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Latin American terrorism and the Soviet connection revisited

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Latin American Terrorism and the Soviet Connection Revisited

Robert P. Hager, Jr.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of scholars and journalists argued that the USSR was sponsoring terrorism as a means of low-intensity conflict against the non-communist world. This view was endorsed by the Reagan administration.

This article assesses what substance there is behind such charges as they relate to Latin America. Its main argument is that sponsorship of terrorists has usually occurred as a byproduct of Soviet support of armed revolution as a tactic rather than for terrorism as such. Soviet willingness to assist armed struggle has varied over the last three decades. The article concludes that, given the current priorities of Soviet Latin American policy, Moscow's sponsorship of armed struggle, including terrorism, is decreasing and will almost certainly continue do so.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was often argued that the Soviet Union sponsored terrorism as a highly effective form of 'low-intensity warfare' against the West, a view espoused by such as scholars Brian Crozier[1] and Herbert Romerstein,[2] among others. Ray S. Cline even claimed that there was 'a carefully developed terrorist infrastructure which serves Moscow's foreign policy objectives.'[3] The same theme was stridently popularized by the American freelance journalist Claire Sterling.[4]

A partial endorsement of this view was made by the Reagan Administration. The late CIA Director William J. Casey wrote,

> Clearly, the Soviet Union and its allies all have grasped the potential of terrorist movements for disrupting societies, particularly in the so-called Third World. Clearly, they have recognized that throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America there are weak governments with low levels of legitimacy and high levels of instability. To a degree far greater than is generally realized, these governments are acutely vulnerable to terrorist disruptions, and are therefore inviting targets to terrorist campaigns. In providing terrorist movements with arms, training, and political support, the Soviet Union and its allies have thus discovered a highly 'cost-effective' way of making the point that in today's world it is not safe to practice democracy.[5]

A meaningful discussion of this issue faces several problems. The first is loose use of the term 'terrorism'; it is necessary to clarify the term.

Otherwise, 'Moscow's role in international terrorism' simply becomes a catch-all slogan for denouncing Soviet assistance to a revolutionary cause which one happens to disapprove of.[6] Romerstein, Crozier, and Cline do not define 'terrorism.' They tend to discuss Soviet support for armed insurgency and the sponsorship of terrorism without distinguishing between the two.

Grant Wardlaw points to another problem. '[N]obody has yet provided ... any serious analysis of Soviet strategic objectives and the manner in which these ends would be served by support for terrorism.'[7] To do so one would have to deal with the duality so often noted in Soviet foreign policy; the Kremlin is the self-proclaimed center of an international social revolution while at the same time it most look after the day-to-day interests of the USSR as an established state. Adam B. Ulam has noted that this results in a certain contradiction among the varied interests that Moscow pursues. On the one hand, instability and catastrophe in the noncommunist world are necessary for the expansion of the international communist movement. On the other hand, the Soviet state needs peaceful relations with the West in order to deflect the threat of war away from itself, and for its own economic development.[8]

While Wardlaw is correct in his assessment of the literature on terrorism, a secondary source literature exists regarding Soviet policy toward revolutionary conflict in the Third World and certain select regions of it, including evidence of times, places, and reasons that the Soviets have supported armed insurgency. There is also an open primary source literature published by the Soviets and some of the Soviet supported Third World insurgent movements. We will show that it is possible to use the two literatures to respond to Wardlaw's concern in one area of the Third World, Latin America. The broader significance of this literature may be that understanding of the use of terror to support foreign policy may require scholars to go outside the narrow confines of the terrorism literature into works dealing with the broader policy goals of various powers and their involvement in regional conflicts.

It will help our analysis if we use an accepted definition of 'terrorism'. Here it will be defined as the use of 'symbolic act[s] designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence'. Terrorist acts are 'symbolic' in that they are designed to influence a broader audience than the immediate victim. The violence used is 'extranormal' in the sense that it is directed at targets that a society would not normally consider within the moral bounds for violent attack.[9]

The Soviets themselves do not admit to sponsoring terrorism. Revolutionary groups, whether linked to Moscow or not, do not own up to using it either. However, we will see that, when the Soviets support armed struggle as a revolutionary tactic, they assist groups using terrorism. As

we will see in our discussion of the Venezuelan insurgency of the 1960s, the USSR has been willing to support terrorism, as it is defined here, even against democratic governments. However, support for these tactics is more a byproduct of backing armed revolution than a calculated strategy of promoting terror.

We have set two tasks for ourselves. One is to provide some analysis of Soviet geopolitical aims in Latin America in the last three decades. The other is to examine the USSR's relations with various revolutionary groups there, some of which have used terrorism at times.

The two high points of Soviet support for armed struggle were in the early 1960s and the early 1980s, after the success of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. Although Moscow had little direct connection with these events, it endorsed violent tactics in a number of Latin American countries soon afterwards, indicating that Soviet endorsement of violence was opportunistic, not a strategic goal in itself. Although it is not yet certain what the full impact of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's changes on Soviet foreign policy will be, there obviously has been a major shift from the late Brezhnev-era policy in the Third World. For the time being, one can expect Moscow's Latin America policy to emphasize good relations with established regimes rather than pursuit of revolutionary goals. Consequently, any Soviet support for terrorism, or any other form of revolutionary violence, in the region (outside of certain cases such as El Salvador and Chile) will probably be minimal.

Before proceeding with this analysis, it is necessary to note that there are ways that the Soviet government can facilitate violence should it wish to do so. In addition to material aid (such as arms), the Soviet intelligence services, the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) and the Committee of State Security (KGB), have considerable expertise in low intensity conflict.[10]

Normally, however, the Soviet government would prefer not to be directly connected with terrorism, even if this means that it cannot fully control the perpetrators.[11] At one time, the USSR could promote violence by means of the world communist movement. Although international communism is declining rapidly, the idea of a world communist movement is an important ingredient in the speeches and writings of the leaders of communist parties (CP's) since 1917.[12] The 'Grenada documents' show how many Third World revolutionary groups took their Marxist-Leninism seriously in the 1980s despite the ideology's decline in the West. Those groups were susceptible to manipulation by the Soviets[13] and could be expected to assist terrorism and/or other forms of violent struggle if the USSR wanted them to.

To some extent, the Soviet government could rely on the resources of its allies to assist in the implementation of its policies. Within the 'socialist

camp', a number of East European regimes were among the most ardent supporters of Third World regimes and movements backed by the USSR; these were Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria,[14] all three of which have been active in assisting Soviet-supported 'national liberation movements' in Africa.[15] Some East European intelligence services, such as Bulgaria's DS, were generally believed to work under KGB direction.[16]

The most important Soviet ally in assisting Third World revolutionary groups was Cuba. Despite his original independence, Fidel Castro's foreign policy would increasingly become subordinated to the priorities of the USSR over time.[17] Cuba's Directorate of General Intelligence (DGI) was brought under KGC control as part of the general Soviet–Cuban accommodation.[18] The Cuban Communist Party (PCC) founded an Americas Department (DA) in 1974 to assist in supporting covert operations in the Western Hemisphere. The DA reportedly worked with the DGI and the KGB.[19]

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) also has maintained an apparatus for aiding and influencing a number of nonruling CPs and other movements, since the days of the Comintern.[20] Currently, this duty is performed by the International Department (ID) of the CPSU's Central Committee,[21] which maintains contact with groups that the Soviet Foreign Ministry itself might not wish to associate with publicly for diplomatic reasons.[22] The ID runs various regional organizations to coordinate conformity with the Soviet line among local CPs.[23] Publications such as *World Marxist Review* and its supplement *Information Bulletin* also provide ideological guidance for those adherents to the world communist movement that are receptive to the Soviet line.[24] The CPSU also has a number of front organizations such as the World Peace Council which can propagandize for pro-Soviet causes. Sometimes, the Soviet government can do this itself by effective lobbying in international forums like the UN.

