

More importantly perhaps, Cuba intervened in 1978 in the internal politics of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN), when Castro urged the leaders of the movement's three factions to forget their differences for the moment and to concentrate on the principal enemy, Somoza. On the whole, however, Cuba's role in the revolution was not essential. Several factors account for this Cuban restraint: a lingering fear of possible US retaliation, fear that prominent assistance to the Sandinistas might crystallize both US and regional opposition to the Nicaraguan Revolution, and an awareness, at least from late 1978 onward, that the Sandinistas stood a good chance of succeeding under their own steam.

Even had there been a prominent Cuban role in the crisis, it would not necessarily have followed that this was a product of Soviet policy. In the abstract, it is just as dubious to argue that the Soviet Union "controls" Cuban policy in the region as it is to maintain that Cuba "controls" the various guerrilla movements in Central America, a position apparently assumed a priori by the Kissinger Commission.⁴⁴ Obviously, Cuba exercises some influence over the guerrillas as does the Soviet Union over Cuba. It is also true that Cuba's high profile foreign policy in the Third World is possible largely as a result of Soviet economic and military support. But it would make sense, in terms of Castro's own revolutionary commitment and Cuba's own security concerns, for that country to support movements dedicated to the destruction of pro-American regimes in the region and their replacement with regimes friendly to Cuba. Moreover, the quantity and quality of Cuban assistance to regimes (limited military aid, small amounts of credits, and the provision of substantial numbers of medical and technical personnel, and of police and military experts) and movements (limited finance, some provision of weapons and other military and communications equipment, and propaganda) in the region are not such as to create unbearable burdens for Cuba. This is in contrast to their deployment of substantial forces in Africa. The fact that Soviet and Cuban interests in the region coincide, and that they co-operate in the pursuit of them, does not imply that Cuba is in any meaningful sense a "proxy" of the Soviet Union. Maintaining that it does involves neglecting the reasons for anti-American behaviour on the part of Cuba, and the real possibilities of loosening Soviet-Cuban ties.

⁴⁴ Henry Kissinger, *et. al.*, *The Report of the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), p. 107.