

This is not to say that this coincidence of interest is not amply exploited by the Soviets, since it provides an opportunity to further anti-American trends in the region without thereby bearing significant risks of the kind which would be associated with direct Soviet involvement. The fact that the Soviets appear to work through the Cubans implies their appreciation of the advantages of access to personnel who are intimately familiar with the region and who blend easily into it. It also suggests two principles motivating their policy in Central America — on the one hand, the Soviets continue to be significantly attracted by opportunities appearing in the “strategic rear” of the United States; but, on the other, they continue to be aware of US sensitivities about direct Soviet involvement and of the risks that are consequently associated with any high profile Soviet activity in this area.

The Soviets greeted the Nicaraguan Revolution and the subsequent dominance of the Sandinista front with considerable pleasure and optimism.⁴⁵ The revolution was perceived to be the first significant progress in the Caribbean Basin since the Cuban Revolution. It was seen as a harbinger of better things to come elsewhere in Central America⁴⁶ and as evidence of a qualitatively new phase in the Latin American Revolution.⁴⁷ It provided a new opportunity to take advantage of US vulnerabilities in the Third World, this time in a region of critical strategic importance to the United States.

It is often noted that one aspect of the Soviet reaction to the Nicaraguan Revolution was an increasing enthusiasm regarding violent revolution in the region, and the rehabilitation in the Soviet literature of figures such as Ché Guevara, previously condemned for ultraleftist adventurism.⁴⁸ What is ignored is that this enthusiasm was matched by frequent admonitions that the Nicaraguan experience was unique and that it was dangerous to draw universal conclusions from it concerning the necessity of armed struggle.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ cf. S. Mikoyan, *op. cit.* (note 42), p. 5; “Nikaragua, Nadezhda Kontinenta”, *Latinskaya Amerika* (1979), #4, pp. 221, 224; A. Shul’govskii, “Eksperiment Bol’shoi Istoricheskoi Vazhnosti”, *Latinskaya Amerika* (1980) #3, p. 5.

⁴⁶ “Nikaragua, Nadezhda Kontinenta” (note 45), p. 221-2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222; R. Arismendi, “Narodnaya Vesna v Nikaragua”, *Latinskaya Amerika* (1980), #2, pp. 12, 20; B.I. Koval’, “Revolyutsia-Olitel’nyi Istoricheskii Protse’ss”, *Latinskaya Amerika* (1980), #3, p. 12.

⁴⁸ See B.I. Koval’, *op. cit.* (note 47), pp. 15-6. See also Shafik Khandal, as cited in note 68.

⁴⁹ S. Mikoyan, *op. cit.* (note 40), p. 35; Shul’govskii, *op. cit.* (note 45), p. 7, Arismendi, *op. cit.* (note 47), p. 34.