In short, in its position as leader of (at least a large part of) the world communist movement, the CPSU was in a position to render considerable aid to revolutionary organizations in the Third World until recently, and can still do so to a lesser extent. However, Moscow has been selective about what revolutionary groups it chooses to aid in Latin America. The reason for the variation could be explained by the duality in Soviet foreign policy. Although Ulam's thesis referred to Soviet relations with major powers, the USSR has often found it beneficial to pursue good state-to-state relations with established Third World governments, even if chances for pushing revolution had to be set aside. What is more, the following pages will show that at times Moscow has found revolutionary violence harmful to its state interests and to the communist movement in Latin America. This gives lie to the thesis that the Soviet Union has a vested interest in the promotion of violence in itself.

The USSR and its Cuban ally can be accused of supporting terrorism against a democratic Latin American regime during the 1960s, when they sustained the Venezuelan rebel National Liberation Front (FLN) and its military wing the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). FALN units attacked American property in Venezuela in retaliation for the October 1962 US blockade of Cuba and often carried out acts 'designed principally to draw attention to their existence and the cause for which they were fighting', such as the hijacking of merchant vessels and civil airliners.[25] The FALN also sought to polarize the population of Caracas by attacking policemen as 'symbols of oppression'.[26] These acts were directed against the social democratic regime of Rómulo Betancourt's Democratic Action (AD). Régis Debray, the French Marxist who was adviser to Fidel Castro in the 1960s, admitted that the attempted revolution was directed against '*the framework of a representative democracy, against a ruling class that has not abolished public freedoms and has preserved constitutional legality over the years*'.[27]

The Soviet role in the early years of the Venezuelan insurgency was a major one. After the orthodox Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) made a full commitment to armed rebellion at the end of 1962, FALN cadres were trained in the USSR (as well as Cuba and China).[28] Well into 1965, Moscow appears to have been shipping funds to the FALN by using members of the Italian Communist Party as couriers.[29] Not only did the CPSU approve of its most devoted Venezuelan disciples' participation in the rebellion, but it used other members of the world communist movement to aid them.

Soviet motives for supporting terrorism in Venezuela have to be understood in the context of events as they had been unfolding in the Third World and the USSR's attempts to deal with them. The late 1950s were important in the history of Third World 'national liberation'; a bloody war for independence continued in Algeria, a revolution occurred in Iraq, and unrest began in the Belgian Congo. Even more importantly, a revolution was happening in Cuba. The Soviet Union did not create these events, but, as a major power, it would have to come to grips with them. The issue would also become a major focus of debate within the world communist movement; local communist parties in the Third World would have to respond to the upheaval there if they were to retain their relevance.[30]

The CPSU did develop a doctrinal response to the events of 1958–60. Anti-Western bourgeois nationalist leaders were to be turned toward a 'socialist path of development' with the support of the Soviet bloc and local communists. A doctrine of 'national democracy' was enunciated at the World Congress of Eighty-one Communist Parties in Moscow in November 1960 along with CPSU General Secretary Nikita S. Khrushchev's pledge to support 'wars of national liberation'.[31]

Fidel Castro's turn to the Soviet bloc after the victory of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959 became an example of what the Soviets were hoping to achieve in the Third World.[32] Even after his conversion to Marxism-Leninism, Castro had not joined the old Cuban CP, the Popular Socialist Party (PSP); he founded the 26 July Movement because he thought the PSP incapable of making a revolution. For its part, the PSP remained dubious of Castro at least as late as April 1958. After that, individual PSP members began joining Castro's Rebel Army. Close ties between Castro and the 'old' communists began the following June.[33] Soon communists were being appointed to officer slots in the Rebel Army and increasingly came to play a major role in administering some of the areas under its control.[34] After Castro's entry into Havana, PSP members and the committed Leninists within the 26 July Movement became a 'hidden government', the real power behind a 'moderate' façade in post-Batista Cuba.[35]

The events in Cuba were crucial to the Soviet willingness to endorse armed struggle elsewhere in Latin America. The ability of the new regime to defeat the Bay of Pigs invasion 'demonstrated' that a communist victory was possible in Latin America.[36] Moscow now approved of Castro's efforts to support revolution elsewhere in the region. However, it did not make adoption of the armed struggle line mandatory for Latin American communist parties.[37]

Richard Gott, a member of the British left, distraught that orthodox Latin American Leninists have not been more vigorous in the pursuit of armed revolution, noted that the Colombian, Venezuelan, and Guatemalan CPs did in fact play an active role in the guerrilla struggles of the early 1960s.[38] The Colombian case may be *sui generis*, an outgrowth of the endemic violence of the 1950s when most of Colombia's major political parties developed their own private armies.[39] The other two cases deserve a closer inspection as to why the local CPs adopted an armed struggle line.

Venezuela's insurgency arose out of the frustrations of the left after the overthrow of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958. The youth wing of Betancourt's AD split off to become the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and proclaimed itself Marxist. The Democratic Republican Unity (URD) also opposed the AD. Youthful elements of the Venezuelan left were dissatisfied with the failure to implement radical reform and end economic dependence on the US and very admiring of Fidel Castro.[40]

The Communist Party of Venezuela was a comparative latecomer to the rising against Betancourt, even though its first armed units had been formed in 1957 and had taken part in the January 1958 general strike in Caracas against Pérez Jiménez.[41] What led the Venezuelan communists to move toward insurrection was fear of being outflanked on the left. The PCV set up its first rural guerrilla units in late 1961, but

it did not go over fully to an armed struggle strategy until the December 1962 Central Committee Plenum. MIR and URD guerrillas had already gone into action and had been joined by dissident military units who had attempted a coup the previous May. However, the PCV was soon able to become the dominant element in the FLN/FALN.[42]

In Guatemala, the Guatemalan Party of Labor (PGT), the Moscow-line CP, would soon be a major element in the revolutionary struggle. However, the original 13 November Movement (MR 13) was formed by nationalist military officers who (according to sympathetic accounts) were motivated by opposition to the use of the country's territory for the forthcoming Bay of Pigs operation by the US. These officers attempted a mutiny in November, 1960 and fled abroad after its failure.[43] In 1961, MR 13 contacted the PGT, which had itself adopted armed struggle. The two organizations agreed to form the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) in December 1962.[44]

The Soviet Union and Cuba soon had a parting of the ways over revolutionary strategy. The mid-1960s saw frequent bitter polemics between Castro and the Moscow-line CPs over the propriety of armed struggle. The Cuban view saw armed struggle as a strategy to be used throughout Latin America. Castro's adviser Debray also seemed to denigrate the importance of the CP's leading role in the armed struggle and even questioned the ability of most Latin American communist parties to make a real revolution. Moscow generally stuck to the standard Leninist view that armed struggle was a tactic only to be used in certain circumstances, not a universal strategy as the Castroites urged. Soviet commentators also wanted the revolution to be kept firmly under the control of the CP leadership.[45] After the American landing in Santo Domingo in 1965, the USSR began to argue that a broad-based anti-imperialist front was the most efficacious communist tactic in the face of US opposition.[46] Moscow also began to find Castro's armed struggle doctrine harmful to its national interests by 1966. The Soviets saw advantages to cultivating relations with Venezuela's President Leoni, a critic of US policy in the Dominican Republic. The continued communist insurgency was the major obstacle to the normalization of Soviet–Venezuelan relations.[47] In general, seeming Soviet complicity in Castro's attempts to unseat governments throughout Latin America was causing the USSR no end of diplomatic embarrassment.[48]

The split between Moscow and orthodox Latin American communists on one hand and Havana and the Castroites on the other came to be best exemplified in Venezuela. In late 1965, the USSR, which until then had been the chief financier of the Venezuelan insurgents, cut off its funding for the FALN.[49] The PCV accepted an amnesty in return for abandoning an armed struggle that had become increasingly unproductive after 1964.

