

IV.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions with regard to Soviet policy emerge from this analysis. First, the Soviet Union over the period under consideration has rather steadily developed its capacity to respond to opportunities in the Caribbean region. Moreover, Soviet perceptions of US strategic interests have developed in such a way that it now views the Caribbean Basin as an area of great interest to the United States. Hence, for reasons presented in Section II, the Soviet Union has a significant derivative interest in the region. The cases considered above demonstrate, moreover, that over the past three decades the Soviet Union has greatly deepened its involvement in regional affairs. It displays considerably greater confidence and resolve today than it did thirty years ago. The dimensions of, if you will, the Soviet challenge in the Caribbean Basin have grown. This justifies concern.

There are, however, several important reservations to this general conclusion.

First, although the Soviet Union has become increasingly able to address the military needs of its clients in the region, its current economic weakness greatly impedes any functional diversification and consolidation of Soviet relations with client left-wing regimes. The massive economic commitment to Cuba adds to this difficulty, in that it absorbs resources which might otherwise be available to other revolutionary actors, and in that the cost of this renders Soviet decision-makers reluctant to assume any further similar commitments.

Second, this trend of growing Soviet activity in the region is not linear. Soviet willingness to assume economic burdens and military risks apparently peaked in 1960-2, but dropped dramatically in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the demise of Khrushchev, and has never approached the 1962 level since. Soviet enthusiasm for, and willingness to support, revolutionary activity rose again after the Nicaraguan Revolution, but recently the Soviets have become more circumspect. Both of these retrenchments may have been largely determined by domestic developments such as the succession crises of 1964-5 and of 1981-5, and the economic difficulties of the two periods, which apparently favoured a re-orientation of policy towards domestic issues. They may also have reflected Soviet preoccupation with events elsewhere such as the