

# The Soviet—Cuban Connection

Mark N. Katz

In late April 1982, a news story circulated that then Secretary of State Alexander Haig had privately described Cuban President Fidel Castro as "anguishing" over an unspecified U.S. offer that could lead to both a rupture in Cuban-Soviet relations and an improvement in Cuban-American ones.<sup>1</sup> If indeed Castro should at some point decide to break away from the U.S.S.R. as China, Yugoslavia, and Albania did before, Soviet foreign policy would suffer a major setback. Like Cuba and unlike the U.S.S.R./s East European allies, communist governments in China, Yugoslavia, and Albania came to power largely through the success of indigenous communist guerrilla forces. All three of them originally allied with the Soviet Union, but eventually broke with it due to Soviet attempts to exercise a greater influence over their domestic and foreign policies than they desired. Should Cuba also sever relations, the U.S.S.R. would lose an important ally that in the past has worked to advance Soviet interests in Africa and Latin America. A Cuban defection from the Soviet camp might, in addition, lead other Third World Marxist-Leninist nations and movements friendly to Cuba to join it (these might include Angola, Nicaragua, and the guerrilla movements in Central America).

But will a serious rift between Moscow and Havana actually take place, or were Haig's reported comments merely wishful thinking? It would seem that Soviet economic and military assistance to Cuba is so great that Castro would be unlikely to give it up easily. It is doubtful that Cuba could obtain from the West the same level of economic assistance on as favorable terms as it now receives from the U.S.S.R. In addition, Soviet military assistance to *little*

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1. "No Offer to Cuba, State Official Says," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1982, p. A25.

Cuba allows it to play a relatively *big* role in international affairs; the United States is not likely to give Cuba the same level of military assistance to allow it to continue playing this role. Finally, as Soviet-Cuban relations have been relatively smooth for some time, it does not appear that Castro has much incentive to break relations with the U.S.S.R. in exchange for friendship with the U.S.

Nevertheless, because other independent communist nations have broken with the U.S.S.R. in the past, and because a Soviet-Cuban split could have important consequences for Soviet and American foreign policies and for regional politics in Latin America and Africa, the possibility of such an event occurring is worthy of investigation. While a definitive statement cannot be made concerning what course Soviet-Cuban relations will actually take in the future, an examination of the various aspects of Soviet-Cuban relations shows those areas in which their respective policies and interests are more in concert and those in which they are less so. The aspects of their relations that will be examined here are their ideological views on revolution in the Third World; their foreign policies toward Africa, Latin America, and other areas; and their bilateral economic and military relations.

#### *Ideological Views on Revolution in the Third World*

An examination of ideologies is important because they reflect more than just philosophical predilections, but policy preferences as well. Ideological differences between communist states have often signalled the deterioration of relations between them even before serious rifts occurred—for example, between the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia and between the U.S.S.R. and China. Although the Soviet Union and Cuba had important differences in the mid-1960s over the question of revolution in the Third World, and a serious break seemed possible, it did not occur. What, then, has been the evolution up to the present of Soviet and Cuban ideological views on revolution in the Third World?

Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 due to the success of the guerrilla army that he and his brother Raul formed and led against the Batista regime. The Communist Party of Cuba had almost no role in Castro's accession to power. It was only after he had been in power that Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist and co-opted the Communist Party into his government. The Communist Party did not control the government; instead, Castro and his guerrilla movement controlled both the government and the Party (indeed, the Party

was reorganized by Castro several times to make it a more effective instrument for his own rule).<sup>2</sup>

The Castro brothers and their guerrilla comrade Che Guevara were rather disgusted by the unrevolutionary role played by the Cuban Communist Party during the Cuban revolution. They saw other Latin American communist parties playing a similarly unrevolutionary role, either through unsuccessfully seeking power by participating in elections or by talking about revolution but doing nothing to bring it about. The Cuban leaders concluded that the only way revolution would come to other Latin American countries would be for them to imitate the Cuban experience. Thus, the Cuban experience was elevated by the Castros and Guevara into a theory of revolution which they called the *foco* theory. In this theory, a small guerrilla group would begin military operations in a given country, gain victories, attract followers, and eventually come to power. Once having achieved power through a violent struggle, the group would co-opt the communist party into its government and use it as one of the instruments of its rule, as the Cubans had done.<sup>3</sup>

This view of revolution was quite different from the one the Soviets held during the 1960s about how Marxism would come to the Third World (particularly to Latin America). The Soviets pointed out that the United States possessed overwhelming military power in the Western hemisphere and that any attempt to overthrow a capitalist government and impose Marxism by force could easily be crushed by the U.S. In order to avoid the defeat of Marxist forces as well as a superpower confrontation such as the Cuban missile crisis in which the Soviets were forced to back down, Moscow called for Latin American Marxists to pursue the peaceful road toward socialism and to eschew the violent one since the U.S. would not permit another Cuba. Unlike Castro, the Soviets supported the efforts of the Latin American communist parties to seek a share of power through electoral alliances with non-Marxist leftist parties. The Soviets were particularly critical of the Cuban notion that the guerrilla army should gain control of the communist party in

2. For a detailed account of Castro's treatment of the Cuban Communist Party in the period just after the revolution, see Andres Suarez, *Cuba: Castroism and Communism 1959-1966* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1967), esp. pp. 124-130.

3. The main exponent of the *foco* theory was neither Castro nor Guevara, but President Mitterrand's foreign policy adviser, Regis Debray. For more on the theory, see Regis Debray, *Revolution dans la revolution?* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1967).

Latin American nations. This was the error which, in the Soviet view, had ultimately led to heresy and schism in Yugoslavia and China. The Soviets insisted that the communist party should lead the way to socialism and should exercise control over the military rather than the other way around.<sup>4</sup>

At the Tricontinent Conference of Asian, African, and Latin American revolutionaries held in 1966, the Cubans openly criticized the U.S.S.R. as being unrevolutionary and called for armed revolution in Latin America whether the pro-Soviet communist parties wanted it or not. Shortly thereafter, Cuba increased its military assistance to several Latin American insurgent groups, particularly in Venezuela, Colombia, and Bolivia.<sup>5</sup> As a result, relations between Moscow and Havana became so strained that the Soviets severely cut back their economic assistance to Cuba. In addition, Moscow's predictions that the Cuban-style revolutions would all fail came true in 1967-68; the insurgencies in Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia (where Che Guevara was killed), as well as smaller ones elsewhere, were all crushed.

Because of the failure of his revolutionary model, his fear of the United States, and Cuba's tremendous need for economic assistance, Castro eventually abandoned his polemics and worked to improve relations with Moscow. One of the first signs of Castro's subservience to Moscow was his approval of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In return for renewed Soviet economic assistance, Castro also ceased his advocacy of a revolutionary doctrine opposed to Soviet views and interests.<sup>6</sup> Since then, the Cubans have not openly challenged the Soviets on matters of ideology. They did not give up their view that Marxist revolution could be brought about by guerrilla armies, but they no longer pushed other Marxists to follow this path nor referred to the ideological dispute they had had with the Soviets.