However, a dissident faction of the FALN remained in the field with the blessing of Castro.[50] Cuban support for the FALN continued and was most dramatically advertised by the landing of guerrillas on the Venezuelan coast in July 1967.[51]

Soviet and Cuban policies toward Latin America converged again in the late 1960s. The standard explanation is, as Robert Pastor puts it, that 'the Soviet Union forced Cuba into line' after Castro had tried Soviet patience and jeopardized the Soviet-line CPs in Latin America by his ineffective but repeated attacks on their respective governments.[52] Part of the terms of Soviet–Cuban accommodation in the late 1960s and early 1970s was that Cuba would not embarrass Soviet relations with Latin American governments by stridently provocative support for insurgency; it agreed to support revolutionary adventures only when they did not injure important Soviet commercial and diplomatic interests.[53]

Looking back on this first period in which the Soviet Union and Cuba were engaged in supporting armed revolution in Latin America one notes several features of Soviet conduct that conflict with any thesis about Moscow backing terrorism or other revolutionary violence gratuitously. The Soviet embrace of 'national liberation war' was an attempt to relate to the rise of nationalism and indigenous social radicalism in the Third World, as were the attempts at revolution launched by the PGT and the PCV. The Soviet concern in the debates with the Castroites that armed struggle only be used where it stood a chance of being effective and that it be under appropriate political control also did not bear out the belief that Moscow supports violence indiscriminately. Moscow's desire to see the Venezuelan insurgency ended once it appeared to falter and began to hurt Soviet diplomatic interests did not do so either.

During the years of the Allende regime in Chile, Moscow officially stressed the 'peaceful road to socialism' for Latin America. The Chilean CP (PCCh) backed the *via pacifica.* Its coalition with Allende was the consummation of the PCCh's united front strategy going back to the 1950s.[54] Throughout the Allende years, the PCCh and the USSR supported legal revolutionary struggle in Chile.[55] It was the former's coalition partners, namely some of Allende's Socialist Party (PSCh) and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) which alienated the center by creating (with Cuban assistance) a 'parallel army' of exiled revolutionaries from all over Latin America, inciting sailors to mutiny against their officers, and openly preparing for civil class war.[56]

It should not be thought that the Soviet emphasis on state-to-state relations with Latin America meant that Moscow completely refrained from support for armed struggle during the 1970s. Moscow seems to have played an active role in helping the Nicaraguan Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to obtain military training. In 1969, a group of

Nicaraguan students at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow were sent to Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) camps in Jordan and to North Korea for guerrilla warfare training. Another group was sent to Czechoslovakia and North Korea for instruction in 1971–72 before returning to Nicaragua in 1973.[57] (During 1969–70 FSLN members were involved in PFLP airline hijackings in the Middle East and conducted their own diversions of civil airliners in Latin America.[58]) Mexican students at Patrice Lumumba University in the 1960s were later trained in North Korea and captured in an abortive plan to destabilize Mexico in 1971 by means of bombings and terrorism. The KGB role in the operation came out in the trial of the group's leaders.[59] Moscow is also believed to have funded the Chilean-based Bolivian National Liberation Army (ELN) through one of the Cuban intelligence services (the DGI) in the early 1970s.[60] The USSR's support for armed struggle was muted and indirect but it was perceptible.

The ideological guidance developed at the Conference of Communist Parties of Latin America in 1975 in Havana did not renounce armed struggle completely.

> Revolutionaries have never been the first to resort to violence. But popular revolutionary movements can and should be prepared to respond to counter-revolutionary violence with revolutionary violence and by various means, including the use of arms, to facilitate the popular movement and the realization of the sovereign will of the majority.[61]

The Conference noted the guerrilla struggles of the 1960s and the fact that some of them were continuing. However, the fact that the 'unrelenting struggle[s] against tyranny in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, and Paraguay'[62] were the only ones praised by name leaves the impression that these were the only countries in which the armed road to power was being explicitly endorsed.

During this time, Cuba was pursuing a two-track policy in Latin America. While it sought better relations with a number of the area's governments, it also aided a number of terrorist groups. The ERP and Montoneros in Argentina and the Tupamaros in Uruguay received safe-haven, training, and propaganda support from the Cubans.[63]

It appears quite possible that the CPSU used the PCC to maintain contact with 'ultraleftist' groups throughout Latin America. The Soviets had never forced the Castroite groups of the 1960s out of the communist movement. Neither had orthodox Latin American communists like Luis Corvalan, leader of the PCCh, even though the Castroites had been criticized for 'impatience' in their desire to launch revolution when 'objective conditions' were not ready.[64] Luis E. Aguilar notes that Castro

had kept himself in a good position to serve as mentor for revolutionaries outside the orthodox CPs.[65] He still serves as a magnetic pole of attraction for divergent, otherwise antagonistic groups.[66] James D. Theberge thinks it possible that, even though the Soviets disapproved of the violence of the Chilean ultraleft, they did nothing to prevent Cuba from assisting the Chileans in order to retain some indirect influence over the MIR and PSCh extremists.[67] R. Bruce McColm believes that the Soviets financed a number of terrorist groups in the Southern Cone by way of the Cubans and East Europeans.[68]

Soviet Latin America policy during most of the 1970s hardly accorded with the view that Moscow supported revolutionary violence indiscriminately. The USSR did support armed struggle at certain times and places, but not when it would harm important Soviet economic and diplomatic interests. Soviet-line Latin American communists generally refrained from armed struggle when conditions seemed unfavorable or when it would adversely affect Moscow's stake in relations with an established regime. These points are well illustrated by the case of Argentina, where orthodox communists attempted to cultivate elements of the armed forces while the USSR would not go on record as being critical of the dictatorship's human rights violations. Moscow seems to have accepted Havana's ties with ultraleft terrorists but not to have had any big hopes for the latter's prospects. In fact, the Chilean ultraleft was seen as having damaged Soviet interests in Chile by provoking the 1973 coup.[69]

Moscow generally tried to avoid visible ties to armed subversion in order to preserve its good relations with a number of South American military regimes. Argentina and the Soviet Union became major trade partners in 1971, which laid the basis for later diplomatic cooperation.[70] These good relations were begun under a military regime but continued under Peronism from 1973–76.[71] The Argentine Communist Party (PCA) and the Soviet press avoided indiscriminate attacks on the military following the 1976 coup. The PCA sought to befriend 'liberals' in the armed forces and isolate the 'Pinochetists'[72] and was rewarded by being spared repression in the late 1970s while the rest of the Argentine Left was savaged. The Soviet Union blocked discussions of Argentina's human rights record in the UN in 1977.[73] The two traded military missions in 1978 and the USSR voiced support for Argentina in its border conflict with Chile.[74]

