warned them that Soviet aid alone would not be sufficient to cure Cuba's economic ills.[58] Khrushchev began signalling that the Soviet Union was not willing to subsidize Cuba's faltering economy unless significant reforms were initiated. The Soviet Union was most concerned about Castro's plans to initiate a plan of radical industrialization which overestimated Cuba's access to raw materials, technology, and other imports. Khrushchev feared that Castro's industrial ambitions reflected an overly optimistic view of the Soviet Union's ability and desire to foster and sustain a strong, albeit inefficient, industrial basis for the Cuban economy. Castro, however, was not willing to accept Soviet intrusion into Cuba's domestic affairs so soon after having defended itself from American encroachment. Surprisingly, the two nations signed a trade agreement in late 1962 which was quite favorable to the Cubans. The Soviets nonetheless showed their dissatisfaction with Castro's policies by delaying shipment of food to the island.

Despite the loss of Cuba as a strategic nuclear military base, the Soviets continued to see the island as

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[57] N. Miller, 89-90.

[58] Ibid., 41.

their most effective sounding board for pro-communist rhetoric to Latin America. However, Castro's move away from Soviet political dominance later caused clear discords in Soviet and Cuban approaches to communist advancement in Latin America. Castro pretentiously insisted on the role of armed struggle as a vehicle to change in Latin America and called for Soviet military assistance to insurgent groups throughout the region. This issue would seal the coffin on Cuban-Soviet relations until a temporary compromise on the issue could be reached following the fall of Khrushchev as leader of the CPSU in October 1964.

During the first six years of years of Soviet-Cuban relations, both nations began to establish objectives that would continue to determine the state of the relationship. However, it was clearly Castro who attracted Soviet interest in Cuba and the Soviets who served Cuban interests. Because of his clearly defined goals, Castro was able to direct the formation of Cuban-Soviet ties. His most important objective was national security and protection against the reassertion of American domination. This objective was met to Castro's satisfaction with the installation of Soviet arms on the island, a project that continued until the missile crisis of 1962. Castro's second objective was economic assistance to improve the standard of living on the island and ensure the success of the revolution. The Soviet Union helped secure this objective by providing Cuba with

considerable economic assistance. In return, Khrushchev, whose objectives were less clearly developed, expected Cuban allegiance to Soviet-style communism and, possibly, greater influence in Latin America and the Third World. The Soviet Union also hoped to arm Cuba and use the island as its Caribbean fortress. But, when this objective directly clashed with Khrushchev's desire to maintain peaceful coexistence with the United States, the Soviet relations with the United States proved more critical. Although the ties developed quickly, the conditions for the alliance remained poorly defined and the first major test to the alliance, the Cuban Missile Crisis, threatened to overshadow the benefits each nation derived from the relationship.

Chapter Two

The Destabilization of Cuban-Soviet Relations: 1964-1968

Although Castro withstood pressures to become the passive Soviet ally that Khrushchev may have desired when the relationship began in 1961, the relationship never endangered Soviet relations with other communist nations. However, when Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, he was succeeded by a more cautious leadership which sought to move more slowly in developing relationships in the Third World, especially with Cuba. As he became aware of Moscow's more cautious approach to Cuban-Soviet ties, Castro's criticism of Soviet foreign policy became more vocal and more frequent.[59] Castro and the new Soviet leadership differed on several important policy priorities, including the role of armed struggle to promote communism in the Third World and the level of Soviet support of communist rebels in Vietnam.

The issue of armed struggle proved to be one of the most divisive issues affecting Cuban-Soviet relations. Castro first made clear his support for revolutionary violence in Latin America following a meeting of the foreign

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[59] W. R. Duncan, 51-52.

ministers of O.A.S. member states in January 1962. At the meeting the member states, most of whom already had severed diplomatic ties with Castro's Cuba, passed resolutions that displayed antagonism toward Castro's revolution and the growth of communism in Latin America. Among them were resolutions stating that "the principles of communism are incompatible with the principles of the inter-American system," and that the "present government of Cuba, which has officially identified itself as a Marxist-Leninist government, is incompatible with the inter-American system" and was thereby suspended from participation in it.[60] Other resolutions excluded Cuba from inter-American defense trade and alliances, including the Organization of American States.

Castro's response came shortly after the conclusion of the conference. On February 5, 1962 he proclaimed the Second Declaration of Havana, in which he urged the "colored races" and peasants of the Americas to rise up in armed struggle against their oppressors.[61] Castro's principles coincided with the beliefs of most Chinese communist leaders who were encouraging armed struggle in Asia. This worried

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[60] J. I. Dominguez, 27.

[61] A. Suarez, 145-146.

the Soviets who were battling with China for leadership of communist parties in the Third World. Cuba was the Soviet Union's most loyal ally in the Third World and the Soviets did not enjoy seeing Castro espouse the tenets of the Chinese Communist Party.

Castro's first implementation of the idea of armed struggle was revealed by the Venezuelan government in the fall of 1963 when a shipment of arms to Venezuelan guerrillas was discovered. The arms were traced back to Cuba and Cuba was charged by Venezuela and other O.A.S. member states with an aggression against Venezuela and an intervention into its internal affairs. Castro claimed his actions were fair retaliation against Venezuela for having led the move to exclude Cuba from all inter-American activities. Castro argued that "the people of Cuba consider themselves to have an equal right to help, with the resources that are available to them, the revolutionary movements in all countries that engage in such intervention in the internal affairs of our country."[62] All Latin American governments, except Mexico, had agreed to the resolutions which served to isolate Cuba, and thus all were potential targets of Castro's reprisal.

By the end of 1964, the new Soviet leadership attempted to come to an agreement with Castro on the issue of armed

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[62] Obra revolucionaria, no. 18 (1964), as quoted in J. I. Dominguez, 29.

struggle. To emphasize its dedication to Third World communist parties, the Soviet Union organized a conference of Latin American communist parties which was held in December in Havana. It was clear that the communist parties of Latin America were themselves divided over which route would be the most effective to bring about political change. Some agreed that revolution was the most effective means to wrest power from the bourgeoisie while others maintained that communist parties must make all attempts to bring about change without resorting to armed struggle.

Recognizing the divisions among the regional communist parties, the Soviets and Cubans came to an agreement. The Soviets agreed to support armed struggle in six Latin American nations where communist-led revolutionary activity was already occurring, namely Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, and Haiti. However, the Cubans conceded to recognize unarmed struggle as the legitimate course for pro-Soviet communist parties to follow in other Latin American nations.[63] As a result of the conference, the Soviets believed that they had quelled a major rift that threatened to separate Cuba and other Latin American communist parties from the Soviet camp, but the rift had only temporarily been bridged.

By 1965 the weakness of Latin American communist parties' commitment to armed struggle was exposed. Even the

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[63] W. R. Duncan, 63.

communist party in Venezuela, the most committed to armed struggle, began to reassess the effectiveness of its guerrilla faction and decided to seek legal or semi-legal means to attain a communist presence in the government. Similar developments elsewhere led Castro and other Cuban communist leaders to abandon the 1964 agreement and denounce non-violent communist parties for their ineffectiveness, bureaucracy, and lack of commitment to the communist cause.[64]

Castro decided to support armed struggle in the Third World wholeheartedly, despite any negative effects on Cuban-Soviet relations. In January 1966 Castro organized the Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American communist parties. At the conference, Castro was candid regarding his policy disputes with the Soviets. He again raised the issue of armed struggle, hoping to find sympathetic supporters among the Chinese and other Asian representatives, particularly the North Koreans and the North Vietnamese. The Soviet representatives looked on with astonishment as Castro closed the conference with a blatant condemnation of the Soviets' position on armed struggle:

> ...sooner or later all or almost all peoples will have to take up arms to liberate themselves.... What with the ones who theorize and the ones who criticize those who theorize while beginning to

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[64] E. Mujal-Leon, 128.

> theorize themselves, much energy and time is unfortunately lost; we believe that on this continent, in the case of all or almost all peoples, the battle will take on the most violent forms.[65]

These words signalled to the Soviet representatives and the representatives of other communist nations that Cuba was intent upon causing a major breach in Cuban-Soviet relations.

