

araguan armed forces to the point where they are by far the largest in Central America. The Sandinista counter-insurgency effort owes its success, moreover, to the mobility and firepower provided by the Eastern Bloc. Such shipments continue. In 1984, East Germany delivered some 800 military trucks, while the Soviet Union recently provided Nicaragua with a number of MI-24 helicopters which have proven very effective in the anti-*contra* campaign. They have been accompanied by limited numbers of Soviet advisers (estimated at around 40-50)⁵⁴ and by far larger numbers of Cuban military personnel. The picture then is one of a growing multi-dimensional Soviet relationship with Nicaragua, a relationship that is viewed with considerable alarm in the neighbouring countries of Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador, let alone in the United States.

The insecurity of Nicaragua's neighbours has been further enhanced by Nicaragua's involvement, to varying degrees and at various times, in military actions against neighbouring states. An example of this was Nicaragua's hot pursuit of anti-government guerrillas into Costa Rica and confrontation between Nicaraguan forces and the Costa Rican Civil Guard in the spring of 1985. Nicaragua has also been implicated in the provision of facilities and sanctuary for guerrilla forces operating in El Salvador and has allowed the trans-shipment of arms destined for these guerrillas through Nicaraguan territory (as during the period leading up to the "final offensive" of the FMLN in January 1981).

It is almost certainly the case that, whatever the circumstances, the Nicaraguan Revolution would have brought about an improvement in Soviet-Nicaraguan relations, and a corresponding reduction in the influence of the United States. The Soviet Union desires to expand its ties with Central American states and to undermine the US position in the Caribbean Basin. The Sandinista Front — or at least prominent elements of its leadership — has had from its inception a strong Marxist orientation (as in Humberto Ortega's assertion in 1980 that "Sandinism" and Marxism-Leninism were one and the same thing or Tomas Borge's affirmation that he is a communist), and consequently has had a degree of ideological affinity with the Soviet Union. This Marxist element of the Sandinista world view is complemented by a strong geopolitically and historically based anti-Americanism which has favoured disengagement from the web of US economic and political influence in the country and attempts to balance this influence with ties to other

⁵⁴ *Soviet Military Power* (Washington: USGPO, 1985), p. 120.