The Soviets, however, did not forget their dispute with the Cubans. Although they did not attack Cuba directly with recriminations about its past heresy, they did issue periodic warnings about the dangers of "Che Guevarism." With the failure of guerrilla insurgencies in Venezuela, Colombia, and Bolivia in the late 1960s and the electoral triumph of a left-wing government

4. See Mark N. Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 28-29, 54.

5. D. Bruce Jackson, *Castro, the Kremlin, and Communism in Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), pp. 1-7.

6. Jacques Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 147-153.

in Chile in 1970, the Soviets felt that their advocacy of the peaceful road to socialism in Latin America was vindicated.<sup>7</sup> Even after a right-wing military coup ousted Allende's government in 1973 and showed that the success of the peaceful road to socialism was obviously in grave doubt, the Soviets continued to criticize the Cuban *foco* theory since it called for the revolutionary armed forces to control the communist party and not the other way around.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Soviet thinking about Third World guerrilla armies did undergo an important change in the early 1970s. Previously, the Soviets did not look upon any guerrilla army with favor since even if it were controlled by a Marxist-Leninist party, it could establish its own power base independent of the U.S.S.R. as China and Yugoslavia had done. Yet while the Soviets did not want to see this happen, the end of the Vietnam war demonstrated that guerrilla armies allied to the U.S.S.R. could be successful. It was this ability to succeed that now made guerrilla armies worthy of Soviet support.<sup>9</sup> Guerrilla warfare also had the advantage of being able to arise almost anywhere under almost any circumstances.<sup>10</sup> There was, however, one important condition that a guerrilla army had to meet in order to be acceptable to the Soviet Union: "guerrilla activities must be carried out under party control and supervision."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, while the failure of the peaceful path and the success of the revolutionary path toward socialism in the 1970s led to increased Soviet support to Marxist guerrilla armies, the Soviets still rejected the "Che Guevarist" notion that the guerrilla army could control the party.

After the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, though, the Soviets relaxed even this qualification and for the first time began to praise the Cuban revolutionary model in which a Marxist guerrilla army and not a communist party serves as the "vanguard force" of the revolution. In March 1980, *Latinskaia Amerika* (the journal of the Latin American Institute of the

7. See Gabor Kartsag, "O razvitiu revoliutsionnogo protsessa v Latinskoi Amerike," *Latinskaia Amerika*, No. 1 (January-February 1972), pp. 6-24, and I. Rybalkin, "Chiliiskii opyt: obshchie zakonomernosti i svoeobrazie revoliutsionnogo protsessa/" *Kommunist*, No. 8 (May 1972), pp. 120-127.

8. L.L. Kruglov, ed., *Vooruzhennaia bor'ba narodov Afriki za svobodu i nezavisimost'* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), pp. 64-66.

9. Colonel V. Andrianov, "Partizanskaia voina i voennaia strategiiia," *Voенно-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No. 7 (July 1975), p. 29.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences) gave a highly favorable review of this type of revolution. S.A. Mikoian, the editor, concluded in an article expressing the consensus of participants in a discussion on Central America, "As yet only the armed path has led to the victory of revolutions in Latin America. And the Nicaraguan experience affirms what had been considered refuted by some after the death of Che Guevara and the defeat of a number of other guerrilla movements."<sup>12</sup> The Soviets also saw that the success of the Nicaraguan revolution enhanced the prospects for similar Cuban-style revolutions in other Central American nations such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Mikoian noted, however, that the Cuban model was not the only armed path to socialism and that what might be a vanguard force at one point in time might also become a reactionary force at a later point.<sup>13</sup> This was an admonition that the Marxist guerrilla army must form and surrender authority to a communist party soon after coming to power to prevent the army from eroding socialist gains (the Sandinistas have so far failed to take this step). Thus, there was a note of caution even in this most favorable Soviet assessment yet of the Cuban model of revolution.

It is interesting to note that at the present time the Soviets have come to accept almost completely the Cuban theory of revolution over which Moscow and Havana exchanged bitter polemics in the 1960s. There is still some area for potential disagreement to arise on this question—the point in time when the Marxist guerrilla army surrenders power to a communist party—but the Cubans have remained relatively silent about ideological differences with the Soviets since the late 1960s. The Cubans must feel gratified that the Soviets have come so far in accepting their view of revolution after condemning it so strongly earlier. Thus, it is not likely that Soviet-Cuban relations will deteriorate over differing views on how Marxist revolutions should come about in the Third World since their differences have become fewer and fewer with the passage of time.

### *Foreign Policies*

Since the late 1960s, the Soviets and the Cubans have ceased their polemics over ideology, but there have nevertheless been important differences in

12. S.A. Mikoian, "Ob osobennostiakh revoliutsii v Nikaragua i ee urokakh s tochki zreniia teorii i praktiki osvoboditernogo dvizheniia," *Latinskaia Amerika*, No. 3 (March 1980), p. 35.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37. See also Katz, pp. 81-82, 106.

their foreign policies. Up to now, the two countries have not allowed those differences to significantly harm their relations, but they are worth examining to elucidate the different principles of their foreign policies. Soviet and Cuban foreign policies since 1970 toward Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the U.S. will be examined briefly to see where the two nations have agreed, where they have disagreed, and how they have handled their disagreements.

#### AFRICA

Although Cuban troops had fought with Algeria against Morocco in 1963 and with Syria against Israel in 1973, Angola was the first instance in which Cuban military intervention took place on a large scale.<sup>14</sup> Once Portugal announced that it would leave Angola by November 1975, the war among the three guerrilla groups (MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA) heated up, South Africa intervened, and the Cuban military commitment rapidly grew to a high of 36,000 troops.<sup>15</sup> The Soviets did not send combat troops to fight the MPLA's opponents as Cuba did, but Soviet assistance was crucial in supplying both Cuba and the MPLA with weapons and in rapidly transporting large numbers of troops from Cuba to Angola in time to prevent the defeat of the MPLA. The Soviets have praised effusively the key role played by Cuba in establishing a Marxist government in Angola.<sup>16</sup>

In May 1977, however, a serious difference between Soviet and Cuban foreign policies toward Angola apparently did emerge. A coup attempt was made against President Neto by the pro-Soviet, black nationalist Alves group. Events surrounding the coup attempt are not fully known; the Soviets either actively assisted the Alves group or else they merely had foreknowledge of the attempt and did not warn Neto of it. When the coup attempt was made, Cuban troops intervened on Neto's behalf to crush it.<sup>17</sup> The Soviets and

14. See William J. Durch, "The Cuban Military in Africa and the Middle East: From Algeria to Angola," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1978), pp. 34-74.

15. Merritt Robbins, "The Soviet-Cuban Relationship," in Roger E. Kanet, ed., *Soviet Foreign Policy in the 1980s* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 158. Castro himself claimed this figure of 36,000; Western analysts put the number at 20,000.