One example of the issues that led to open clashes between the Soviet Union and Cuba involved the degree of Soviet support for communist Viet Cong guerrillas. Beginning in 1965 Castro stepped up his indictments against Moscow's handling of the conflict in Vietnam.[66] Throughout 1965 the United States had steadily increased its bomb attacks against communist guerrillas in North Vietnam. Castro felt that the Soviets were neglecting their "socialist brethren" and called for increased aid to the guerrillas to promote retaliation against American forces. A Cuban delegate addressing the Twenty-Third Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1966 stated that, in combatting U.S. backed imperialism, it is necessary to "use all available means...and take all necessary risks."

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[65] Ibid., 70.

[66] Ibid., 65-66.

The delegate's remarks received no applause.[67]

The Cuban government's message was clear and the ball was plainly in the Soviets' court. Communist parties throughout the world, including those in other Latin American nations, began to call for official sanctions against Castro's Cuba. However, the Soviets, fearful of isolating Cuba and leaving it susceptible to counterrevolution, resisted.[68] To cut off military and economic assistance to Cuba would entail leaving Cuba vulnerable to intervention by the United States or diplomatic action by the O.A.S. that would lead to the overthrow of Castro. And since there was no other strong communist representative in Latin America, this would leave the Soviets without an ally in the region. For this reason, the Soviets did not want to alienate Castro. The Soviets realized that Cuba was unlikely to break with them so long as it needed Soviet military and economic assistance. And although the Soviets were investing considerable resources in their relationship with Cuba, the island remained a beneficial and necessary ally.

Although Moscow did not want to cut off Cuba from Soviet financial assistance, it did seek some form of retaliation against Cuba's criticism. When Arab nations called for an oil embargo in 1967, the Soviets took

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[67] W. R. Duncan, 65-66.

[68] J. Levesque, 132-133.

advantage of the potential impact its oil exportation policies could have on foreign relations. The Soviets ignored Cuban requests for a ten percent increase in Soviet oil imports, responding with only a two percent increase in 1967.[69] The Soviet Union sold the remaining oil on the open market to earn much-needed hard currency to finance its own internal economic expansion. There is little doubt that both sides recognized that such economic sanctions were one of the most powerful weapons available to the Soviets for applying pressure on the unrepentant Cuban regime. Castro was aware of the economic importance of Soviet oil shipments to Cuban industry. The Soviets also suspended military shipments to Cuba in 1968, cut Cuban enrollment in Soviet universities, limited technical assistance to Cuba, and delayed trade agreements with Cuba in 1968.[70]

The worsening of Cuban-Soviet relations in this period was due primarily to Castro's desire to prove himself as the predominant communist leader in Latin America and the uncontested representative of Third World interests to the Soviet Union. He worked vigorously to preserve Cuba's elevated, and arguably undeserving, status in the eyes of the Soviet Union. Similarly, he did not want to give the impression of becoming a puppet whose actions were directed by the Soviet Union. He took every opportunity to disclose

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[69] N. Miller, 108-109.

[70] J. I. Dominguez, 75.

where his and the Soviet leadership's views differed. His willingness to openly and forcefully confront Soviet leaders on an issue as delicate as armed struggle signalled to the Soviets his perception that Cuba's position within the relationship was secure. Soviet leaders agreed that Castro's position was secure and wanted to ensure his continued alliance to the Soviet Union.

Castro recognized the importance of Soviet military and economic assistance to his island's security and prosperity, but his dedication to Cuban communism and Cuba's agenda in Latin America and the Third World encouraged him to resist political submission to the Soviet Union. The Soviets were aware of the friction Cuba was causing within and outside the Soviet camp of communist parties, but did not want to risk pushing Castro toward developing relations with China or the United States. Both sides realized that, if the relationship was to continue, common ground must be discovered and the policy aims of both nations must be taken into account. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Castro's acclaim for the action provided that common ground, which would lead to renewed accommodation in Cuban-Soviet relations.

Chapter Three

Renewed Accommodation in Cuban-Soviet Relations: 1968-1975

By the end of 1967, Castro was facing the greatest challenges to his government since the end of the revolution. Ernesto "Che" Guevara, one of his greatest advisors and a major hero of the 26th of July Movement, had been killed in Bolivia on October 8 after having been ostracized by the Bolivian communist revolutionaries he was trying to lead. The death of Guevara symbolized the deteriorating support for armed struggle among Latin American revolutionaries. Many of the communist parties that had earlier supported Castro's call for violent methods began to accept the Soviet line of non-violent revolution. The growing allegiance to Soviet-style communism reflected Castro's failing influence in the region.[71]

Castro's loss of credibility among Third World revolutionaries stemmed, in part, from Cuba's worsening economy. Despite continued Soviet assistance, though at lower levels than Castro had demanded, the economy began to collapse. Cuba's economy began to reflect badly on the

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[71] Christopher Whalen, "The Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba," in I. L. Horowitz, 625-626.

government as trade deficits with the Soviet Union increased, goods grew scarce, and rationing became part of the status quo.[72] To other pro-communist regimes in the Third World, the Cuban model of revolution and development was no longer attractive.

Brezhnev too was facing mounting problems of his own. The threat posed by Cuban criticism of Soviet policies was worsened by dissension within the Warsaw Pact and continued difficulties with China. The gravest threat to Soviet leadership of the socialist world came from Czechoslovakia. In 1968, conservative Stalinists were driven from power and replaced by reform-minded communists headed by Alexander Dubcek who called for greater independence from Soviet control. Brezhnev decided to reaffirm Soviet control over its satellites, particularly Czechoslovakia. In May 1968 the Soviet military began conducting maneuvers on Czech soil. On August 21, Soviet tanks invaded Prague and forced the ouster of Dubcek's government. Castro, recognizing the benefits of improved Cuban-Soviet relations, took notice of the severity of Soviet actions and began to reassess his firm stand against Soviet influence in Cuban affairs.[73] Although Castro did not fully support the invasion of Czechoslovakia, he realized that Cuba's economic and

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[72] T. Ashby, 48.

[73] Peter Shearman, The Soviet Union and Cuba, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1987), 22-23.

security concerns outweighed his aversion to the invasion.

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia is generally recognized as one of the most significant junctures in Cuban-Soviet relations. It marked the transition from a period of extreme disharmony to one of renewed accommodation. However, the transition was not an easy one considering Castro's ideology and his commitment to Cuban nationalism. The act was clearly a violation of Czechoslovakian sovereignty. Castro knew the proposed reforms by Dubcek represented a move away from Soviet domination and expressed growing Czech nationalism. The day after the invasion there was a large demonstration in Havana protesting the invasion. However, Castro realized that his condemnation of the action could serve only to add to the strains on Cuban-Soviet relations.

On August 23, following two days of silence regarding the Soviet invasion, Castro defended Soviet actions and publicly embraced the "Brezhnev Doctrine," a resolution affirming that the Soviet Union retained the right to invade any Eastern European nation that threatened to leave the socialist camp. Knowing that his position could prove unpopular, Castro began his speech to the Cuban people saying, "some of the things we are going to say here will be in contradiction with the emotions of many." He defended his position by arguing that the Czech leadership had been "in camaraderie with pro-Yankee spies" and with the agents

of West Germany and all that fascist and reactionary rabble."[74] The Soviets were pleased with Castro's support for Soviet policy and initiated a period of political, economic, and military rapprochement with Cuba.

Following more than a decade of neglect of most of its critical industries, Castro assented to direct Soviet involvement in Cuba's economy. Throughout the 1960s, Castro had devoted most of the nation's resources to ensuring the social success of his revolution. He poured money into public services, including health care and education, so that the population could experience the tangible benefits of revolution. Although Soviet aid and technology made it possible to sustain certain key industries, especially the production of sugar and nickel, most of the nation's industries and production facilities were run-down and in desperate need of modernization.

The Soviets frequently offered to take a more active role in the Cuban economy and urged Castro to adopt a system of central economic planning similar to the Soviet model. However, Castro opposed central planning since he thought it was too rigid for the rapidly changing Cuban economy. But as the economy deteriorated and Castro realized his economic strategy was jeopardizing the success of the revolution, he began to consider greater compliance with the Soviet model and integration into the Soviet bloc. In July 1969, a

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[74] T. Ashby, 51.

defector from Cuba's intelligence network revealed that Castro had signed an accord with Moscow committing himself to a pro-Moscow course, in return for which Moscow agreed to continue economic assistance to Cuba and supply 5,000 technicians to restructure the island's faltering economy.[75]

The Soviet technicians reorganized the Cuban government and bureaucracies to parallel the systems found in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European nations. The technicians sought first to legitimize the role of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) as an active body within the Cuban government. The political system was reorganized along Leninist lines with Castro as head of government and the PCC as the primary governing body, albeit a tool to enhance Castro's control over the island. The next key step was the creation of the Inter-Governmental Cuban-Soviet Commission for Economic, Scientific, and Technological Cooperation, a venture begun in 1970 which legitimized and facilitated Soviet-sponsored economic and political reforms in Cuba.[76] In 1975 the Cuban government announced the nation's first five-year economic plan for 1976 through 1980.[77] The plan was designed and implemented by Soviet and Eastern European

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[75] W. R. Duncan, 76.