In the early 1980s, Soviet policy did shift to forthright support of armed revolutionary struggle throughout some regions of Latin America. The immediate cause was the FSLN's victory in Nicaragua in July 1979. This led to a Soviet admission that, in the words of S.A. Mikoyan, editor of the journal of the Latin America Institute of the Academy of Sciences, 'so far only the armed path has led to the victory of the revolution in Latin

America'[75] and that some groups previously criticized for being 'ultra-leftist' could overcome their weaknesses to become true revolutionaries.[76]

The new view of armed struggle was rendered in the geopolitical context of the late Brezhnev era. Soviet policy in the Third World at this time was becoming increasingly 'left-wing.' Under the 'right-wing' strategy pursued by Khrushchev and by Brezhnev until the early 1970s, Moscow's main Third World allies had been noncommunist nationalist regimes. However, these governments had often not been reliably pro-Soviet in their orientation. The new 'leftist' policy stressed a reliance on regimes and movements such as the Sandinista Front that espoused a specifically Marxist-Leninist ideology.[77]

Part of the USSR's strategy involved helping Marxist movements come to and/or consolidate state power, often with the active assistance of East Germany, Vietnam, and, especially, Cuba.[78] By the end of the 1970s, deteriorating economic conditions and the oligarchy's frustration of reform had led to revolutionary situations in much of the Caribbean Basin. Support for insurgency was seen by Moscow as a low-risk way to weaken the influence of the US in its own 'strategic rear' at a time when American power was still in its post-Vietnam War slump.[79]

The new Soviet policy toward Latin America was soon made visible throughout the area in a number of ways. The most concrete manifestation was material aid by the Soviet Union and its East European and Third World allies to Latin American insurgents. The case of El Salvador illustrated this process:

> According to captured documents, in 1980 the Salvadoran guerrillas successfully solicited extensive military-supply, training, and logistic-support commitments from several Eastern European states, Vietnam, Cuba, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Iraq.
>
> The captured documents indicate that particular care was taken to disguise the origins of this military aid, Czechoslovakia offered the Salvadoran guerrillas nontraceable Czechoslovak arms, circulating in the world market, to be transported in coordination with East Germany. Bulgaria promised German weapons, 'rebuilt from World War II', and East Germany was to donate medicines and 'combat kits', seek sources of Western-made weapons, and provide military training, especially for clandestine operations. Ethiopia offered 'several thousand weapons' of Western origin, and Vietnam some 60 tons of US-made rifles, machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers, and ammunition. Nicaragua considered giving Western-manufactured arms in exchange for the communist-made weapons that had been promised the guerrillas. Iraq made a $500,000 'logistic donation' for use in Nicaragua and El Salvador. While agreeing to

consider assisting with the transport of arms from Vietnam and to provide limited training, the USSR apparently decided to allow other bloc members to shoulder the major burden, thus minimizing direct Soviet involvement with the Salvadoran guerrillas.[80]

A similar pattern occurred in Guatemala on a smaller scale. Arms shipments from Cuba and Vietnam via Nicaragua apparently began reaching the Guatemalan rebels by early 1981.[81] Francis Fukuyama notes that such a pattern of actions by Soviet clients throughout the Third World indicates some degree of centralized coordination.[82]

One noteworthy indicator of the new Soviet policy was the new attitude toward armed struggle on the part of Soviet-line communist parties in a number of Latin American countries. Admittedly, in Guatemala the PGT's resort to guerrilla warfare predated the post-Nicaragua switch in Soviet policy. In a 1977 issue of *Latinskaya Amerika*, the official journal of the Latin American Institute of the Soviet Academy of Science, a leader of the PGT argued that 'in Guatemala the working people can come to power only through armed struggle' and called for 'unity of action with all opposition forces', including the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP).[83] In October 1979, *World Marxist Review* published a section on 'Revolution: The Ways to Do it' regarding Central America. An article by PGT Secretary General Carlos Gonzales reaffirmed that 'the longer-term, decisive significance will attach to the non-peaceful road of revolution.'[84]

The piece by a member of the Central Committee of the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP), the orthodox CP in Costa Rica, argued that 'our country has conditions needed for a peaceful revolutionary process ... [but] circumstances may change abruptly and that would inevitably necessitate a different road and nonpeaceful forms and methods of struggle'.[85] The author went on to claim that 90 percent of the labor strikes in Costa Rica were organized by PVP-controlled unions.[86] In this light, it is interesting to note that a former counterintelligence officer of the Sandinista security apparatus (DGSE) later testified that the Sandinistas 'have been training Costa Ricans and providing them with weapons since 1980 ... [and] have directed Costa Rican labor unions to pursue a hard line in negotiations with the government to create friction.'[87] A number of PVP members were among the Costa Ricans that were trained in Nicaragua for guerrilla operations.[88]

The new attitude toward armed struggle would be most starkly revealed by the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS). Interestingly, considering what was to come, the article by a PCS Central Committee member in the October 1979 issue of *World Marxist Review* did not mention armed struggle.[89] However, the *Review*'s *Information Bulletin* would soon be printing a statement by the PCS and other leftist groups entitled 'Revo-

lutionary Violence is Now an Inalienable Right of the Salvadoran People'. The declaration, dated 10 January 1980, noted the impact of Nicaraguan events on the revolutionary process in Central America and claimed 'our agreement on coordinated and united action ... opens a new chapter in the history of the country, in the struggle for the final liberation of our people'.[90] PCS Secretary General Jorge Shafik Handal later claimed in a November 1980 issue of the CPSU journal *Kommunist* that unity among revolutionary groups in El Salvador was reached in December 1979; all accepted 'armed struggle combined with political struggle[91] ... The revolutionary movement in El Salvador will win out. It will win through the force of arms, for objectively there is no other way'.[92]

The Honduran communists (PCH) also reexamined the issue of armed struggle. A PCH Central Committee member foresaw in the May 1980 *World Marxist Review* that the situation in Honduras might become a revolutionary one similar to Nicaragua's in the late 1970s.[93] The December 1979 PCH Central Committee Plenum 'came to the conclusion that in view of the government's swing to the right and the deterioration of the domestic political situation, armed struggle would be the likeliest way of coming to power'. Therefore, 'military training' of Party members was to be carried out anticipating a time when a 'revolutionary situation exists'.[94] Secretary General Rigoberto Padilla Rush told *Latinskaya Amerika* in 1981 that 'the Communist Party has appealed to its members and the other democratic forces of the country to prepare to wage the struggle in all its forms. This does not mean that we support an immediate armed rebellion – that would be political adventurism'.[95]

The views of the leaders of Central America's orthodox CPs as expressed in various Soviet and other Soviet-controlled journals and their actions seem to reveal a good bit about the post-July 1979 Soviet view of the priety of armed struggle in Latin America. In regards to Guatemala, little had changed; the PGT's insurgency had been launched in the 1960s and endorsed at the 1975 Havana Conference. In regards to El Salvador, on the other hand, the new Soviet line with its endorsement of armed revolution was a major change. Apparently, the CPSU also seems to have seen possible revolutionary situations developing in Costa Rica and Honduras and endorsed preparation by their respective communist parties for the possible launching of future armed actions.