16. Major General M. Iasiukov, "Mirovaia sistema sotsializma—istoricheskoe zavoevanie mezhdunarodnogo rabocheho klassa," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 24 (December 1977), p. 68, and Colonel G. Malinovskii, "Natsional'no-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie na sovremennom etape," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 24 (December 1979), p. 33. See also Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1975," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2 (Spring and Summer 1978), pp. 3-33.

17. William M. LeoGrande, "Cuban-Soviet Relations and Cuban Policy in Africa," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 16-17.

Cubans, thus, supported opposite sides in this case, if these reports are accurate. Yet even if such a serious Soviet-Cuban difference did occur, the two governments did not allow the incident to affect their broader relations. The U.S.S.R. has continued to support the MPLA government headed first by Neto, and after his death, by dos Santos.

In the late 1970s, UNITA recovered strength and extended its control to a large area of southern Angola. The Cuban troop commitment to Angola, which had fallen to 12,000, was raised to 19,000.<sup>18</sup> Up to now, the Soviet-supported Cuban and MPLA troops have been unable to defeat UNITA. In addition, South African incursions into Angola have continued. The level of casualties and the economic burden that this protracted conflict has inflicted on Cuba have led to some domestic dissatisfaction with the war in Cuba.<sup>19</sup> While the Cuban government is unhappy that it has been unable to end the conflict in Angola, Castro has shown no sign of withdrawing his forces in order to halt the loss of Cuban lives and money there. The goal of protecting the MPLA is one that the U.S.S.R. and Cuba have decided to continue pursuing since neither wishes to see the fall of the Marxist government in Luanda which they both had been instrumental in establishing.

Soviet and Cuban foreign policies toward the conflict in the Horn of Africa began in a more coordinated fashion than did their policies toward Angola, but they have ended by following a somewhat more divergent course. Both the U.S.S.R. and Cuba were strongly allied to Somalia in 1974 at the time of the Marxist revolution in Ethiopia. Both immediately moved to establish military ties with the new revolutionary government. When conflict over the Ogaden threatened to escalate in early 1977, both Castro and then Soviet President Podgorny flew to the region and attempted to find a peaceful solution. When Somalia invaded Ethiopia in the spring of 1977, both the Soviet Union and Cuba sided with Ethiopia (Somalia then abrogated its Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the U.S.S.R., expelled Soviet and Cuban military personnel, and turned to the West for assistance). While the Cubans had maintained operational command of their own forces in Angola, the Soviets had overall command of Cuban troops in the Ogaden campaign,

18. Robbins, "Soviet-Cuban Relationship," p. 159, and *The Military Balance 1981-1982* (London: IISS, 1981), p. 96. By July 1982, this was reduced to 18,000; see *The Military Balance 1982-1983* (London: IISS, 1982), p. 103.

19. Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 355.



allowing a much more highly coordinated military effort.<sup>20</sup> In 1982, there were 13,000 Cuban troops and 1,350 Soviet advisers in Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

Yet while the U.S.S.R. and Cuba combined effectively to help Ethiopia against Somalia, their policies toward the conflict in Eritrea differed markedly. Both the Soviets and the Cubans had given political and some military support to Eritrean Marxists when Haile Selassie was in power. The new Ethiopian Marxist government decided to continue to hold Eritrea; after it had driven Somalia out of the Ogaden, it launched a military campaign to defeat the Eritrean guerrillas.<sup>22</sup>

The Soviets quickly shifted their support from the Marxists in Eritrea to the Marxists in Ethiopia and provided Addis Ababa with Soviet arms and advisers to defeat the guerrillas. Cuban aid to its former Eritrean allies also ended, but Castro was unwilling to send Cuban troops or provide military assistance for Ethiopian operations in Eritrea. Despite Soviet and Ethiopian insistence on a military solution, Castro called for "just political solutions" to the Eritrean problem.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the Soviets, Castro was sensitive to Third World criticism that the Eritreans were fighting a just war at a time when Castro was striving to be accepted as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. (The Ethiopian campaign against Somalia did not give rise to such criticism since Somalia had disregarded the consensus among African states that borders created by the European colonial powers should be accepted; Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea in 1962, on the other hand, has never been regarded as legitimate, especially by the Arab nations.) Castro has yet to spell out, however, what the elements of a just political solution to the Eritrean conflict should be.

Nevertheless, the Cuban decision not to join the Soviet-Ethiopian effort to defeat the Eritrean guerrillas shows that an important policy difference exists between Moscow and Havana. However, the Soviets and the Cubans have avoided criticizing each other and have even refrained from publicly acknowledging that they possess different views on this issue. Further, although Cuba is not giving military support to the Ethiopian effort in Eritrea,

20. Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet-Cuban Alliance in Africa and the Caribbean," *The World Today*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (February 1981), p. 48.

21. *The Military Balance 1982-1983*, pp. 17, 103.

22. See Nelson P. Valdes, "Cuban Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 63-75, and Tekie Fessehatizon, "Comment: One Eritrean View," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 80-85.

23. "Text of Castro Rally Speech" (Havana Domestic Service, April 26, 1978), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, April 27, 1978, p. Q4.

it is not undercutting the Ethiopians by supporting the Eritreans either (as the Eritreans have angrily pointed out).

Soviet and Cuban foreign policies toward the rest of Africa are basically similar. Both oppose South Africa and support SWAPO's effort to liberate Namibia. Neither wishes to see a peaceful settlement to the Namibian conflict for fear that independent Namibia would dissociate itself from them as Zimbabwe did after a negotiated settlement in that country. The U.S.S.R. and Cuba also support POLISARIO in its struggle against Morocco for the Western Sahara. They also have varying degrees of warm relations with Libya, Mozambique, and other "progressive" states (such as Algeria, Guinea, Benin, Congo, Ghana, Tanzania, and others) and cooler relations with more conservative ones (such as Kenya, Zaire, Nigeria, and Senegal). Soviet and Cuban foreign policies are thus for the most part mutually supportive in Africa.

#### LATIN AMERICA

Soviet and Cuban foreign policies have also become increasingly complementary in Latin America. The U.S.S.R. has joined Cuba in declaring that the Sandinist victory in Nicaragua is a "correct" revolutionary model for other Central American nations. The Soviets have supported the violent path to revolution in El Salvador and have called for the unification of the revolutionary forces in Guatemala.<sup>24</sup>

Yet even though the Soviets have become more supportive of Marxist insurgents in Central America, they have also attempted to build friendly relations with existing governments in the rest of Latin America. Both the U.S.S.R. and Cuba have worked to improve their ties with the major Latin American nations—Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Peru. Their relations with Chile, however, have remained poor since 1973. The Cubans have lagged behind the Soviet Union in improving relations with Latin America as distrust lingers over Cuba's attempts to foster revolution in their countries in the late 1960s. Soviet and Cuban support to Argentina during the Falkland Islands crisis, however, has served to improve their image in Latin America substantially.