[76] Ibid., 85.

[77] Sergio G. Roca, "State Enterprise in Cuba under the New System of Planning and Management," in I. L. Horowitz, 299-300.

technicians. The most important move came in July 1972 when Cuba was admitted to the Soviet-directed Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). This gave the Soviet Union and its communist allies greater control over the reorganization of the Cuban economy in a manner more closely resembling the Soviet model.[78]

The period following Cuban admission into the CMEA was marked by the paradox of integration between Cuba and its communist allies in organizational matters and divergence between them in balance of trade. Cuba benefitted greatly from access to CMEA markets, especially the ability to import larger amounts of raw materials and manufactured goods from East Germany and the Soviet Union. Eastern European nations failed to benefit significantly from the limited agricultural goods, primarily sugar and tobacco, exported from Cuba. Although the Soviets did not want to increase Cuban dependence on Soviet bloc trade, they sought to maintain adequate dependence to ensure Cuba's continued need of the Soviet bloc.[79] The Soviets, appreciating their increased influence over Cuban political and economic matters, were careful not to make specific demands on Castro. Castro, who had come to power on his own and proven himself a major figure in the international arena as a result of his charisma, strong will, and political

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[78] P. Shearman, 27.

[79] J. I. Dominguez, 84.

shrewdness, was more valuable as a willing ally of the Soviets than as a controlled puppet. In Cuba he was a popular leader whose control was not to be challenged. Therefore, Soviet leaders were careful to include Castro in decisions regarding Cuba's economy. The Soviets also made every attempt to meet Castro's requests whenever they were not detrimental to Soviet aims and interests.[80] For example, Cuba was awarded economic favors at Castro's request, including rescheduling of Cuba's trade debt with the Soviet Union, heavily subsidized agriculture, and modernization of industry.

For the Soviets, stronger economic ties with Cuba helped to ensure Soviet influence in economic, political, and foreign affairs. By the mid-1970s, the Cuban economy was so dependent on Soviet economic assistance that Castro could not afford to turn away from the Soviet Union without jeopardizing the island's economy. Cuban membership in the CMEA, through which most of the economic benefits were acquired, demanded Castro's full political and economic cooperation. Cuba's membership also displayed the expanding influence that the Soviet Union was enjoying throughout the world. By generously subsidizing the Cuban economy, the Soviets hoped to use the island as an example of the Soviet commitment to Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Third

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[80] W. R. Duncan, 86.

World.[81]

Besides serving Moscow as an international proxy, Cuba remained important to the Soviet Union for strategic reasons. Following Cuban-Soviet rapprochement, the Soviets sought to refortify Cuba as a military bastion. In 1968 the Soviet navy extended its forward deployment to include the Arabian Sea, the Horn of Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean.[82] To service the Soviet fleet in the Caribbean, the Soviets acquired Cuban permission to construct a base at Cienfuegos, Cuba. In July 1969, as the Soviet Union was preparing for the opening round of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I), a nine-ship Soviet navy task force, including one nuclear submarine, visited Cuba and conducted maneuvers in the Gulf of Mexico.[83] This task force marked the first time since the destruction of the Spanish fleet off Santiago de Cuba in 1898 that the naval force of a rival extrahemispheric power had been allowed to enter the Caribbean without United States intervention. The United States chose to ignore the maneuvers. Nixon, perceiving no threat from the task force, did not want to respond in any way that might have jeopardized negotiations for a possible U.S.-Soviet SALT agreement.[84]

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[81] P. Shearman, 30-31.

[82] T. Ashby, 65.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., 66-67.

In late 1969, the Soviet Union and Cuba arranged several high-level meetings to discuss improved military relations. In November, Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko visited Cuba before attending the SALT I meetings with the United States. In April 1970, Cuban Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro spent five weeks in the Soviet Union and met personally with Brezhnev.[85] In June 1970, the U.S. National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, alerted President Nixon to increased Soviet military activity in Cuba. He warned:

> While the Soviet naval visits may be part of the overall trend in recent years toward increased Soviet naval activity ever further from Soviet home ports, they may also be an effort to "accustom" Washington to greater Soviet use of Cuba by establishing gradually the precedent of visits and bunkering of active Soviet fleet and air units. The Soviets could conceivably wish to maintain Soviet naval units in the Caribbean-South Atlantic on a more or less permanent basis, refueling and resupplying out of Cuba.[86]

United States intelligence personnel began to pay considerable attention to the activities of the Soviet

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[85] J. I. Dominguez, 79.

[86] Henry Kissinger, The White House Years (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1979), 637, as quoted in T. Ashby, 68.

military in and around Cuba.

In September 1970, the United States collected evidence of what appeared to be the construction of a permanent base for Soviet nuclear submarines at Cienfuegos. Since the construction of the installation could afford the Soviets a base for nuclear hardware and delivery systems, the incident was compared to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the issue served as a test of the secret agreement which resulted from the crisis prohibiting Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba in exchange for U.S. recognition of Cuban sovereignty.[87] When American congressional leaders called for action, the United States and the Soviet Union arranged for quiet negotiations. These negotiations yielded an agreement by which Moscow agreed to stop servicing nuclear submarines in Cuban ports.[88]

Although it appeared the Soviets once again had given in to U.S. pressure, the Soviets decided to test the agreement. Brezhnev ordered Soviet nuclear submarines to continue using the base at Cienfuegos for servicing and naval exercises continued for over a year without any response from the United States. It is generally believed that the United States was aware of the submarines and their visits to Cienfuegos, but the Nixon administration ignored the violations in order to ensure good relations between the

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[87] P. Shearman, 26.

[88] C. Whalen, in I. L. Horowitz, 627.

United States and Soviet Union at the SALT I meetings in May 1971.[89] Castro was pleased with the Soviet's noncompliance with the agreement. By testing the U.S. response, the Soviet Union had shown that Cuba was a vital part of Soviet strategy.[90] This assured Castro that the Soviets were willing to arm and defend the island.

Soviet military activity in Cuba continued to increase steadily throughout the 1970s and Castro remained an ardent supporter of Soviet foreign policy. There were many signs of the strong relations between the two nations, including a trip by Brezhnev to Cuba in January 1975, shortly after the fifteenth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Although Khrushchev had been invited to visit Cuba several times, he feared that such a visit would have an adverse effect on U.S.-Soviet relations. And by the time Brezhnev had consolidated power in the late 1960s, Cuba had stopped issuing invitations to Soviet leaders. Therefore, the trip symbolized a significant improvement in Cuban-Soviet relations. During the trip, Castro publicly assailed the United States and China for their recent attempts to reconcile and form an anti-Soviet alliance.[91] This was seen by most observers as an open announcement of renewed Cuban-Soviet friendship and a rejection of Chinese goodwill

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[89] Ibid., 627-628.

[90] P. Shearman, 27.

[91] J. Levesque, 180-181.

toward Cuba and other Third World nations.

In June 1975, an international conference of 24 Latin American communist parties was held in Havana. Castro used the conference as an opportunity to proclaim publicly the Cuban-Soviet rapprochement. The conference served to demonstrate the firm support the Latin American communist parties afforded the Soviet Union and its policies toward the United States, China, and the Third World.[92] Castro again expressed his contentment with improved relations with the Soviet Union at the first congress of the Cuban Communist Party in December 1975. The congress itself was important since it clearly displayed the newly prominent position which the PCC occupied in the restructured Soviet-style Cuban political system.[93]

Despite the lavish praise Castro directed toward Moscow, the relationship was a two way street. In return, Castro received considerable support from the Soviet Union when he sought to formalize ties with several African nations and act as the spokesman for Soviet and communist interests in Africa.[94] A tour was organized for March and April 1977 which afforded Castro the opportunity to promote Cuba's foreign policy agenda and offer Cuban support for revolutionary activity throughout the continent and took

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[92] Ibid., 183.