The new Soviet line had a number of practical implications for the policies of a number of Latin American communist parties. Several, as we noted, adopted armed struggle tactics. Many Moscow-line parties also reassessed their relations with other leftist groups and sought unity with them in countries as diverse as Chile, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.[96] The Cuban Party played a prominent role in promoting greater unity among rebel groups in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia. The willingness

of Central America's orthodox communists to join in armed struggle alongside Trotskyites, Castroites, and Maoists was the 'most obvious indication' of Moscow's new view of revolutionary violence.[97] It is also generally agreed among students of Chilean politics that the decision of the PCCh to adopt an armed struggle line was in large part the result of the 1980 leftward shift of the international communist movement in regards to Latin America. Admittedly, there were some purely internal reasons for the PCCh's decision to adopt armed struggle; for example, as in Venezuela in the early 1960s, it seemed like a potentially advantageous way for the local CP to maintain its credibility as a revolutionary left organization.[98] However, the importance of international factors on the PCCh's actions is underscored by the fact that before 1980 the Chilean Party had advocated the peaceful road to power even after the 1973 coup.[99]

There were other signs of the new Soviet evaluation of Latin America. The most frequently commented on is the open endorsement of armed struggle by scholars at the Latin America Institute.[100] Some American scholars have concluded that, in the wake of Nicaragua, there was considerable Soviet optimism regarding prospective revolution in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[101] Morris Rothenberg refers to this as 'Moscow's Domino Theory'.[102] Soviet scholars also indicated a more approving view of the hitherto scorned ultraleft.[103] The new Soviet enthusiasm for armed struggle in Latin America was not just shared by academics but also by a number of ranking CPSU leaders. Boris Ponomarev, then head of the International Department, wrote in an article on the 'Invincibility of the Liberation Movement' in the Third World, 'One after another the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean basin are taking their fate into their own hands'.[104]

These paragraphs suggest that the Soviet Union can in fact be credited with responsibility for a large part of the revolutionary violence in some Latin American countries in the early 1980s. In addition to the material assistance it provided on its own, much of Moscow's contribution consisted of using its authority within the world communist movement. As noted above, some of the orthodox CPs in Latin America adopted an armed struggle line only after the CPSU indicated approval of such a course.

The major share of outside material aid for Latin American insurgencies came from Soviet allies, not from the USSR itself. To a large extent, this can also be attributed to the CPSU's role in world communism. Some of the Soviet allies involved, such as Iraq, were not Marxist-Leninist states, but the great majority were. Some scholars will also argue that Cuba's actions in support of revolutionary movements in Latin America reflect Cuban concerns as a Latin American country and cannot be attributed to

Soviet intentions.[105] This argument becomes rather dubious when one notes that Moscow's actions and words had the effect of supporting and reinforcing Castro's attempts to 'export revolution' in the early 1980s.[106] Whatever one attributes Cuba's actions to, most of the Marxist-Leninist states involved in the cooperative effort to aid insurgency in El Salvador and elsewhere were not Latin American countries and their motivation for involvement in Central American civil wars seems more attributable to ideology and other Soviet influences than anything else; there was no other connecting thread between countries as diverse as East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, and Vietnam.

Supporting evidence for the hypothesis that there is a connection between the CPSU's new line and the upturn in revolutionary violence in Latin America at the end of the 1970s has been provided by the Guatemalan left. The PGT, which declared itself '[a] contingent of the revolutionary, democratic, and anti-imperialist movement in the world', felt it 'necessary to underline the significance of ... the growing influence of the socialist world community, of socialism on the international situation, and the increasing solidarity of all revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces' and noted that it 'highly values its fraternal, comradely relations with the parties of the socialist countries'.[107] Outside the orthodox CP, the EGP was a little more forthright in discussing the USSR's role in the revolutionary process in its 'International Declaration' of 14 October 1979:

> Our peoples' struggle for final liberation ... is part of the world struggle between the capitalist system on one side, and the forces of socialism and national liberation on the other ...
>
> [R]evitalization of their revolutionary positions has been taking place among the powers in the world socialist camp. The Soviet Union, among other socialist countries, appears to have ended a period of impasse which created much confusion [i.e., during detente], and to have returned its foreign policy to the militant, combative stance which it should have by nature.[108]
>
> ... The socialist camp has purified and revitalized itself ... Its presence guarantees revolutionary activity.[109]

More recently, the Soviet Union has tried to disengage from revolutionary violence in Latin America. This shift, like the endorsement of armed struggle in the early 1980s, must be seen in the context of overall Soviet foreign policy. Moscow was becoming increasingly apprehensive over the deterioration of its relations with the US,[110] dissatisfied with the inability of some Leninist client regimes to consolidate their domestic base,[111] and tired of the drain of Third World adventures on its resources.[112] The result was a reversion to a policy reminiscent of Khrushchev's efforts

to cultivate developed, capitalist Third World states in order to seek diplomatic and economic advantages. Such a policy also has the virtues of avoiding the dangers of confrontation with the US and the outlay of resources associated with the Brezhnev policy.[113]

Gorbachev's Third World strategy has been applied in most of Latin America. The 1986 CPSU Congress made no mention of support for national liberation movements. Moscow has tried to cultivate an image as a status quo power in the region and has denied any intention of incorporating Nicaragua into the Soviet bloc.[114]

The new Soviet policy, according to Ilya Prizel, is based on several perceptions. The first is that the current state of socioeconomic development of the major Latin American states is not conducive to revolution. The second is that the 'national bourgeoisie' is endemically anti-American; therefore, US–Latin American diplomatic cooperation will necessarily be somewhat constrained.[115] Soviet policy is designed to exploit a number of Latin grievances against the US. The Inter-American System sustained major damage as a result of Washington's support for Britain in its 1982 war with Argentina over the Falklands.[116] In contrast, Moscow and Havana gained a lot of good will for themselves by their diplomatic support for Argentina.[117] The Soviets have also benefited considerably from their sympathy for the Latin American side of the international debt issue.[118] The third perception on which the new Soviet policy is based is that Latin America can serve as a good source of technology for the USSR due to the region's rather lax export controls.[119] Finally, the region is a good market for Soviet counter-trade, a procedure in which the USSR provides certain services (such as infrastructural improvement) in return for Latin American goods.[120] All these factors give the Soviet Union an incentive not to upset its diplomatic and commercial relations with established Latin American governments.

Starting in 1983, the Soviets have made a major effort to mobilize international support for Nicaragua with the launching of a major propaganda campaign against US actions in Central America, especially support for the contras.[121] Although Moscow was initially cool toward the efforts of the Contadora countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia) to negotiate an end to the Central American conflict, it came to endorse their efforts.[122] The Soviets concentrated much of their efforts for easing the pressure on Nicaragua on cultivating Mexico,[123] whose position on Central America is more than any of the other Contadora powers at odds with Washington.[124] Gorbachev wanted to avoid the diplomatic isolation of Nicaragua in Latin America in order to insure the FSLN's continuance in power.[125] A major objective of his Latin American policy was to get non-Soviet-bloc support for the Sandinistas.[126]

In line with Gorbachev's policy Third World of courting comparatively

developed capitalist countries like India, the Soviets have been eagerly wooing Latin America's major states. The focus of Soviet attention in the region has been Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.[127] Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited the first in October 1986 and the last two (and Uruguay) in September 1987.[128] The USSR has been careful not to antagonize Mexico by an adventurous policy in Central America; Mexico, a developed capitalist state with economic and diplomatic clout, is the sort of state which Moscow will woo under the current Soviet strategy in the Third World.[129] Moscow has been rewarded by Mexican endorsement of the Soviet position on issues such as Central America and disarmament.[130]

However, a new Latin American policy could not have been implemented by Moscow in the context of Soviet, Cuban, and Nicaraguan support for revolutionary armed struggle. By early 1982, Cuba's relations with much of Latin America had been strained by a number of issues, one of which was its support for Colombia's guerrillas.[131] Under President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala, Colombia supported the Reagan Administration's Central America policy because of Managua's claims on a number of Colombian islands[132] and severed relations with Cuba because of Havana's support for M-19.[133] Nicaragua's military build-up and support for leftist terrorism in Honduras had led that country to seek a close alliance with the US against the Sandinista threat; Honduras became host to an American military build-up, Contra base camps, and training facilities for Salvadoran troops.[134] Nicaragua's relations with Costa Rica worsened because of Costa Rican unease at Nicaraguan militarization. Relations deteriorated even further during Nicaragua's 1982–6 support of a terrorist campaign in Costa Rica, which began to accept US counter-insurgency and antiterrorist assistance.[135] Costa Rica's ties with Cuba and the USSR were almost severed because the two were believed to have trained a number of the terrorists.[136] A continuation of Moscow's endorsement of armed struggle in Central America and Managua's belligerence toward its neighbors would have complicated any Soviet hopes of getting Latin support against the Reagan Administration's Central America policy.