Soviet and Cuban foreign policies toward Latin America have evolved from conflicting positions in the 1960s to a fruitful compromise in the 1980s. In

24. See "Guatemalan Revolutionary Forces Need Unity" (Moscow in Spanish to Latin America, February 12, 1982), in *FBIS: Soviet Union Daily Report*, February 23, 1982, pp. K3-K4.

those countries where Marxist revolution appears to have a good chance to succeed (such as El Salvador and Guatemala), the Soviets and the Cubans both support the armed path to socialism. However, in those nations where Marxist revolution seems to have little chance at success (most of the rest of Latin America), both Moscow and Havana try to establish friendly ties with the existing governments. There are certain very conservative governments (as in Chile) with which the Soviets and Cubans do not wish to establish good relations; nevertheless, Moscow and Havana do not attempt to foster revolution in them if the chance for success is poor. Provided that their support of revolution in Central America does not stir up Latin American fears that Moscow and Havana will seek to encourage revolution in their countries, this more cooperative Soviet-Cuban approach to Latin America is well suited to maximize their joint interests throughout the region.

#### EUROPE AND ASIA

In other parts of the world, though, Soviet and Cuban foreign policies do not always serve both their interests. Cuba does agree with Soviet efforts to improve relations with Western Europe, isolate China, support Vietnam's foreign policy in Southeast Asia, and assist the radical Arab states against both the moderate Arabs and Israel. However, Cuba has been reticent in its support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan and of the imposition of martial law in Poland. Cuba has given only a perfunctory endorsement of these actions, indicating less than total Cuban support of them.<sup>25</sup> Yet while Cuban discomfort with these actions was plain, Cuba nevertheless did endorse them.

Cuba has been reticent about these heavy-handed Soviet moves in part because they put Cuba on the defensive in the Non-Aligned Movement. These Soviet policies make it more difficult for Cuba to argue that the U.S.S.R. is the natural ally of the Non-Aligned Movement, especially when other leading members like Yugoslavia strongly criticize such moves. Soviet actions in Eastern Europe, though, are distant from the vital concerns of both Cuba and virtually all of the Third World (perhaps the only Non-Aligned member which is vitally concerned with Eastern Europe is Yugoslavia). What

25. Castro admitted that "not the slightest trace of legality exists" for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; see Robbins, "Soviet-Cuban Relationship," 148. For Cuban reservations about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the declaration of martial law in Poland, see Robert Rand, "Seweryn Bialer on Cuba, the United States, and the USSR," *Radio Liberty Research* RL183/82 (April 30, 1982), pp. 2-3.

the Soviets and their allies have done in Eastern Europe, then, has not embarrassed Cuba much. Afghanistan, however, is a different matter since nearly all Third World nations—especially Moslem ones—strongly object to the Soviet invasion of that country.

#### THE UNITED STATES

Cuban-American relations have for the most part been poor since Castro came to power, but recently he has given some indication of wanting to improve ties with Washington.<sup>26</sup> It is not clear how friendly he would like Cuba's relationship with America to become. However, it appears there are limits to which Cuba itself wishes to foster Cuban-American rapprochement. Although Castro has indicated his willingness to discuss with the U.S. the role of Cuban armed forces in Angola, he reiterated in a speech July 26, 1982 his opposition to a link between Namibia's independence and the withdrawal of Cuban troops. Instead, he insisted that Cuban troops would only leave on the basis of a bilateral decision by Havana and Luanda, and even then Cuban troops would withdraw "gradually" after South African forces had withdrawn from Namibia "to the other side of the Orange River, and when there is no longer a foreign threat to the Luanda government."<sup>27</sup> In other words, as long as the MPLA feels threatened by any opposition (even internal opposition such as UNITA which both Luanda and Havana see as foreign inspired), Cuban troops will remain in Angola.

This example points to a larger theme in Cuban foreign policy that would tend to limit cooperation with the U.S. Even aside from Soviet encourage-

26. Castro was unusually moderate in his treatment of the U.S. in his July 26, 1982 speech; see "Castro Addresses Anniversary Rally in Bayamo" (Havana Domestic Service, July 26, 1982), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, July 27, 1982, pp. Q1-Q18. See also Richard M. Weintraub, "U.S. Passed Up Overtures by Cuba," *The Washington Post*, September 9, 1982, pp. A1, A19; and Rand, "Seweryn Bialer," p. 2.

Although Moscow and Havana have not publicly stated their differing views on how far they would like to see Cuban-American relations progress, these were hinted at in their varying reactions to the Reagan Administration's proposals to improve U.S. relations with Nicaragua. Moscow heavily criticized the U.S. proposals, but Havana remained silent about them. Perhaps this was because both the Soviets and the Cubans saw these proposals as a viable basis for the improvement in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations which the U.S.S.R. wanted to prevent but which Cuba saw as useful for Nicaragua and, by implication, for itself. See Nikolay Chigir, "Rejection of Proposals" (TASS in English, March 16, 1982) in *FBIS: Soviet Union Daily Report*, March 17, 1982, pp. K4-K5; "U.S. Stand on Negotiations" (Havana Domestic TV Service, March 18, 1982), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, March 18, 1982, p. Q2; and "Castro Meets with Castaneda, Reiterates Stand" (Havana Domestic Service, March 22, 1982), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, March 23, 1982, p. Q1.

27. "Castro Addresses Anniversary Rally in Bayamo," p. Q-17.

ment to do so, it is Castro's desire to promote armed revolution in the Third World. While Cuba no longer attempts to instigate revolution where conditions for it are not ripe as it did in the 1960s, Cuba often becomes involved militarily in countries where Marxist guerrillas appear to have a good chance to succeed. As the brief attempt at Cuban-American reconciliation in the mid-1970s demonstrated, Castro is not prepared to forgo military involvement in the Third World in exchange for American friendship. Indeed, since military intervention overseas puts a heavy drain on the Cuban economy in terms of manpower, rapprochement with the U.S. would allow Cuba to compensate somewhat for this loss through trade with the U.S. and through maintaining a more relaxed defense posture vis-a-vis the U.S. It appears that Castro desires improved Cuban-American relations partly as a means to facilitate Cuban military involvement in the Third World, and not as a tie that would obstruct it. However, so long as assisting Third World revolutionary movements remains a more important foreign policy to Castro than improving relations with the U.S., and the U.S. refuses to allow an improvement in bilateral relations because he pursues this policy, the Soviets can reasonably expect that Cuban-American relations will remain poor.

#### **FOREIGN POLICY PRINCIPLES**

While Cuban and Soviet foreign policies are broadly similar, there are important differences between them which indicate that they are based on somewhat differing principles. Soviet foreign policy's primary aim is to strengthen (and when possible, broaden) the system of Marxist-Leninist states under Soviet leadership. As it has in Afghanistan, the U.S.S.R. will go to extraordinary lengths to see that a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regime does not fall from power. The Soviets view the nations of the Third World as their natural allies and they work hard to maintain friendly relations with these nations even if they are not all "progressive" (such as Argentina). Nevertheless, the Soviet commitment to the preservation and strengthening of the system of pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist states takes precedence in Soviet foreign policy over the goal of having good relations with the Third World. The Soviets, then, will take actions in pursuit of their primary goal even if such actions worsen their relations with the Third World.