[93] Ibid., 184-185.

[94] W. R. Duncan, 136-137.

Castro to eight African nations before ending with an official visit to Moscow. The Soviets benefitted tremendously as a result of this show of confidence in Castro, since he reciprocated by allowing Cuban troops to fight a proxy war in Africa on behalf of the Soviet Union.

This period in Cuban-Soviet relations represents a time of cordiality and mutual benefit. Although Castro was forced to temper his enthusiasm for armed aggression and stress compatible aspects of Soviet foreign policy, his regime was awarded greater importance and legitimacy in the international communist community. Cuba's membership in the CMEA, often viewed as a decision that severely restricted Cuban autonomy, actually contributed to the security of the regime and the benefits of the revolution so long as the CMEA trade agreements remained favorable to Cuba. Similarly, it further accredited Cuba as a representative of communist interests in the Third World. It was during this period that Cuba proved itself an influential actor in international politics and paved the route for Cuban-Soviet cooperation in Africa and Latin America.

Chapter Four

Cuban-Soviet Foreign Policy Cooperation: 1975-1985

Cuba's foreign policy interests had always centered on the promotion of its own security and prosperity. However, Castro also sought to establish for himself and his government a position in the international community which would allow Cuba to champion the causes of developing nations generally, and Latin America specifically. Castro recognized that there existed a power vacuum in Latin America which no nation, other than the United States, was able to fill. He aimed to assume the leadership of Latin America and break U.S. control over the region and recognized the Soviet Union's eagerness to see Castro, its only socialist ally in the region, succeed.

Castro's objectives in Latin America and the Third World were to redefine the relationship that existed between developed and developing nations and secure for developing nations access to the resources and technology of more advanced nations. Cuba and its beneficial relationship with the Soviet Union served as proof that access to such resources could promote the development of Third World economies and societies. Realizing that he must reach

beyond Latin America to regions outside of U.S. domination, Castro began to focus his attention on the less developed nations of Asia and Africa. Despite its close relationship with the Soviet Union, Cuba became an active and influential member of the Nonaligned Movement, a political association of developing nations designed to focus international attention on issues relevant to the Third World. Although Cuba saw membership in the Movement as a means to acquire political leverage independent of the Soviet Union, the Movement benefitted from Cuba's well-established clout, both politically and economically, in the world community.[95] The Soviets also welcomed Cuba's participation in the Movement since Cuba's elevated status within, and eventual leadership of, the Movement served to quietly promote socialism among developing nations. Both nations aspired to increase their influence in the Third World.

By the mid-1970s the strong ties and similar objectives between Cuba and the Soviet Union began to manifest themselves in the form of foreign policy cooperation in the Third World. The early Cuban-Soviet relationship focused on Cuba's effectiveness as a model for other pro-communist movements in Latin America. Cuba's ability to serve as a viable model for African nations was not recognized until the beginning of an African reaction against the neocolonialism which characterized the post-independence

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[95] J. I. Dominguez, 219.

period. Although most European powers had withdrawn from Africa, the borders, governments, and economic infrastructure that remained revealed a continuing European presence. Recognizing that pan-African trade and alliances were not remedying the region's severe economic and social problems, many African governments sought the assistance of the United States and the Soviet Union.[96] Africa, a region that once placed very low in the foreign policy priorities of the superpowers, was transformed into a major arena of Cold War competition as a result of the growing influence of developing nations generally.

Brezhnev's foreign policy goals, independent of Castro's aims, were to advance Moscow's strategic and political power in ways which would exhibit the Soviet Union's expanding role as a leading global actor, while at the same time undermining Western influence in the region.[97] Although Marxist-Leninist ideology legitimized Soviet expansion in Africa, ideological considerations were of secondary importance to the Soviets who sought instead to establish good relations with nations which could logistically facilitate the Soviet Union's growing air and naval capabilities. The Soviets were prepared to extend

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[96] David E. Albright, ed., Communism in Africa (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 13.

[97] Jiri Valenta, "Soviet-Cuban Intervention in the Horn of Africa : Impact and Lessons," Journal of International Affairs (Fall/Winter 1981/1981), 354-364.

economic and military assistance to well-situated African states, particularly those in North Africa and along the coasts, that could be of strategic and political use to broader Soviet foreign policy aims, particularly the stemming of Western and Chinese influence among Third World states and providing a greater Soviet voice in African affairs.

The emergence of Marxist regimes in Africa in the mid-1970s, especially among Portuguese colonies, reflected the growing popular dissatisfaction with oppressive colonial and post-colonial governments. The Soviets attempted to portray these movements as the natural advent of internal class struggle which would lead to the global acceptance of socialism. One leading Soviet official explained, "the socialist orientation in Africa is a continuation of the Cause of the October Revolution under the specific conditions of its carrying out the high mission of preparing the way for the victory of scientific socialism."[98] Yet although the Soviets warmly welcomed the growth of Afro-Marxism, this ideology was a purely African adaptation of socialism and should not be viewed as a result of Soviet influence on the continent.[99] Despite Soviet military and

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[98] Edmond J. Keller and Donald Rothchild, eds., Afro-Marxist Regimes: Ideology and Public Policy (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), 225.

[99] B. D. G., in his article "Afro-Marxism: A Preliminary View" (African Review, vol. 6, no. 4, 1976), distinguishes between African Marxists and Afro-Marxists.

economic assistance to African states throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Soviet activities in Africa bore few concrete results until 1976 when the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) defeated the U.S.-backed National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) following a two year civil war.

Although the Angolan Civil War (1975-1976) represented the first significant act of Cuban-Soviet cooperation outside of Latin America, this cooperative effort was not strictly a result of Soviet initiatives in Africa. It is argued that the Cuban government, hoping to extend its own influence beyond Latin America, set the stage for active Soviet involvement in the war in Angola. Cuban support for Angolan communists and the MPLA began in the 1960s when Castro arranged for the training of MPLA-backed soldiers in Cuba. There the soldiers' studies focused on guerrilla tactics to be used against the Portuguese colonial government.[100] Cuban assistance to the MPLA continued and expanded to include the deployment of Cuban troops to help fight the civil war. By September 1975 more than 20,000 Cubans had been sent to Angola to fight against the FNLA as

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African Marxists attempt to apply strict Soviet-style socialism to the prevailing conditions in Africa. Afro-Marxists attempt to mold the principles of Soviet socialism into a new ideology which adapts to the special conditions in Africa.

[100] Pamela S. Falk, Cuban Foreign Policy (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986), 85.

soldiers and technical advisors.

Soviet support for the MPLA was less consistent as a result of Soviet caution in supporting untested national liberation movements as well as previous Soviet failures in Africa, particularly the replacement of Soviet-backed regimes in Ghana and Mali with pro-U.S. governments in the late 1960s.[101] Although the Soviet Union began sending economic assistance to the MPLA before the Cubans had recognized the movement, the flow of aid was uneven. The first disruption of aid occurred in 1963 when the Soviets temporarily canceled financial assistance to the movement. Full aid was restored in 1964. Again in 1972 the Soviet Union curtailed military aid, partly as a result of political infighting among the MPLA leadership and partly as a result of Brezhnev's signing of the Basic Principles Agreement which "codified" superpower conduct in global politics. Although the MPLA survived and Soviet military aid was revived briefly, the Soviets chose to abandon the movement in 1974 and focus on improving relations with leaders in North Africa, including Muhammar al-Qaddafi of Libya and Anwar Sadat of Egypt.[102] Once the colonial government collapsed and civil war began, the Soviets resumed both military and financial aid to the movement to

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[101] P. Shearman, 35.

[102] W. R. Duncan, 122-123.

supplement Cuban assistance.[103]

The Soviet Union and Cuba committed themselves to the MPLA at a time when the international system seemed to have changed.[104] The threat of intervention by the United States was minimal since the U.S. had just been defeated in Vietnam and American public opinion was strongly opposed to new military engagements in the Third World. For the Soviets, the time seemed right to extend assistance to a fledgling communist movement in Africa in the hopes of establishing a loyal regional ally. The Cubans, who also sought to project their influence abroad, recognized the war as an opportunity to prove themselves useful to Soviet operations in the Third World. With the inception of the Angolan Civil War, the Soviet Union began to depend heavily on Cuba as a tool of Soviet foreign policy. The signing of the Basic Principles Agreement in June 1974 meant that the American president and the Soviet premier would consult one another in the event of an international crisis and that neither nation would seek unilateral advantage in the event of a regional crisis in the Third World.[105] Therefore, in order to influence the Angolan crisis without consulting or involving the United States, Brezhnev decided to take advantage of the cooperative relationship between Cuba and

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[103] Ibid., 128-129.