A further reason for a new policy regarding Latin America was the decline in the optimism of the early 1980s regarding the prospects for armed struggle.[137] Edme Dominguez Reyes believes that by the mid-1980s Soviet hopes for successful revolution in most of Central America had peaked.[138]

As a result of these considerations, the USSR began to disengage from supporting some of the Latin American insurgencies it had previously endorsed. It should be noted that armed struggle was never approved in countries where conditions for its success were lacking.[139] Moscow's policy throughout the early 1980s continued on the previous dual track to some

extent; where prospects for revolution were poor and the USSR could gain trade and diplomatic advantages by dealing with the regime in power, as was the case in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, local communist parties were encouraged to follow reformist, united front policies.[140] In fact, even at the height of Soviet euphoria in the wake of the 1979 victory of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the assistant editor of *Latinskaya Amerika* warned that the 'armed revolutionary vanguard ... winds up in isolation, often doomed to destruction' if armed struggle is adopted in countries where 'the masses' do not support it.[141]

A policy of disengagement from the armed struggle line has been applied in Colombia. What is interesting in this case is that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the armed wing of Colombia's Soviet-line CP, remained in the field against the government throughout the 1970s, unlike most orthodox Latin American communists. Both FARC and M-19 received training support from the Soviet Union and Cuba, even though Bogotá established diplomatic relations with Moscow and Havana.[142]

However, there is a new Soviet policy toward Colombia which seeks to end the civil war by integrating the CP into the country's political system. The inauguration of President Bolisario Betancur in 1982 ushered in a new Colombian foreign policy more independent of the US. Betancur wanted to end Colombia's guerrilla problem by a political settlement. In order to bring this about, he needed better relations with Cuba and Nicaragua in order to end their support for the rebels and gain their assistance in inducing the insurgents to seek a truce.[143]

The behavior of the Soviet-line FARC offers an interesting contrast to that of M-19. The former, the oldest guerrilla group in Colombia, was the first to sign an armistice with the government in March 1984.[144] The latter did not do so until August of that year[145] and then declared the truce ended in June 1985.[146] For the most part, FARC has lived up to the cease fire and has denounced M-19 violations.[147] It participated in the March 1986 elections after renewing the armistice with the government.[148]

According to Malcolm Deas, there was speculation that FARC's adherence to the truce was due to external guidance. It was not useful for the USSR, Cuba, or Nicaragua to be seen making life difficult for a major member of the Contadora Group.[149] The failure of internal pacification in Colombia could have led to a return to a hard line against the guerrillas and a more pro-American foreign policy.[150]

Soviet fears along these lines were reflected in press coverage of M-19's November 1985 assault on the Palace of Justice in Bogotá. TASS, the USSR's official news agency, referred to the 'tragic events' in which over one hundred people died and referred deprecatingly to M-19 as an 'organization of ultraleftist persuasion'.[151] *New Times*,

a Soviet news magazine printed for non-Soviet, often noncommunist, audiences noted that the Communist Party of Colombia criticized M-19's actions and feared that they might provoke a wave of repression against the opposition.[152]

More recent evidence of Communist Party thinking was given at a seminar on democratization in Latin America which was held in Bogotá in 1988 under the sponsorship of the Colombian Center for Social Studies (CSS) and *World Marxist Review*. Nicolas Buenaventura, member of the CP Central Committee and CSS Director, argued that FARC and the Party sought an end to Colombia's civil war. He quoted a former government General Staff chief approvingly, 'In the present state of the country, neither can the government's measures solve the problem of revolutionary violence, nor can armed groups striving for power attain their goal through the use of force. There is only one way out, and it is to find a basically political settlement of the issue'.[153]

The Soviet Union does not currently see continued terrorism or civil war in Colombia as being in its interest. This conclusion can be inferred from Soviet press commentary on Colombia and the actions and statements of the Soviet-line CP in that country.

Moscow's views on Colombia are consistent with its general Latin America policy. Since the mid-1980s, the Soviets have encouraged local CPs not to destabilize the region's democracies. This is in marked contrast to the 1960s when communist actions often contributed to the instability that provoked military takeovers. Moscow currently encourages local communists to pursue reformist tactics in most of the Southern Cone. For the time being, according to Soviet analysis, the best that the 'toiling masses' can hope for is the return of bourgeois democracy. Therefore, most of the region's CPs support the new democratic regimes.[154] This line was laid down in a 1984 conference of South American communist parties in Buenos Aires. 'Observers' from the PCC, the FSLN, and the French Communist Party were present as a declaration was adopted to support the 'democratic process'.[155]

Soviet strategy in the Southern Cone stresses state-to-state relations. The Soviets have no desire to disrupt their good ties with Brazil and Argentina. For one thing, Moscow wants Latin support on disarmament. Brazil is also a trade partner of the USSR's client regime in Angola. Therefore, ties with subversion would harm Soviet state interests.[156]

Soviet Southern Cone policy is illustrated by the case of Peru. The Soviets have maintained their economic and military ties with that country. President Alan Garcia, who was elected in 1985 on a populist and 'anti-imperialist' platform, was a continued target of Soviet diplomatic wooing. Moscow has avoided, to all appearances, any relationship with Peruvian terrorists such as Sendero Luminoso.[157] It is often believed that

Sendero's fanaticism has isolated it from potential foreign supporters.[158] It is true that other observers argue that, since Sendero has an office in Managua and ties with Libya and the Chilean MIR, the Soviets could indirectly aid the movement if they wanted to. Sendero's anti-Soviet ideology and Moscow's important ties with Lima make this is unlikely to happen.[159] Inside Peru, its attacks on Soviet, East German, Cuban and Nicaraguan targets indicate that it does not receive Soviet-bloc assistance.[160]

The exception to Moscow's general policy in South America is Chile. Here it continues to back armed struggle and the local Soviet-line communists have established their own armed wing, the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR). Since 1983, the FPMR has conducted a number of bombings and has shown a willingness to inflict civilian casualties that exceeds that of the MIR.[162]

Conditions in Chile also differ considerably from the rest of South America and have been more conducive to armed struggle. For a while, the democratic opposition did not seem to offer a viable option to the Pinochet dictatorship. Since 1985, the FPMR and its MIR allies have launched a series of bombings and other actions in order to seize the initiative from, and provoke government crackdowns on, the democrats.[162] Due to its experience with previous periods of illegality and its ability to maintain radio contact with its exile leadership in the USSR, the PCCh has been better able than other parties of the Chilean Left to survive the repression.[163] A faction of the PSCh is currently aligned with the PCCh and accepts armed struggle.[164] As of mid-1986, there were a number of reasons why supporting the FPMR might have been seen as a worthwhile tactic.