Cuban foreign policy also wishes to see both the strengthening and broadening of the system of pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist states and the establishment of close Cuban ties with the Third World. Where Cuba differs from the

U.S.S.R., however, is that Cuba sees each of these goals as having more or less equal priority. Cuba sees itself and wishes other Third World nations to see it as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. Since one of the Movement's goals is that Third World nations should not be dominated either by the U.S. or the U.S.S.R., Soviet actions that the majority of Third World nations object to can hurt Cuba's position. If the U.S.S.R. invades other Third World nations as it did Afghanistan or pursues other policies which Third World nations seriously object to, one result may well be that the Soviets force Cuba into the position of choosing between continuing its support of Soviet foreign policy and retaining its leadership position in the Non-Aligned Movement. This is a choice that Castro would find very difficult to make as he depends heavily on Soviet support but also values his image as a revolutionary and anti-imperialist Third World leader.

These differing emphases in Soviet and Cuban foreign policies show that serious differences between Moscow and Havana are *possible*—though not that they are *actual*. Soviet and Cuban foreign policies have since the late 1960s served mainly to support each other. While Soviet foreign policy has sometimes made Cuba's position in the Non-Aligned Movement difficult, the differences that have occurred so far are not great enough for Cuba to make an issue of and jeopardize the diplomatic, economic, and military support that Cuba now receives from the U.S.S.R.

#### *Bilateral Relations*

For Cuba, the most important aspect of the Soviet-Cuban relationship is Soviet policy toward Cuba itself. Soviet support of Castro in the early 1960s was crucial for the very survival of his regime. Although the U.S.S.R. does not play as direct a role in Cuba as it does in its East European satellites, Soviet support of both Cuba's economy and defense are extremely important in allowing Castro to pursue his internal and external policies.

#### **THE ECONOMY**

Shortly after the U.S. reduced its import quota of Cuban sugar to zero, the U.S.S.R. agreed to purchase it instead. The complete embargo by the U.S. of all trade with Cuba was offset by large-scale Soviet economic assistance. Without the U.S.S.R., Castro could have neither prevented the Cuban economy from collapsing in the early 1960s nor maintained Cuban economic

independence from the U.S. up to the present. Cuba's economic independence from the U.S., however, has only been won at the cost of ever-increasing economic dependence on the U.S.S.R.

In the 1960s, Cuba attempted to avoid dependence on the Soviet Union by developing a Cuban socialist economy independent of all other nations. Soviet and Czech efforts at fostering economic development on their models in the early 1960s were relatively unsuccessful. In addition, much of the industrial equipment that Cuba had purchased from the Soviet bloc was of very poor quality. The Soviets then advised the Cubans to concentrate on increasing their production of sugar instead of industrial development. Cuba could then exchange its sugar for Soviet and East European manufactured goods.

Castro and most of the governing elite opposed this model of development. Che Guevara criticized it as putting Cuba in the same dependent position vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R. as Cuba had been vis-a-vis the U.S. before the revolution. Following this path would serve Soviet interests, but not Cuban ones. Yet while Guevara foresaw clearly that Soviet involvement in the Cuban economy would lead to Cuban economic and political dependence on the Soviet Union, his proposals for making Cuba economically independent were less clear. Guevara's and the Cuban leadership's aim was to build a true communist society: material incentives were to be replaced by moral and revolutionary ones, money and trade were to be abolished, but industrial development was expected to take place rapidly.<sup>28</sup>

A minority within the Cuban leadership—primarily those who had been associated with the Cuban Communist Party before 1959 and had not served with Castro's guerrillas—criticized as Utopian the attempt to make Cuba economically independent of all nations. They believed that Cuban economic development would take place only if Cuba relied upon Soviet assistance, trade, and advice. In order for development to occur, material incentives for individuals and profits as a measure of success for enterprises would be necessary. This group became unpopular with Castro in the mid-1960s when Soviet-Cuban polemics reached their height and when Cuba was striving hardest to pursue an independent "revolutionary" path of development. The leaders of this group were arrested and expelled from the party in 1968; they

28. See Kosmas Tsokhas, "The Political Economy of Cuban Dependence on the Soviet Union/' *Theory and Society*, Vol. 9 (March 1980), pp. 331-339.

were charged with forming a "micro-faction" that was loyal to the U.S.S.R. and not to Cuba.<sup>29</sup>

It was at this point that the Soviets became exasperated at spending large sums of money on Cuba while the Cuban government vociferously criticized the U.S.S.R.'s ideological position on revolution in the Third World and its model of economic development. In 1968, the Soviets reduced shipments of oil to Cuba while at the same time announcing an increase in oil sales to non-Marxist Latin American nations.<sup>30</sup> Since Cuba was then (and is now) almost totally dependent on access to imported oil for its economy to function and since Cuba could not obtain the same quantity of oil from any other nation, Castro was faced with the choice of continuing his independent foreign and domestic policies at the price of economic collapse or of benefiting from Soviet trade and aid at the price of a substantial degree of Cuban economic and political dependence on the U.S.S.R. Castro chose the latter.

With Soviet-Cuban relations re-established on a more desirable basis as far as the U.S.S.R. was concerned, the Soviets renewed their economic assistance to the Castro regime. New economic agreements were signed in the early 1970s and the repayment of Cuba's mounting debt to the U.S.S.R. was rescheduled to begin in 1986.<sup>31</sup> Many of the pro-Soviet economists who were in disfavor in the 1960s found themselves back in office by the mid-1970s. The attempt to pursue an independent Cuban model of development was abandoned and Soviet methods were introduced instead. These included reliance on material incentives for both individuals and enterprises as well as structuring the Cuban economy to meet the needs of the Soviet bloc (Cuba joined COMECON in 1972).<sup>32</sup> By the mid-1970s, Cuba's economy was growing strong, thanks to a sharp increase in the world market price of sugar and to Cuba's close economic relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup>

Recently, however, Cuba's economy has been stagnating. Jorge Dominguez has pointed out that this has been caused primarily by four factors: 1) the sharp decline in the world market price of sugar, 2) the recession in the Soviet economy which has limited the U.S.S.R.'s ability to aid Cuba, 3)

29. *Ibid.*, p. 337, and Dominguez, *Cuba*, p. 162.