[104] J. I. Dominguez, 152.

[105] P. Shearman, 35-36.

the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev entrusted Castro with considerable responsibility concerning the conduct of the civil war. However, this was not merely a gesture of good faith on Brezhnev's part but reflected the Soviet Union's need to focus its troops and attention on other conflicts. Since the Cubans had available troops to send to Angola, the Soviet was able to focus its attention, resources, and troops on the growing conflict in Afghanistan. Although the Soviets provided significant military counsel, Castro was in command of the communist forces. For example, it was Castro's decision to dramatically increase Cuban troop deployments to Angola following the arrival of five thousand South African troops to assist the FNLA in October 1975. Several hundred Cuban advisors helped to plan strategy for the MPLA and the largest clash of the civil war involved Cuban troops representing the MPLA and South African troops representing the FNLA and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Approximately two hundred Cuban troops died during the three day battle.[106]

Castro's role as the Soviet representative in Angola continued following the victory of the MPLA forces. Cuba maintained a force of 25,000 troops in Angola to help protect against South African intervention. In 1984 Angola and South Africa agreed to negotiate the withdrawal of

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[106] OP. S. Falk, 88.

foreign troops. Castro's new status as the Soviet spokesman in the Third World was obvious as he met with Angolan officials to outline the terms for foreign troop withdrawal.[107]

By the late 1970s Cuba had established its presence throughout Africa and the Middle East. Cuban forces abroad in the late 1970s accounted for two-thirds of the military and technical personnel stationed by all communist states in the Third World -- exceeding Soviet troops in Afghanistan and Vietnamese forces in Southeast Asia. In addition to troops, Cuba dispatched advisors, technicians, and construction workers to Algeria, Iraq, Jamaica, Libya, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and Grenada in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[108] By 1979 Cuba was helping to defend Soviet interests not only in Angola, but also in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

In each of these cases, Cuban and Soviet foreign policy goals converged as they had in Angola. The Angolan civil war proved that Cuba was a reliable ally. Cuban assistance to Ethiopian resistance against Somolia (1977-1978) proved that Cuba's aims could be restricted to a single task and

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[107] W. R. Duncan, 131-132.

[108] Robert A. Packenham, "Cuba and the USSR: What Kind of Dependency?," in I. L. Horowitz, 161.
(Cuban troop and advisor totals in 1978: 35,000 in Angola and Ethiopia, 200 in Libya, 1000 in Mozambique, 300-400 in South Yemen, 100-150 in Guinea Bassau, 50 in Tanzania, 20 in Iraq, and 15-60 in Zambia.)

would not necessarily involve the occupation of a nation after the task had been successfully accomplished. Although the Cubans acted with considerable autonomy in Angola, in Ethiopia the Cuban forces were used to augment Soviet forces backing Ethiopian resistance in a border dispute with Somalia. Soviet and Cuban troops acted in unison, though generally with Soviet leadership and following Soviet guidelines.[109] This was due in part to the fact that the Soviet Union had a vested interest in Ethiopia because of its use of the nation as a strategic base. The Cuban commitment was considerable, and by early 1978 its presence had grown to about 12,000 troops.[110] As a reward for Cuban assistance in Ethiopia, the Soviets provided Cuba with increased economic and military aid and more frequent shipments of oil, nickel, and other natural resources.

The late 1970s also represented a time of Cuban-Soviet cooperation in Central America. Given its geographical proximity to Nicaragua and El Salvador, Cuba naturally had greater interest in assisting fledgling communist movements in those nations. Cuba had supported national liberation movements there since the early 1960s, even in the face of Soviet indignation and banishment from regional alliances and trade. However, by the late 1970s, the Soviets acknowledged Cuba's ability to effectively represent Soviet

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[109] W. R. Duncan, 127.

[110] P. Shearman, 52.

interests in the region. Although the Soviets still sought caution when supporting revolutions in the United States' back yard, Castro desperately wanted to see greater revolutionary activity throughout Latin America. When the revolutions began in Nicaragua (1977-1979) and El Salvador (1979-1981), the United States tried to prevent the spread of socialism in Latin America by funding and supplying anti-communist forces there. The Soviet Union, which saw the emergence of any communist government in the region as an important step toward breaking U.S. hegemony in Latin America, was eager to provide economic and military support the FSLN because of its professed dedication to Marxist-Leninist doctrine and its dedication to Soviet-style communism.[111] As a result, the Soviets provided weapons and limited logistical support through Cuba, which also wanted to see the spread of communism in Latin America since it would translate to potential anti-American allies in the region.[112]

Cuba provided the guerrilla forces in both countries, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN or Sandinistas) in Nicaragua and the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL) in El Salvador, in an attempt to overthrow the ruling governments and install socialist regimes. In Nicaragua the Cubans helped train, arm, and transfer an

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[111] T. Ashby, 106-107.

[112] W. R. Duncan, 155-156.

"internationalist brigade" to fight alongside the FSLN which was seeking to overthrow the oligarchical regime of General Anastasio Somoza. By late 1979 Cuba had sent nearly 3,000 civilians (teachers, doctors, and health care professionals) to assist the FSLN. In addition, Cuba provided the Sandinista movement with over 15,000 military and security advisors.[113] Despite the rebels' victory in Nicaragua, the Cuban and Soviet assistance should not be overemphasized. The rebels received considerable assistance from many nations, including democracies in Latin America (Venezuela, Mexico, and Costa Rica) who were eager to see an end to the corrupt regime.

El Salvador's revolution came about under different circumstances than did Nicaragua's. In Nicaragua, as in Cuba, the revolution stemmed from rebels' attempts to seize control from a dynastic despot. In El Salvador the struggle was intended to reform a quasi-democracy which served a select oligarchy and continuously propagated leaders from the same social and economic class. The guerrillas aimed to overthrow the ruling elite and acquire economic benefits for the poor. Cuban assistance to the Salvadoran guerrillas began ardently. However, by 1981, the second year of the war, the Cuban involvement was restricted to military advisors and irregular weapons shipments due to a reduction in Soviet financial support for Cuba's activities there..

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[113] Ibid., 165.

Although there was no overthrow of the ruling elite, the revolution can be categorized as a limited success. By 1981 the government had initiated political and economic reforms designed to aid peasant farmers and workers.[114] Cuban and Soviet support dropped further following an ill-fated guerrilla offensive in January 1981. Following the guerrilla defeat, the Soviet Union encouraged the small Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES) to move away from armed struggle and concentrate on negotiations with the ruling government.[115] Although Castro openly supported the guerrillas, he could not maintain significant levels of support without continued Soviet backing.

A major setback to the spread of socialism in Latin America occurred when Cuban-Soviet domination was ended in Grenada. On October 19, 1983 Maurice Bishop, the communist ruler of Grenada and protege of Castro, was killed following a coup d'etat. The leaders of the coup were dissatisfied members of Bishop's Marxist "New Jewel Movement" who saw Bishop's anti-American stance weakening. President Ronald Reagan, seeking to ensure the safety of 1,000 Americans on the island and promote the formation of a democratic government, sent 1,900 troops to the island. The communist government was replaced with a democratic system, in which the communist factions continue to do battle. The invasion

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[114] Ibid., 167.

[115] Ibid.

was significant since it revealed that the United States was not willing to allow unchecked Soviet expansion in Latin America. Castro, not expecting Soviet military retaliation against the United States, supported Soviet condemnation of the invasion.

Throughout this period, the Soviet Union and Cuba, faced with numerous communist struggles throughout the world, decided to divide the world into "mini spheres of influence." The Soviets opted to concentrate on crises in Afghanistan (begun in 1979) and Poland (begun in 1981). As a result, the Cubans were allowed to conduct their wars in Angola, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and assume greater control over communist forces in Ethiopia, with relatively little Soviet interference. The Cuban success in Nicaragua led the Soviet Union to consider more seriously the support of armed struggle in Latin America. Scholars, too, began to reconsider the guerrilla warfare theories once championed by Che Guevara and guerrilla tactics as a recognized route to legitimate power lost support.