Moscow may be reassessing the Chilean situation. The PCCh's armed struggle line is tactical, not strategic.[165] The Chilean communists prefer to come to power by way of a post-Pinochet transitional government, but they are currently maintaining their alliance with the MIR for the possibility of a Sandinista-style insurrection.[166] In early 1989, however, the Communist Party was reportedly locked in internal debate as to whether or not armed struggle was a useful tactic in light of Chile's progress toward liberalization and democratization.[167] Despite his refusal to criticize violence by the FPMR, longtime Chilean communist leader Corvalan has been permitted to return to Santiago, where he endorsed the Christian Democratic presidential candidate.[168] Official contacts have been reopened between the Soviet and Chilean governments.[169] If Soviet policy runs true to the form it has followed in the rest of South America, Moscow's endorsement of armed struggle in Chile may soon be withdrawn.

Our analysis of recent Soviet Latin America policy does not indicate

a pattern of indiscriminate support for revolutionary violence, much less a view that terrorism necessarily would be in Soviet interests. The Cuban–Soviet support for armed struggle in the early 1980s damaged a number of Soviet interests, by contributing to the isolation of Cuba[170] and, as noted above, pushing such countries as Colombia and Honduras into alliance with the US. The USSR is trying to improve relations with Guatemala and Honduras, two countries it has always scorned as being US dependencies;[171] it obviously would not have found renewed Nicaraguan support for leftist insurgency in those countries or Costa Rica at all conducive to this end. Moscow is also cultivating major Latin American countries, such as Mexico, for economic reasons. A repeat of the KGB's support for terrorism in Mexico, which hurt Soviet relations with a number of Latin nations at the time,[172] would be foolhardy. Soviet officials have good reason not to desire to aid terrorism or other violence all over Latin America.

This assessment is born out by the actions and statements of Moscow-line communists in Latin America. The case of Colombia has been noted above. The Costa Rican PVP has also revealed a new attitude. As was also indicated above, late in 1979 the PVP saw the possibility that armed struggle might become an appropriate tactic. Publishing this view in *World Marxist Review* indicated Soviet endorsement. However, a 1988 article by the PVP's secretary general does not even mention armed struggle. Instead he stressed the necessity of supporting the government's foreign policy in order to prevent Costa Rica from being used as a base against Nicaragua. This was despite the PVP's ideological hostility toward President Oscar Arias.[173] Publication of this opinion in *World Marxist Review* indicated both current Soviet policy and Moscow's changed attitude from the early 1980s. Honduran Communist Secretary General Padilla Rush's 1988 article in the *Review* failed to repeat his 1981 discussion of the necessity of the PCH's preparation for armed struggle. Instead, he endorsed the Central American 'peace process' in order to insure the 'defense of the Sandinista people's revolution ... our bounden duty and obligation' even if the Guatemala Accords are 'a compromise with the bourgeoisie'.[174]

Moscow's Latin American allies, Nicaragua and Cuba, responded in different ways to the new Soviet line. The Sandinistas have some longstanding ties to a number of South American terrorist groups. Apparently, Nicaragua provided some of the weapons used in M-19's assault on the Palace of Justice. However, Managua tried, even if not too convincingly, to deny the allegations, in order to avoid alienating Bogotá.[175] The issue of Sandinista connections with M-19 continued to be a sore point in Colombian–Nicaraguan relations.[176] There has also been

evidence linking Nicaragua to a leftist group that attacked a military barracks in Argentina early in 1989.[177]

However, the Sandinistas came to feel that it was necessary to make sure that Nicaragua's immediate neighbors did not become 'launching pads for aggression' against it.[178] Therefore, their actions generally fell into line with Soviet desires that Nicaragua avoid becoming isolated from the rest of Central America. Even before the inauguration of Guatemala's President Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo in January 1986, the Sandinistas and the Guatemalan military reportedly made a deal not to aid each other's respective rebels.[179] Early in 1989, the Nicaraguan regime made an agreement with the other Central American governments not to support insurgents inside each others' borders.[180] Whatever past ties it kept up with South American terrorists, closer to home the FSLN seems to have followed the new Soviet policy.

Moscow's current policy on armed struggle probably will be received badly in Havana. Gorbachev's new policy of reducing support for revolutionary regimes and movements has already opened the possibility of strains with Castro, whose importance to the Kremlin will be diminished by such a turn of Soviet policy.[181] It has been suggested that one reason for Moscow's reluctance to end all support for the Salvadoran rebels is its desire to avoid further disputes with Havana at a time when some have already emerged over economic and ideological issues.[182] A number of reports indicate that Cuba has continued to assist the M-19 in Colombia.[183] This could indicate a conscious division of labor within the world communist movement, one in which Moscow 'assigns' the PCC the role of maintaining contact with the Latin American ultraleft. It is more likely that a serious Soviet–Cuban rift similar to that of the 1960s might emerge.

As of the time of this writing (mid-April 1990), there is some indication that the USSR might be contemplating disengaging from support of the Salvadoran insurgency. Before the November 1989 rebel offensive, Soviet press commentary on the 'dialogue' between the government and the rebels had generally been upbeat and approving.[184] Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, according to US Secretary of State James Baker, privately committed the Soviet Union to try to stop the flow of arms to El Salvador during negotiations in September 1989.[185] The rebels have reportedly been concerned for some time that the USSR might press Cuba and Nicaragua to reach an accommodation with the US at their expense;[186] in fact, some State Department officials believe this partially explains the timing of the latest rebel attacks.[187]

Recent scholarly assessments disagree as to how long the new Soviet foreign policy will last. Jack Snyder believes the Gorbachev's internal reforms are smashing the 'Stalinist' institutions with a vested interest in

militant expansion abroad on behalf of 'progressive' ideological causes.[188] Fukuyama's 1987 assessment was that the Gorbachev changes are merely the sort of tactical shifts that one sees periodically in Soviet foreign policy. If it is, another 'leftward' shift in Soviet Third World policy may occur if the current strategy fails to yield the expected economic and diplomatic gains for Moscow.[189] This might again lead to a more assertive policy in support of revolutionary groups. (There are indications that Fukuyama's more recent views may be different.)[190]

For the time being, at least, support for violent revolution in Latin America will not likely be a major aspect of Soviet policy. The International Department of the Central Committee, which has played a historical role in promoting revolutionary causes in the Third World, has undergone a number of changes; the ideologues associated with the Brezhnev-era policies have been replaced by advocates of 'right-wing' tactics and the ID as a whole has had its role in policy-making curtailed.[191] It is unlikely that Moscow will soon upset its détente with Washington, or relations with the major Latin American countries, by a return to the early 1980s policies.

The debate over the appropriateness of armed struggle as a tactic has been around as long as the world communist movement.[192] Moscow and the Soviet-line CPs in Latin America have been rather conservative in their endorsement of revolutionary violence. They were most free with it in the early 1960s and the early 1980s when successful revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua, respectively, seemed to indicate that armed struggle could be successfully employed in the region. Even then, Soviet endorsement was given only in countries in which conditions seemed appropriate for success. Moscow's unwillingness to aid a number of terrorist groups supported by Cuba in the 1970s indicates that the USSR does not support violence when it merely serves to provoke repression on the whole left or when doing so would jeopardize important Soviet relations with incumbent regimes. Moscow also wanted to see the guerrilla wars in Venezuela in the 1960s and Colombia in the 1980s ended when their continuation would complicate Soviet diplomatic concerns, even though the USSR had previously backed the insurgents.