30. Dominguez, *Cuba*, p. 162.

31. Archibald R.M. Ritter, "The Cuban Revolution: A New Orientation," *Current History*, February 1978, p. 85.

32. Tsokhas, "Political Economy," pp. 339-345.

33. See Edward Gonzales, "Complexities of Cuban Foreign Policy," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (November-December 1977), pp. 4-6.



continuing low levels of labor productivity, and 4) the opportunity costs of manpower used in Cuba's foreign military activities.<sup>34</sup> Thus, even though Cuba has sacrificed its economic independence to a substantial degree of Soviet control, economic development has not taken place as rapidly as Cuban leaders had hoped.

This situation might appear to provide an incentive for the Cuban leaders to loosen their economic ties with the U.S.S.R. and expand them with the West. There are, however, important reasons why they are both unwilling and unable to decrease their dependency on the U.S.S.R. With the exception of the U.S., Cuba does trade with Western countries and has even received economic assistance from some of them. However, since Cuba's hard currency receipts from capitalist countries are limited both by their demand for Cuban goods and the price of sugar (Cuba's main export), Cuba is unable to greatly expand its imports of Western goods. Cuba is also limited in what it can export to the West by its long-term trade agreements with the U.S.S.R. which call for large quantities of Cuban products to be sold to the Soviet bloc in return either for Soviet bloc goods or non-convertible currency. In order to escape from this situation, Cuba would have to drastically reorient its economy away from the Soviet bloc. Cuba will probably not seek to do this, though, since the Cuban economy is by now so deeply integrated into the Soviet economic system that Cuba would suffer severe economic dislocations as well as incur heavy investment costs over a long period of time if it attempted to redirect its economy toward trade with the West.<sup>35</sup> Finally, as Dominguez also pointed out, despite the economic disadvantages of Cuban economic dependence on the U.S.S.R., this relationship provides the Cuban leadership with an extremely important political advantage: Soviet economic assistance allows the Cuban government to maintain a high degree of control over Cuban society through centralization. Before the revolution, American and other Western direct investment in Cuba bypassed the Cuban government, making it difficult for the government to control Cuban society. Soviet economic involvement in Cuba, by contrast, is directed completely through the Cuban government, allowing the government to exercise maximum control over both enterprises and individuals.<sup>36</sup>

34. Jorge I. Dominguez, "Cuba in the 1980's," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (March-April 1981), pp. 50-52.

35. For a recent description of Cuba's economic difficulties see "Mother Russia's Son," *The Economist*, June 19, 1982, pp. 95-96.

36. This point was made in Dominguez, *Cuba*, p. 159.

The Castro government would probably seek to drastically reduce Cuban economic dependence on the U.S.S.R. only under one of the following conditions:

- The world market price of sugar, nickel, or some other commodity Cuba possesses rises dramatically for a relatively long period of time so that it would be more profitable for Cuba to reorient its exports from East to West. Cuba would have to receive enough hard currency so that it could import from the West and Third World whatever Cuba needs for its economy to function (such as oil and machinery). Cuba's economic relations with communist nations would then be on the same basis as with non-communist ones. However, close economic ties with the West would not necessarily influence Cuba to distance itself politically and militarily from the U.S.S.R., as Libya has shown.
- The Soviet Union reduces its economic support to Cuba so drastically that Cuba will be forced to turn to the West. This might happen if a severe Soviet economic crisis occurred that would render the U.S.S.R. unable to continue supporting Cuba, or if the Soviet leadership became unhappy either with Castro or his successors. In either case, a cutoff in Soviet economic support to Cuba would probably result in severe strains in Soviet-Cuban political and military ties as well.

While both of these conditions are possible, they do not appear to be very likely. As long as Soviet-Cuban economic relations remain similar to what they have been from the early 1970s up to the present, neither the U.S.S.R. nor Cuba has any incentive to see them deteriorate.

#### **DEFENSE**

While Cuba attempted to limit Soviet involvement in its economy in the 1960s, Cuba has steadily sought to increase Soviet involvement in its defense from 1961 to the present. In neither effort has Castro been as successful as he had hoped. Although the U.S.S.R. has provided large amounts of military equipment to Cuba and has been instrumental in supporting Cuban forces in Africa, the Soviet commitment to defend Cuba remains ambiguous. Cuba is not a member of the Warsaw Pact and has not signed a bilateral defense treaty with the U.S.S.R. The Soviets' formal commitment to defend Cuba appears to be less than their commitment to defend newer Marxist regimes in Africa and Asia with which the U.S.S.R. has signed treaties of friendship and cooperation. Although the Soviets have played a substantial role in

Cuba's defense, Castro has constantly been disappointed that the U.S.S.R. would not state its military commitment to Cuba clearly, leaving him in doubt about the extent to which Cuba could rely on the U.S.S.R. if Cuba actually were attacked.

Cuban dissatisfaction with the Soviet military commitment first arose during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The U.S.S.R. had emplaced medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba, but when the Kennedy Administration imposed a naval blockade around Cuba and demanded that the U.S.S.R. remove the missiles, Khrushchev quickly backed down. The Soviets agreed to withdraw the missiles in exchange for an American pledge not to invade Cuba. While Khrushchev declared this pledge to be a victory for socialism, Castro later indicated that he did not regard the outcome of the crisis as such. What particularly irritated Castro was that the Soviets had failed to take any actions to defend Cuba against the U.S., but instead came to an agreement with Washington concerning Cuba's security without even consulting him.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in 1970 the U.S. warned the Soviets that it would not tolerate the basing of Soviet submarines with nuclear weapons in Cuba (particularly at the naval facility that the Soviets were constructing at Cienfuegos). The Soviets apparently agreed to keep Soviet SSBNs away from Cuba.<sup>38</sup> Once again, the Soviets had backed down in their military commitment to Cuba and had reached an agreement with the U.S. regarding Cuba without consulting Havana. More recently, Moscow and Havana have responded somewhat differently to American outcries about a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba in 1979 and about Soviet deliveries of advanced MiG fighters to Cuba on several occasions. The Soviets have insisted that their soldiers are there only on a training mission which does not threaten the U.S., and that the aircraft delivered are not offensive but defensive in nature. By contrast, the Cubans have emphasized that Cuba is an independent, sovereign nation that is free to enter into any military relationship it wants with the Soviets.<sup>39</sup>

37. See Levesque, *USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, p. 44. See also Herbert S. Dinerstein, *The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

38. "Zaiavlenie TASS," *Pravda*, October 14, 1970, p. 4. The Soviets were so concerned that the Cienfuegos incident not develop into another missile crisis that they issued this official TASS statement to deny that the U.S.S.R. had violated the 1962 accord and to reassure the U.S. that they would not do so in the future. The Cubans, on the other hand, made almost no mention of the incident.

