

Basin. They believe instability is the product of indigenous economic and social factors, and revolutionary agitation is essentially the natural product of massive inequities in land tenure and income distribution, inequities which, if anything, are growing with the passage of time. The masses in such circumstances have little stake in the status quo and are willing, indeed eager, to follow those radicals promising fundamental change. To the extent that any outside actor is responsible for the instability characteristic of the region, it is the United States, in her imposition of inequitable and impoverishing trade and investment relationships and in her political and military support for regimes established to perpetuate internal exploitation and external dependency.

By contrast, in their view, Soviet and Cuban assistance to revolutionary forces has been sporadic and quantitatively insignificant, and by and large a consequence of US backing of counter-revolutionary forces. The attempt to characterize social upheaval as the product of Soviet/Cuban expansionism is thus merely a pretext whereby the United States justifies permanent involvement in order to maintain her political, economic and military hegemony. Even if the Soviet Union wanted to establish itself in the region and was successful, this would not constitute a significant strategic threat to the United States, given

- a. continuing American conventional superiority in the region, allowing rapid suppression of Soviet forces and facilities;
- b. very long and vulnerable Soviet lines of communication to the region;
- c. the likelihood that any conflict involving the United States and the Soviet Union would escalate sufficiently quickly that non-nuclear facilities in the region would be irrelevant.

These two contrasting positions define the end points of a broad spectrum of opinion on the role of the Soviet Union in the Caribbean Basin and the significance of that role. Most analysts of Soviet policy fall between these two poles, taking the view that although the deep-seated causes of regional crisis are indigenous and socio-economic in character, Soviet and Cuban involvement (in the form of financial, technical, military and organizational assistance to anti-American revolutionary forces) is a significant contributing factor, expediting the transformation of revolutionary potential into the reality of civil conflict. They differ, however, in the emphasis they attach to indigenous versus external causation, and in their assessment of the degree to which this external involvement threatens the United States.