Although Cuban-Soviet cooperations encouraged new socialist states, the financial support to ensure their survival was lacking since neither Cuba nor the Soviet Union could afford to provide newly established communist regimes with the amount of economic assistance they sought to rebuild their economies. However, the Soviets were eager to reward Cuba for its cooperation in Latin America and Africa

and provided Castro with increased arms shipments and economic assistance, part of which was earmarked for the promotion of armed struggle in Latin America.[116]

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[116] W. R. Duncan, 173, 177-178.

Chapter Five

The Gorbachev Era: 1985-Present

Cuban-Soviet relations throughout the first three years of the Mikhail Gorbachev era remained secure and relatively unchanged. Castro was careful to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union as a means of ensuring continued military and economic assistance. However, since the introduction of political and, more importantly, economic reforms within the Soviet Union, Soviet foreign policy has become subordinated to the more urgent domestic problems challenging the stability and unity of the nation. In an attempt to revitalize the nation's domestic economy and reduce economic assistance to Soviet allies, Gorbachev deemed it necessary to reassess the theory and practice of past foreign policies. The result was "new thinking," an approach which postulates that Soviet policies must be based in the long run on reasonable cost/benefit analysis and economic accountability, not on the outdated ideological formulas that guided past foreign policy.[117]

The idea of "new thinking" conceptualizes Gorbachev's

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[117] Jiri Valenta, "'New Thinking' and Soviet Policy in Latin America," The Washington Quarterly (Spring 1990), 136-137.

call for radical changes to combat the rising costs and decreasing effectiveness of policies initiated under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev and his predecessors.[118] The Soviet military buildup and international activism of the late 1970s, particularly the invasion and prolonged occupation of Afghanistan, backing for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and support for other vanguard party regimes, depleted Soviet resources and contributed to deepening economic and social stagnation in the Soviet Union. This, combined with growing Western opposition to Soviet international behavior (as demonstrated by U.S. support for freedom fighters in Afghanistan and anti-Leninist insurgents in Angola, Nicaragua, and Cambodia), prompted Moscow to reassess its foreign policy goals and strategies. What resulted were policies which were intended to initiate or strengthen state-to-state relations based on western perceptions of normal international relations, including trade, economic assistance, and overt military sales to existing governments.

Gorbachev began by deemphasizing ideology as the foundation for Soviet foreign policy. Brezhnev had defended much of his foreign policy, including the invasion of Czechoslovakia and subsequent issuing of the Brezhnev Doctrine in 1968, the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and escalation of the Cold War, with Leninist ideology that

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[118] Ibid., 136.

justified all efforts to aid the spread of world socialism. Gorbachev sought to reform Soviet foreign policy and promote state-to-state relations based on positive economic and political cooperation. This would entail the restructuring of relations with existing allies.

At first, western scholars and analysts doubted Gorbachev's commitment to reshaping the Soviet Union's approach to international relations. Similar pronouncements of U.S.-Soviet rapprochement and other foreign policy reforms by earlier Soviet leaders failed to bring about a more stable international situation. Therefore, few westerners recognized that "new thinking" was more than propaganda and reflected a fundamental change in the Soviet Union's perception of its role in world affairs.[119]

In the first few years of Gorbachev's rule, it appeared that there was no significant shift in the relations between Moscow and Havana. In an address before the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) in February of that year, Castro offered renewed testimony that Cuba remained the leading, faithful ally and advocate of the Soviet Union and its interests. He claimed that his nation had never before been stronger militarily and would discharge its "sacred internationalist duties in accordance with its

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[119] John Edwin Mroz, "Soviet Foreign Policy and New Thinking," International Affairs (Moscow) (May 1990), 23.

abilities."[120] However, during his report before the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU, shortly after the PCC congress, Gorbachev failed to mention the Kremlin's traditional pledge of support for "wars of national liberation" of the type witnessed throughout the Third World and forcefully advocated by Castro.[121] Instead, Gorbachev asserted that global problems affecting the way people live and the very existence of the planet must carry greater urgency and importance than the problems of any one class or the promotion of any one ideology.[122] He called for support for renewed detente with the west, arguing that non-violence and mutual cooperation would better ensure an improved international climate and the future of the Soviet Union. He defended his position and refuted the belief, maintained by Khrushchev and Brezhnev, that peaceful coexistence with imperial, capitalist nations (namely the United States and western European nations) was useful only as a prolonged tactic to postpone, but not prevent, the inevitable confrontation between the capitalist and communist worlds.

Gorbachev's failure to pledge support for wars of national liberation and his efforts to encourage greater

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[120] R. Bruce McColm, "Castro's Ambitions Amid New Winds from Moscow," Strategic Review (Summer 1986), 48.

[121] Ibid., 49.

[122] Serg Mikoyan, "Soviet Foreign Policy and Latin America," The Washington Quarterly (Summer 1990), 180.

socialist cooperation with capitalist nations drew sharp criticism from Castro. In 1986 the Cuban Communist Party published a platform paper entitled "Principles and Objectives of Foreign Policy." The paper pledged Castro's and the party's abiding support for revolutionary movements around the world and vowed to work toward unity among diverse forces that are part of the international revolutionary process. The paper reiterated Castro's internationalist commitment, saying "the [Cuban] party and people will continue to fulfill honorably their internationalist duties, exercising solidarity with the peoples who are struggling for their independence and national liberation."[123]

Castro's unwillingness to accept Soviet "new thinking" may be explained in two ways. First, Castro has always maintained that a U.S.-Soviet rapprochement would increase the chances of an American invasion of Cuba. As he saw it, stronger ties between the Soviet Union and the West would weaken the Soviet commitment to its Third World allies, especially Cuba. Although many analysts argue that the threat and feasibility of direct American intervention has diminished considerably since the 1960s, Castro believes that the U.S. government would welcome any type of coup, whether organized from within Cuba or sponsored by Cuban

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[123] R. Bruce McColm, "Castro's Ambitions Among New Winds from Moscow," Strategic Review (Summer 1986), 48-49.

exiles in the United States and South America.[124] The second explanation reflects Castro's commitment to the revolution and the legitimacy his government derives from that commitment. Support for revolution is a constitutive ideological dimension of the Cuban revolution. It validates Castro's regime at home and augments his influence abroad.[125] Violence -- conventional and guerrilla -- has been the fuel of his power and prestige.

By 1987 Gorbachev began to mesh "new thinking" and perestroika, Soviet plans for domestic economic reform, by calling for significant economic reform, including the expansion of trade to include non socialist nations and the solicitation of economic assistance and trade credit from Western Europe, from its economically dependant allies, particularly members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). However, Castro argued that the economic reforms associated with perestroika were not a precondition for "new thinking" elsewhere than in the Soviet Union. He maintained that the acceptance of worker incentive programs and market-oriented management of industry would betray the people of Cuba. Castro called for "rectification" of the Cuban economy -- a return to a more doctrinaire Marxism that rejects material incentives as well as profit and private

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[124] "Castro's Future," Nightline (ABC News, Show No. 2298), March 14, 1990, 4-5.

[125] J. I. Dominguez, as quoted in R. B. McColm, 50.

property.[126]

Although Castro was unwilling to accept market reforms as proposed by the Soviets, he recognized the need for some reforms to remedy poor economic planning and bureaucratic inefficiency. He agreed to implement certain Soviet-style reforms that reflected modernization and economic self-discipline, but asserted that he was firmly opposed to the mixture of socialism and capitalism since the two systems are based on very different approaches to society and economics. In December 1986 he argued:

> Apparently we [socialists] thought that by dressing a person up as a capitalist we were going to achieve efficient production in the factory and so...we started to play at being capitalists.... When there's no competition, if the motivation prompting the owner in a capitalist society to defend his personal interests is out of the question, what is there to substitute for this? Only the cadres' individual sense of responsibility, not just the collective's sense of responsibility, the role played by the cadres. The man who is in charge there must be a

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[126] Michael Kline, "Castro and 'New Thinking' in Latin America," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs (Spring 1990), 97.