39. On the Soviet brigade in Cuba see, "Komu i zachem eto ponadobilos?" *Pravda*, September 11, 1979, p. 1, and "Prensa Latina on U.S. Charge of Soviet Troops" (Reuter, September 6,

Castro has attempted to elicit a forthright commitment from the Soviets to defend Cuba militarily if necessary, but these attempts have only resulted in demonstrating how vague the Soviet commitment really is. For example, in his speech to the 26th Communist Party of the Soviet Union Congress in February 1981, Castro referred to a Soviet guarantee against U.S. threats of military intervention against Cuba.<sup>40</sup> Brezhnev's speech to the Congress, however, omitted mention of any such guarantee to Cuba, though Brezhnev did assert the U.S.S.R.'s right to help defend Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup> The strongest statement that Brezhnev has made recently about Cuba came in his speech to the Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress on April 7, 1981. Brezhnev described Cuba as an "inseparable part" of the socialist community.<sup>42</sup> This statement, however, made no mention of a Soviet military commitment to ensure that Cuba remained a part of the socialist community, and thus Castro could hardly be satisfied with it. Castro admitted that he expected little Soviet support in a crisis when he announced in a speech October 24, 1981 that Cubans "should learn not to expect anyone to defend us . . . but first of all to defend ourselves."<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, while the Soviet military commitment to Cuba is not as strong as Castro would prefer it to be, the Soviets have not left Cuba to completely defend itself alone. Virtually all the Cuban armed forces' equipment comes from the U.S.S.R., including some advanced Soviet weapons systems. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Cuban air force in July 1982 included two squadrons of MiG-23 Flogger-Fs (ground attack aircraft) and one of MiG-23 Flogger-Es (the standard export version).<sup>44</sup> In 1982, Cuba began receiving the much more capable MiG-23

1979), in *FBIS: Latin American Daily Report*, September 6, 1979, p. Q1. On the MiGs, see A. Petrov, "Puskaiut myrnye puzyri," *Pravda*, November 18, 1978, p. 5, and "Castro Addresses 10th WFTU Congress Opening" (Havana Domestic Service, February 10, 1982), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, February 12, 1982, p. Q14.

40. "Speech by Cuban President Fidel Castro on 24 February 1981 to the 26th CPSU Congress in Moscow" (Havana Domestic Service, February 24, 1981), in *FBIS: Soviet Union Daily Report—Proceedings of the 26th CPSU Congress*, Vol. II, pp. 19-21.

41. Leonid Brezhnev, "Accountability Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th CPSU Congress" (Moscow Domestic Service, February 23, 1981), in *FBIS: Soviet Union Daily Report—Proceedings of the 26th CPSU Congress*, Vol. I, p. 10. Brezhnev made little reference to Cuba in this speech.

42. "Brezhnev Speech" (Moscow Domestic Service, April 7, 1981), in *FBIS: Soviet Union Daily Report*, April 7, 1981, p. F3.

43. "Castro Speech" (Havana Domestic Service, October 25, 1981), in *FBIS: Latin America Daily Report*, October 27, 1981, p. Q13.

44. *The Military Balance 1982-1983*, p. 103.

Flogger-Bs (air-to-air tactical fighters with advanced missiles and radar that are rarely sent outside Warsaw Pact countries).<sup>45</sup> The Cuban army possesses over 660 Soviet tanks (including 50 T-62s) and 50 FROG-4 surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs), while the Cuban navy is equipped with ships carrying Styx SSMs.<sup>46</sup> Further, while other Soviet Third World allies must pay for their Soviet weapons, it appears that Cuba receives most of them free of charge.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to weapons, there are about 2700 Soviet troops in Cuba whose main function is to train Cuban armed forces. There are also several thousand additional Soviet personnel involved in intelligence, training, and other activities. While Cuban pilots have been serving in Africa, Soviet pilots have been flying patrol missions in Cuba since 1978.<sup>48</sup> Although some Soviet military activity in Cuba is related to Soviet military purposes alone, much of it is also directly related to the defense of Cuba (such as the provision of weapons and the use of Soviet pilots in patrol missions).

The crucial question for Cuba, of course, is whether the U.S.S.R. would come to its aid if Cuba actually were attacked. The Cubans fear that the U.S.S.R. would back down in a future crisis as it has in past ones. Even if the Soviets wanted to help Cuba in an emergency, Cuba's distance from the U.S.S.R. and proximity to the U.S. would make Soviet actions difficult in the face of U.S. opposition. Further, in the same way as the West Europeans worry about whether the U.S. would risk a wider war to protect them, the Cubans must doubt whether the Soviets would risk a wider war in order to protect Cuba. On the other hand, the Soviets can point out that the U.S. has kept its promise not to invade Cuba which it made to the Soviets in 1962, and hence the U.S.S.R. has indeed served to protect Cuba. Also, by not giving Cuba an iron-clad defense guarantee, the Soviets inhibit Castro from undertaking actions that would directly provoke a U.S. military response and thus force the U.S.S.R. to either confront the U.S. or abandon Cuba.

Cuba may doubt the U.S.S.R.'s willingness to defend it against the U.S. in a crisis, but so long as Castro does fear that the U.S. might actually attack Cuba, he has no choice but to rely upon whatever military commitment the U.S.S.R. has decided to give Cuba, no matter how vague. Cuba could not

45. Gerald F. Seib, "Cuba Is Getting Advanced Soviet Fighters, Missiles, Causing Concern at White House," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 1982, p. 2.

46. *The Military Balance 1982-1983*, p. 103.

47. Dominguez, *Cuba*, p. 151.

48. Jiri Valenta, "The USSR, Cuba, and the Crisis in Central America," *Orbis*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 726, 729.

successfully defend itself alone (despite Castro's claims that it would) nor is there any other power or group of powers that would be willing or able to defend Cuba. Nor could Cuba obtain as much weaponry to defend itself (as well as to engage in military adventures abroad) on such favorable terms from any other nation except the U.S.S.R. Finally, Soviet military aid to Cuba is also important for ensuring that Castro can crush any domestic rebellion against his rule. Thus, despite Castro's disappointment with the lack of a forthright Soviet commitment to defend Cuba, he is likely to continue to rely upon the level of Soviet military assistance he does receive and continue his attempts to elicit a stronger statement of support from Moscow.

### *Conclusion*

There are many ties that draw the Soviet Union and Cuba together. Both nations share a Marxist-Leninist ideology, encourage Marxist revolution in the Third World, are working to build a socialist economy and defend the socialist order in Cuba, and are hostile toward as well as fearful of the United States. Nevertheless, there are important strains in Soviet-Cuban relations: the U.S.S.R. has not made as strong a commitment to Cuba's defense as Castro wants from it. In addition, there are important problems associated with Cuba's heavy dependence on Soviet economic assistance. In the foreign policy realm, Soviet actions in Eritrea and Afghanistan have embarrassed Cuba in its attempt to convince Third World nations that the U.S.S.R. is the natural ally of the Non-Aligned Movement. Finally, there are potential Soviet-Cuban strains in the areas of ideology—their dispute of the 1960s was never really settled on mutually agreeable terms even though the Soviets have to a large extent adopted the Cuban position which they had previously condemned. Yet while these strains could flare up if the U.S.S.R. and Cuba undertook actions that antagonized each other, at the present the ties that bind Moscow and Havana together appear stronger than the forces that could drive them apart.