What can one affirm about any connection between the USSR and terrorism in Latin America? Based on the information presented above, there are three sorts of cases in which the Soviets have aided terrorism as we defined it earlier in this essay.

One might argue that the USSR has responsibility for some of the acts of terrorism carried out by ultraleft groups during the early 1970s. However, as indicated above, most Soviet assistance that any of these groups received was indirect and often rather limited. Criticism of ultraleft terrorism by the orthodox CPs has been derided by Westerners as a Soviet

tactical ploy.[193] However, the Latin American ultraleft of the 1970s was often hostile to the established communist parties. What is more, ultraleftist violence often provoked rightist military coups that repressed orthodox communists as well as the rest of the left. It is also noteworthy that most of the ultraleft terrorists of the Southern Cone in the 1970s (such as the Argentine ERP) adhered to Trotskyism and other variants of Marxism that make their actions unlikely indicators of Soviet policy. Therefore, public Soviet hostility to these groups was probably genuine.[194] Two conclusions are possible from this. The first is that any Soviet assistance to these groups might very well have been given for the purpose of not 'losing' them completely at a time when the CPSU faced a number of rivals, especially the Chinese CP, for leadership of the communist movement in the Third World. Secondly, given Moscow's current stake in a 'respectable' image in South America, the demise of China as an ideological rival, and the decline of ultraleftist terrorism in a number of Southern Cone countries, aid given to terrorist groups is likely to decrease.

A second category of terrorist violence that Moscow bears some responsibility for is that sponsored by allies heavily dependant on it for security and economic aid. In the case of Latin America, this would especially mean Cuba. However, Cuba's support for revolutionary violence often proceeds in part from its own agenda.[195] Castro's position as patron of various violent groups has proven useful to him in blackmailing various Latin American governments to avoid actions that offend him and to seek his good offices in mending their security problems.[196] Although subversion is frequently a source of a tension in Cuban relations with Latin America, if Castro broke completely with organizations like M-19, it would throw away one of his bargaining assets.[197] At times in the past the USSR has acted to moderate Cuban behavior, and the Soviet Union (even if it could) is unlikely to pay the political costs of making Havana sever all ties with Latin American revolutionary groups in the near future. However, given the current Soviet stake in détente with the US and good relations with most of Latin America, the USSR is unlikely to encourage or subsidize a new Cuban offensive to 'export revolution'.

The last and final category of cases in which the USSR can be accused of aiding terrorism is in those instances where the Soviets have condoned armed revolutionary struggle. There is often an overlap between the two for several reasons. First of all, a revolutionary group needs to publicize its cause. Secondly, by definition, that group has accepted the necessity of destroying the existing government and basis of society. Finally, it often faces the necessity of intimidating supporters of the incumbent regime to cease activities that hinder the revolutionary cause. Although revolutionary violence and terrorism are not necessarily

synonymous, terrorism, as defined above, is often a tactic revolutionaries find expedient. For example, in the case of Venezuela, individuals that most people would not consider legitimate targets in a conventional conflict (for example, policeman) were attacked for their role in supporting the regime, to intimidate government supporters, and to enhance the appeal of the FALN among those already alienated from the existing society; in brief, violence against what one does not normally consider 'legitimate' targets was carried out for 'symbolic' reasons in addition to any individual role the people in question played in sustaining the Venezuelan government.

As noted, there have been cases in which Soviet interests have led Moscow to support revolutionary violence in Latin America by providing financial support and training, and, more often, by condoning the participation of the local communist party in the armed struggle and using its position as leader of the 'socialist bloc' to encourage and coordinate support for revolutionary movements by its allies. The internal divisions among some of the revolutionary organizations supported would make it impossible to say that a particular terrorist act (for example, the assassination of a rightist politician in El Salvador) represents a calculated Soviet policy.[198] In a general sense, one could say that the USSR bears some responsibility for the actions of insurgents that it chooses to assist. Clearly, however, support for armed struggle as a tactic seems to be much less important than it was in the early 1980s, and support for terrorism, usually a byproduct of the armed struggle policy, will most likely decrease.

NOTES

1. Brian Crozier, 'The Direct Support' in Benjamin Netanyahu (ed.), *International Terrorism: The Soviet Connection* (Jerusalem: Jonathan Institute, 1979), pp. 15–18.
2. Herbert Romerstein, 'Political Doctrine and Apparatus', in Uri Ra'anan *et al.* (eds.) *Hydra of Carnage: The International Linkages of Terrorism and Other Low-Intensity Operations: The Witnesses Speak* [hereafter referred to as *Hydra*] (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986), p.59.
3. Ray S. Cline, 'The Strategic Framework', *International Terrorism*, p. 21.
4. Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret World of International Terrorism*, rev. ed. (New York: Berkeley Books, 1982), pp. 269–80.
5. William J. Casey, 'The International Linkages – What Do We Know?', *Hydra*, p. 11.
6. Romerstein, pp. 59–73 is a prime example. He provides a quick overall discussion of Soviet connection with revolutionary activities since the Comintern, and asserts 'Lenin's policy of encouraging others to engage in terrorist acts has borne fruit throughout the world' even though many of the actions that he discusses (such as the assignment of Comintern personnel to serve as military advisers to the Nationalist Chinese in the 1920s and 1930s or support for the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War) do not fall inside any meaningful definition of terrorism.
7. Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p. 56.
8. Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–67* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968), pp. 133–4.

9. Thomas Perry Thornton, 'Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation', in Harry Eckstein (ed.), *Internal War* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 73 (emphasis in the original). See the discussion on pp. 74–8.
10. For an analysis of this, see John J. Dziak, 'Military Doctrine and Structure', *Hydra*, pp. 78–92.
11. Grant Wardlaw, 'Terror as an Instrument of Foreign Policy', in David C. Rapoport (ed.), *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Frank Cass, 1988), p. 253.
12. R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War*, Vol. 1: *Revolution versus Containment, 1955–61* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 11 makes this point in regard to understanding the conflict in Indochina.
13. One example of these findings is Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., 'Notes on Grenada, Soviet Proxies, and U.S. Policy', *Grenada and Soviet/Cuban Policy: Internal Crisis and U.S./OECS Intervention* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 228–9.
14. Charles Gati, 'Fraternal Assistance: Eastern Europe in Grenada', in ibid., pp. 87–96 and Condoleeza Rica, 'Comments', ibid., pp. 97–101.
15. Richard H. Shultz, Jr., 'Soviet Strategy and Organization: Active Measures and Insurgency', in Dennis L. Bark (ed.), *The Red Orchestra*, Vol. 1: *Instruments of Soviet Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1986), pp. 58–60.
16. For one discussion of the KGB's relationships with its East European counterparts see Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Sword and Shield: Soviet Intelligence and Security Apparatus* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing, 1986), pp. 205–10 and 212–5.
17. An extensive literature exists on this subject; for a brief discussion, see Chapter 5, 'The Sovietization of Cuba', Robert S. Leiken, *Soviet Strategy in Latin America*, Washington Papers, Vol. 10, No. 93 (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 44–60.
18. James D. Theberge, *The Soviet Presence in Latin America* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1974), p. 39. Richelson, p. 212 believes that the DGI's relations with the KGB are tighter than any other intelligence service than the Bulgarian DS.
19. Leiken, op. cit., p. 60. An account of the DA and its activities in Latin America and the Caribbean can be found in R.A. Hudson, 'Castro's America Department: Systemizing Insurgencies in Latin America', *Terrorism* 9 (1987): 125–67.
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