Communist...A revolutionary![127]

Castro vowed to withstand Soviet warnings to reform the Cuban economy, including threats that Gorbachev was planning far-reaching and significant cuts in economic and military assistance to its socialist allies. Although Castro recognized the need to prepare for such cuts in aid, he was unable to reconcile Soviet-style reforms and Cuban-style Communism. He explained, "We [Cubans] will never renounce the glorious title of Socialists and Communists. We have hard-working people fully dedicated to the task of dealing with problems, dedicated to advancing the Party and the Revolution. The Party will not at any time stop being called the Communist Party of Cuba."[128]

By 1987 Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union planned to reduce military aid to most allies outside of Eastern Europe. Cuban arms imports, which totaled $2.1 billion in 1985, dropped to $1.8 billion in 1987.[129] This reduction, believed, in part, to be a reaction to Castro's negative assessment of shifts in Soviet policy, led some analysts to suspect that Gorbachev would resort to economic

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[127] R. Rabkin, "Implications of the Gorbachev Era for Cuban Socialism," Studies in Comparative Communism (Vol. 23, no. 1, Spring 1990), 39.

[128] Ron Chepesiuk, "Castro Against the Tide," The New Leader (January 8, 1990), 10.

[129] Jan S. Adams, "Change and Continuity in Soviet Central American Policy," Problems of Communism (March-June 1989), 113.

pressure to bring Castro into conformity with his reforms. Gorbachev maintained that these reductions were motivated by economic necessity and that changes in Soviet military and economic assistance to its allies should not be interpreted as signs of displeasure with them.[130]

During a brief visit to Cuba in April 1989, Gorbachev faced veiled criticism of perestroika and "new thinking" by Castro, but publicly renewed his commitment to Cuba by signing a Treaty of Friendship between the two nations. However, within months of Gorbachev's visit to Cuba, Soviet deliveries of petroleum and building supplies were delayed without any official explanation or apology.[131] Castro began to speak publicly of a possible decline in economic assistance from the Soviet Union. Soviet spokesmen flatly denied that the delays were a tactical maneuver to force Castro to reconsider his opposition to Gorbachev's reforms, but emphasized that the economic arrangement between Cuba and the Soviet Union was not compatible with reforms taking place in the Soviet Union and restructuring would be necessary.[132]

Cuba faced the gravest threat to its economy following

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[130] R. Rabkin, 27-28.

[131] Joseph B. Treaster, "Castro Begins to Talk of Decline in Crucial Aid from Soviet Union," New York Times (July 28, 1989), A2.

[132] Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Castro's Nightmare," Washington Post (February 27, 1990), A23.

the collapse of the Soviet Union's East European satellites and the subsequent breakdown of the CMEA. Most of the social progress that Castro provided Cuba was accomplished at the cost of enormous foreign debts and reliance on trade subsidies secured through Cuba's "most favored nation" status within the CMEA. Since 1972, beneficial trade agreements with CMEA states have served as insurance against Cuban economic collapse. Cuba became excessively dependent on "soft" CMEA trade, which was conducted on a barter basis rather than in hard currency. But as the Central and East European members adopted market-oriented economies, they abandoned subsidized trade with Cuba. This left Castro to rely even more heavily on Soviet trade subsidies, most of which were scheduled to end by 1991.[133]

Castro's reaction to the collapse of Cuba's subsidized trade arrangements was to reaffirm Cuba's commitment to socialism. He accepted the right of Eastern European nations to shift to market economies and told a gathering of international journalists, "If a socialist country wants to construct capitalism, then we have to respect this right." He added, however, that socialism "is [Cuba's] policy and there can be no other way; history makes it so."[134]

It is clear that Gorbachev's policy changes are not

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[133] Eugene Robinson, "Castro: Let World Change, Cuba Will Stay the Course," Washington Post (March 17, 1990), A21.

[134] Ibid., A1.

intended to imperil the Soviet Union's relationships with Cuba or any other nation. The Soviets desire continued positive relations with Cuba and other traditional allies, but are convinced that significant political and economic restructuring within the Soviet Union, as well as stronger ties with non-traditional allies, is necessary to the maintenance of Soviet socialism. It is unintended concurrence, however, that these changes are altering, and often jeopardizing, the influence of the Soviet Union over its allies. Such is the case with Cuba.

The Soviet Union truly desires to keep Cuba within its camp. The relationship which former Soviet leaders built with Castro continues to serve the objectives of the Soviet Union today.[135] Militarily, Cuba provides the Soviets with an electronic surveillance base at Lourdes for the collection of intelligence data, it provides a military air base from which the Soviet Union can launch reconnaissance flights along the eastern shores of the United States, and it allows for Soviet naval use of the shipyards at Cienfuegos. In addition Cuba, which enjoys a popular socialist government and health and human services that surpass those of other developing nations, has long represented the potential positive aspects of socialism to Latin American and other Third World nations.

Although the Soviets are encouraging Cuba to adapt to

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[135] R. Rabkin, 24.

changing conditions in (and benefits from) the Soviet Union, Castro does not view the Soviet model as compatible with Cuba's economic strategy. His most frequent argument against reforms proposed by the Soviets is that the introduction of limited market-oriented mechanisms to Cuba's socialist economy would undermine the progress of the Cuban Revolution. However, he faces the realization that reforms in the Soviet Union are also likely to have an impact on Cuba, its economy, and, eventually, the success of the revolution.

Castro fears that a sustained decline in Soviet military aid to Cuba threatens the unity of Cuba's military and its ability to defend itself from U.S. intervention, a more feasible threat if Cuba's defenses are compromised as a result of cuts in military aid. Following the recent withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola after a year of military stalemate, morale is low. If Castro cannot secure continued funding or employment for his returning troops, once content officers may try to overthrow the current order and stability.[136]

Castro, however, continues to promote the old-line ideas and rhetoric, including the offering of encouragement to the remaining socialist movements throughout Latin America. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union's Eastern European satellites, Castro initiated a new wave of

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[136] R. B. McColm, 53-54.

veiled anti-Soviet rhetoric. He argued, "the crisis in the Soviet bloc was the result of a long-term imperialist strategy of undermining socialism from within, compounded by 'some errors' that may have been committed."[137]

The Cuban response to Soviet calls for economic and political reforms has been to turn a deaf ear. The Soviets, concerned with the increasing economic and political problems within their own borders, have responded with gentle persuasion and continued cuts in military assistance. There has been a clear and seemingly irreparable ideological rift in Cuban-Soviet relations. However, the Soviet Union cannot be expected to maintain Castro as a relic of communism. Gorbachev must concentrate on the reform of his own nation's economy. Soon he will be forced to make drastic cuts in Soviet economic aid to Cuba. While this could endanger Cuban-Soviet relations, it must be realized that Gorbachev fundamental role as president is to ensure and protect the survival of the Soviet Union. Although Cuba is a beneficial ally, the need to stabilize the Soviet economy outweighs the need to maintain a strong network of allies which serves only the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's 'new thinking' defines the survival of the nation as the driving force of Soviet foreign policy.

Although Castro's popularity within Cuba leads many

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[137] G. Black, 4.

analysts to believe that he could easily win a free election, he cannot justify reforms which would directly conflict with his actions as leader of the revolution. He has enjoyed over thirty years as the leading voice of communism in the Third World with Soviet backing. In many ways, the loosening of bonds with the Soviets allows Castro to move forward with his dream to prove himself as the leading independent spokesman for communism in the Third World. If Cuba were to follow the path of reforms to the extent witnessed in Eastern Europe, it would indicate to the Cuban people that Castro was abandoning the revolution and socialist ideals which served to legitime his rule since 1959. And it seems doubtful that Castro, who clings to the now somewhat fading image of his revolution, will be able to make the visionary, but risky, leap into the reality of 'new thinking' and embark on a domestic reform, like the Soviets, to improve Cuba's image and ensure its role as a leader among developing nations.

Conclusion

The previous review of Cuban-Soviet relations since 1959 clearly demonstrates the close alliance that developed between the two nations and left Cuba economically and militarily dependant on Soviet support. However, this dependance was a calculated risk which Castro was willing to take in order to ensure the physical security of his nation, the success of his government's social programs, and the promotion of Cuba as an influential actor in international politics. And despite the many just criticisms charged against Castro's regime, including human rights violations, deception and censorship, and international terrorism, it has succeeded at providing the nation with security and relative comfort at home and an influential voice as the most enduring socialist nation in the Third World.

Although Cuba historically was seen as vulnerable to U.S. military and economic aggression, Castro used close ties with the Soviet Union to secure political and economic independence from the United States. With massive Soviet assistance, genuine socio-economic and political accomplishments have been achieved, including a highly egalitarian redistribution of income, major advances in the

areas of education and technical training, and the establishment of a national health care system superior to similar programs in most developed nations. Castro's alliance with the Soviet Union and international communism has afforded Cuba a disproportionate amount of world attention and influence for a nation of its size and limited resources. And although Castro has tolerated Soviet interference in many areas of its economic and political affairs, Cuban "internationalism" has regularly reflected the government's commitment to maintaining a foreign policy independent of Soviet domination.