Under what conditions would a Soviet-Cuban rift be likely to occur? It is impossible to predict how this might take place, but Soviet clashes with its former communist and non-communist allies might give some clue. The U.S.S.R. has sometimes antagonized its allies by attempting to control their internal politics (Yugoslavia, China, Albania), or by not providing what its allies considered to be an adequate defense against either the U.S. or some other state (China, Egypt, Somalia, and perhaps soon Iraq). In all these cases,

the U.S. really did not take any action to befriend the Soviet ally and lure it away from the U.S.S.R. Instead, disagreements seem to develop strictly in terms of sharply deteriorating bilateral relations between the U.S.S.R. and its ally, after which the latter has itself sought out varying degrees of U.S. friendship and protection.

On the basis of this, it might be concluded that past Soviet conflicts with its allies show that the U.S. does not have to work hard at creating them in order for rifts to occur. Because of this, and because Castro appears to want warmer relations with the U.S. partly to help finance his military adventures abroad, it would seem that the U.S. need not—indeed, should not—seek closer ties with Cuba now. If a Soviet-Cuban rift is going to take place, it will do so without any American encouragement. Some might then argue that it would be counter-productive for the U.S. to improve relations with Cuba before this since Castro will become militarily involved in the Third World as long as the Soviets give him the means to do so. Once a Soviet-Cuban break takes place, of course, Cuban ability to become militarily involved in the Third World would be greatly diminished.

Yet while previous clashes between the U.S.S.R. and its allies occurred without any American effort to first improve relations with the Soviet ally, it seems much too optimistic to think that a Soviet-Cuban split could occur in the same manner. Because of history and geography, Cuba fears the U.S. more than perhaps any other present or former Soviet ally. In his 1978 interview with Barbara Walters, Castro made it clear that even after being in power for close to two decades, he blamed almost everything that went wrong in Cuba on the C.I. A.<sup>49</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to determine the extent to which the basis for Cuban fear of the U.S. is real or imaginary. The fear itself, however, is real. As a result, it is doubtful that Cuba would ever break relations with the U.S.S.R. even under great Soviet provocation unless the U.S. first made some convincing gesture toward Cuba that the U.S. will not undertake threatening actions against it. Nevertheless, although Cuban-American detente might be a necessary condition for a Soviet-Cuban rift to occur, it is not a sufficient one.

It is impossible to tell if Cuba would have moved closer to the U.S. had Washington made friendly overtures to Havana in the mid-1960s when Soviet-Cuban relations became very poor, but it would be worth America's

49. Barbara Walters, "An Interview with Fidel Castro," *Foreign Policy*, No. 28 (Fall 1977), pp. 24, 29-30, 36-37, 39-40.

while to be in a position to exploit potential Soviet-Cuban differences in the future. There are several possibilities in which Cuba might wish to become more independent of the U.S.S.R. if Cuba knew it could move closer to the U.S. For example:

- In 1986, Cuba must begin repaying its massive debt to the U.S.S.R. If the Cuban economy is still in as poor condition as it is now, Cuba will strive to postpone further its repayments. Since the U.S.S.R. is also experiencing economic difficulties, it is likely to insist on repayment. It is probable that fairly serious Soviet-Cuban disagreements may occur over both repayment and the level of Soviet economic assistance and trade with Cuba. Friendlier relations with the U.S. could allow Cuba to lessen its almost complete economic and (hence) political dependence on the U.S.S.R.
- Castro is striving to maintain his leadership position in the Non-Aligned Movement. If the U.S.S.R. ever took action against or invaded another Third World nation, Castro might be forced to choose between remaining a Soviet ally and continuing his leadership role in the Third World. Friendlier ties with the U.S. might induce Cuba to move toward the latter position and away from the former.
- Fidel Castro (born in 1927) and his brother Raul (born in 1931) have been the dominant figures in Cuban politics from the revolution up to the present. Beyond Fidel and Raul, it is not at all clear who will come to power and a succession struggle could result. It is possible that the Soviets will attempt to acquire much greater control in Cuba than they have now and that this will alienate many new Cuban leaders who might be much more willing to turn to the U.S. than Castro. Or, a pro-Soviet faction might seek to promote itself to power with Soviet assistance, inducing another more purely nationalist group to resist them by turning to the U.S. In such a case, it might be crucial for the U.S. to have some influence in Cuba already since if America did not, the U.S.S.R. and the pro-Soviet faction would be able to act much more rapidly than the U.S.

The People's Republic of China in the mid and late 1960s was hostile to both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. and advocated revolution throughout the Third World. Nevertheless, a revolutionary China hostile to both superpowers was preferable to the U.S. than a revolutionary China allied to the U.S.S.R. And, of course, China in the 1970s became less revolutionary, more hostile to the U.S.S.R., and more friendly with the U.S. Similarly, even a radical, revolutionary Cuba hostile to both the superpowers should be re-



garded as preferable to the U.S. than a Cuba hostile only to the U.S. and firmly allied to the U.S.S.R. Yet while it is doubtful whether Alexander Haig's reported belief that Castro wishes to change alliances will occur in the immediate future, the history of Cuban-Soviet relations shows that Castro would prefer to be more independent of the U.S.S.R. This is a development that is very much in America's interest to encourage. Without an American effort to demonstrate that the U.S. is not hostile to it, however, the Cuban government might well convince itself that it must remain dependent on the Soviets for fear that otherwise Cuba would have to face American "hostility" alone.

Shortly after Haig's comments about Cuba were reportedly made, however, the U.S. undertook a series of unfriendly actions toward Cuba. The State Department spokesman denied that there was any specific proposal for Cuba to change alliances that Castro was considering.<sup>50</sup> In addition, on April 19, 1982, the Reagan Administration announced the reimposition of restrictions banning tourist and business travel to Cuba that had been lifted during the Carter years.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the U.S. held a large-scale naval exercise in the Caribbean intended to show Cuba that the U.S. can defend its interests in the region. As Wayne Smith (former head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana) revealed, all these signs of a harder U.S. policy toward Cuba took place after Cuban officials repeatedly expressed the desire to improve Cuban-American relations.<sup>52</sup> The Soviet Union, on the other hand, recently increased its aid to Cuba to the highest level it has ever provided.<sup>53</sup> If Castro really is considering distancing himself from the U.S.S.R. and drawing closer to the U.S., both American and Soviet foreign policies at present appear designed to discourage him from such a course of action.

50. "No Offer to Cuba, State Official Says," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1982, p. A25.

51. Barbara Crossette, "U.S. Linking Cuba to 'Violence' Blocks Tourist and Business Trips," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1982, pp. A1, A9.

52. Wayne S. Smith, "Dateline Havana: Myopic Diplomacy," *Foreign Policy*, No. 48 (Fall 1982), pp. 157-174. See also "Relations with Cuba: Refrozen," *The Economist*, May 1, 1982, pp. 32-33.

53. "Moscow Boosts Aid to Cuba," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 1982, p. A24.