

volvement in nascent guerrilla movements, and in so doing lost the initiative to the non-communist radical left; this happened in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The Partido Socialista Nicaraguense (PSN) joined the armed struggle in Nicaragua only in 1977. In the Salvadoran case, the local party embraced the armed struggle in 1980, only after the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Indeed, not much changed in Soviet policy in Latin America in 1973-79. Despite the heightened scholarly effort after 1969 (the year that the Soviet publication *Latinskaya Amerika* was founded), the region remained one of rather low priority in the development of Soviet policy in the Third World; the Soviet Union was preoccupied with events in South-East Asia, the Middle East, and southern and north-eastern Africa. Among the various regions of the Americas, the one which received the least attention in the scholarly literature was Central America. The impression one gets from a survey of the literature during the period is that Soviet analysts just weren't paying much attention to it. The same might of course be said of Western scholars.

3. Nicaragua and the Crisis in Central America

Little had prepared the Soviet Union for the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua. The lack of comment on the subject until success was imminent suggests that the Soviets were taken by surprise. Sergo Mikoyan, the editor of *Latinskaya Amerika* noted in 1980:

However, the victory of the Sandinista revolution came as a joyous surprise (*radostnoi neozhidannosti*): even a year before 19 July 1979, hardly anybody could predict it.⁴²

Once again, there is little compelling evidence of a significant Soviet role in fomenting or directing this revolutionary process.

The instability in Nicaragua was overwhelmingly local in origin. The principal reasons for the revolution were:

1. the emergence of new social groups (mainly middle and working class) as part of a gradual process of modernization since the 1930s and particularly since the late 1950s, together with the failure to develop governmental structures to draw these groups into the political process. Indeed, the Nicaraguan regime grew more oppressive as pressure from below increased;

⁴² S. Mikoyan, "Revolutsionnoe tvorchestvo prokladyvaet put' k pobede" *Latinskaya Amerika* (1980), #2, p. 5.