Because of Cuba's economic and military dependence on the Soviet Union, scholars and analysts have tended to overemphasize the degree of leverage the Soviet Union exerts over Cuba. Both the "Sovietization of Cuba Thesis" and the "Surrogate Thesis" contend that by allowing Cuba to become dependent upon Soviet assistance, Castro forfeited his nation's autonomy and made Cuba a surrogate of Soviet directives. I argue that each of these theses neglects the frequent divergence between Cuban and Soviet policies regarding key issues. Similarly, the theses fail to consider that Castro's willingness to conform with Soviet policy in other areas could simply be the result of balanced and informed consideration of his government's options. Cuba is clearly a friendly ally of the Soviet Union and it is to be expected that such allies will attempt to

coordinate policy on important issues. Although the Soviet Union has used its economic and military assistance to Cuba to exert influence over Castro's government, I allege that Cuban-Soviet relations exemplify those of two nations pursuing compatible interests.

Proven cases of assertive or coercive power by the Soviet Union over Castro are rare. One clear example, detailed in chapter two, occurred in 1967-68 when the Soviets cut back oil supplies to Cuba in an attempt to coerce Castro to suspend his emphasis on armed struggle in the Third World. But even then, what compelled the Cubans to shift to the pro-Soviet line of peaceful change was a number of other domestic and regional forces, including the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia, the lack of success among Latin American guerrilla movements, and increasing problems with production and workers' strife in Cuba.[138] Therefore, it would be inaccurate to portray Soviet sanctions against Cuba as the only factor contributing to Castro's change of policy.

The "Sovietization Thesis" points to Cuba's membership in the CMEA and Castro's willingness to restructure the nation's economic institutions to parallel those of the Soviet Union as examples of the Soviets exerting undue influence over Cuba. It maintains that such moves furnished the Soviet Union with exorbitant leverage with which it

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[138] W. R. Duncan, 191.

could control the Cuban economy and pressure Castro to conform with Soviet policies. However, it cannot be ignored that Castro actively pursued membership in the CMEA and was fully aware of the potential risks and benefits from economic restructuring. The arrangement formalized Cuban trade with the Soviet Union and other CMEA member states, thereby ensuring stable markets for Cuban exports and providing continued supplies of necessary imports. During the first decade of Cuban membership in the CMEA, trade with socialist nations rose considerably from 65.2 percent in 1974 to 87 percent by 1984.[139]

The central premise of the "Sovietization Thesis" is that the relationship between Castro's Cuba and the Soviet Union resembles the relationship that existed between pre-revolutionary Cuba and the United States. Before the revolution, Cuba's relationship with the United States was characterized by an era of U.S. imperialism followed by an era of U.S. hegemony.[140] From 1898, the year Spain ceded Cuba to the United States, to 1934, the year the Platt Amendment was abrogated, the U.S. maintained control over political and economic developments in Cuba. During these years, the United States directed the actions of the Cuban government and readily seized control of the government and

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[139] Frank T. Fitzgerald, "The 'Sovietization of Cuba Thesis' Revisited," Science and Society (Vol. 51, no. 4, Winter 1987-1988), 443.

[140] J. I. Dominguez, 8.

occupied the island when U.S. directives were not followed. Once Cuba had been molded to serve American interests, the Platt Amendment was repealed and the U.S. sought only to ensure the security of the island and protect U.S. firms doing business there. Trade between the two nations was normal and, although the U.S. maintained Naval bases on the island, no measures were taken to establish an unusually large American military presence on Cuba. However, Cuban foreign policy up to the revolution was always expected to conform with U.S. interests in the region.

The relationship between Castro's Cuba and the Soviet Union is very different. The "Sovietization Thesis" assumes rather than demonstrates the existence of Soviet coercion. Since the establishment of political and economic ties, Castro has enjoyed considerable independence from Soviet pressure and has frequently pursued policies which directly conflicted with Soviet aims. There is reason to believe that the Cubans maintain considerable leverage in their dealings with the Soviets and that the Cuban-Soviet relationship is one of negotiated give and take.[141] For example, Cuba was able to solicit overt Soviet support for its activities in Angola, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, despite the Soviet Union's official curtailment of such support. The results of Cuba's intervention in Africa and the success of the Cuban-backed Sandinistas in El Salvador

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[141] F. T. Fitzgerald, 447.

influenced the Soviet Union to moderate temporarily its opposition to armed struggle. Because of his significant leverage in the Nonaligned Movement, Castro has acquired the unofficial role of Soviet spokesman to the Third World, particularly to Latin America. However, Cuba's sacrifices to ensure economic stability and a strong voice in the socialist world have proven costly, if not detrimental.

Cuba's failure to establish economic relations with most non-CMEA nations has left the island vulnerable to financial ruin as a result of the collapse of CMEA trade and the announcement by the Soviets of cuts in military and economic assistance to dependant allies. These events along with Castro's frequent criticism of Gorbachev's reform policies, have led many analysts to predict an end to friendly relations between the two nations. They argue that the two approaches to socialism are no longer reconcilable and, without the benefits of Soviet economic assistance, Castro has no incentive to accommodate Gorbachev's 'new thinking.' However, even if the Soviet Union were to cut off completely economic assistance to Cuba, Castro could continue to profit from its relationship with the Soviet Union.

Because Cuba had focused its foreign economic policy on subsidized trade with CMEA nations, the Soviet Union remains one of the few nations with which it can be assured of continued trade, albeit on less favorable terms. Gorbachev

has vowed to provide Cuba with $450 million in aid and hard currency loans to see it through the immediate crisis.[142] If Castro is willing to accept economic relations with capitalist nations, a key tenet of 'new thinking,' then the Soviets would conceivably seek to maintain Cuba's economic viability thus far by continuing to provide Castro with technical assistance and economic advisors. More importantly, expanded trade with capitalist nations could help to safeguard Cuba's educational, health, and welfare systems, the success of which fosters public support for Castro's regime.

Acceptance of "new thinking" could also serve to preserve Castro's influence abroad, influence which he derives from Cuba's unique relationship with the Soviet Union. Cuban foreign policy has as its goals "to hold power and leverage in the international system, to remain independent of the United States, to support insurgencies, and to promote diplomatic relations."[143] According to Michael Kline and other scholars, none of these goals, including support for insurgencies, is necessarily inconsistent with 'new thinking.'[144] In recent years Castro has been willing to use diplomatic measures to pursue

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[142] M. Kline, 100.

[143] Pamela S. Falk, Cuban Foreign Policy: Caribbean Tempest (Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, 1986), 25.

[144] M. Kline, 103.

many of Cuba's foreign policy aims, including the undermining of U.S. economic and political pressure against Cuba. A recent example of this policy occurred in 1989 when Cuba garnered the support of Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico to defeat a U.S.-sponsored resolution in the United Nations condemning Cuba for human rights violations.[145] Castro's declaration in January 1989 insisted that "there should be no doubt whatsoever that we fully support the Soviet Union's peace policy."[146]

Although Soviet Union is willing to sacrifice its relationship with Cuba if Cuban-Soviet relations threaten to jeopardize "new thinking," it too stands to lose many benefits. Cuba continues to serve as the Soviet Union's primary bridge to the Third World. It serves as an example of a nation that willingly adopted and preserved socialism and Marxist-Leninist teachings. And it acts as a base of support for future communist movements in Latin America. More practically, Soviet bases and intelligence installations on Cuba would be irreplaceable due to the island's strategic location. Because of these benefits, it is feasible that the Soviet Union will work to retain Cuba as a socialist ally and would make whatever concessions are economically possible to keep Cuba as an eager defender of Soviet policies.

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[145] M. Kline, 104.

[146] Ibid, 104-105.

As has been reflected throughout the history of Cuban-Soviet relations, any solution to this conflict will necessitate compromise by both sides. Each nation has benefitted from the relationship and each stands to lose considerable interests if the alliance folds. It is plausible that, in order to preserve stability at home and influence abroad, Castro will accept changes in Soviet policy while asserting his traditional brand of communism and beliefs. In return, the Soviets will promise to honor its military alliance with Cuba and work to maintain limited economic assistance and trade agreements that benefit Cuba. These actions will allow each nation to safeguard traditional benefits while independently pursuing better relations with other nations.

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