PREFACE

In the post Second World War period Latin America had occupied an important place in Soviet Union's global revolutionary strategy. Latin America was not an area of vital security interest to the Soviet Union, notwithstanding the importance Moscow attaches to the preservation of socialist Cuba. Soviet strategic concerns in Latin America stem from the region's status as a high priority area for the United States and the challenge thereby posed to the USSR as a rival superpower.

The traditional Soviet perception of Latin America was basically determined by two key factors. First, because of the great distance between the Soviet Union and Latin America and the paucity of historical contacts between the two. A salient feature of the Soviet perception of the region was Moscow's inordinate ignorance and its inability to fully comprehend the political dynamics of the Latin America. Second, the Soviet perception of the region was basically conditioned by the relationship, between the Latin America and the United States. Until the 1960s, Moscow perceived the region as the "strategic rear" of the United States.

During the 1960s and 1970s several major changes took place in the international arena that caused profound
changes in Soviet perceptions of Latin America. By the early 1970s most of the Latin American countries increasingly began to perceive itself as a part of the "Third World". This new self-perception of Latin America altered the traditional image of the region held in the Soviet Union. In addition, the attainment of nuclear parity with the United States, the construction of a "blue water" navy, and socialist economic model enabled the USSR to establish, for the first time, a modest presence in Latin America.

Some of the important Latin American countries were suddenly brought to the revolutionary thresh-hold largely due to the success of Cuban Revolution in 1959 and Sandinista victory in Nicaragua in 1979. Their success largely due to through guerrilla warfare and combined with other like minded leftist groups. This event had triggered off a wave of guerrilla warfare in other parts of the Central American region in particular as in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica.

From the global perspective, the political developments of the Latin American region as a whole and Central America, in particular, were quite significant for the Soviet Union. The Soviet policy towards Central America was aimed at enduring a foothold in the region.

(ii)
The process had already been initiated with the victory of Cuban revolution and other successful events in Chile and Nicaragua facilitated Soviet Union’s involvement in Latin American affairs in an increasing order.

Nicaragua first came under Soviet attention after the fall of Somoza military regime in 1979, then it was drawn to other countries of Central American region for instance El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Thereafter Soviet Union backed wide range of "political and military" activities in Central America. The main objective in the region was basically to support 'leftist change' in accordance with her ideological imperatives.

Cautions and careful, the Soviet Union had employed as a broad policy in its expanding relationship with Central America. The Soviet Union had followed what has been called "two-track" policy, i.e., state to state diplomatic relations in the field of trade and aid, and party to party relations. Due to predominance of the United States in the region, Soviet proposed a diplomacy aimed at preserving revolutionary regimes and discreetly bolstering leftist movement without provoking a direct confrontation with the United States. In this Soviet cautious calculations, with respect to Central America, Cuba and Nicaragua played a vital role.

(iii)
In early eighties, the revolutionary groups in the entire Central American region locked in a bitter battle against the existing military regimes but in this battle no body could emerge victorious. Although the Moscow was not so optimistic about the prospects for revolutionary change through armed struggle, they continue to support number of "political military fronts" throughout the region.

In due course of time, with the emergence of democratic government in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras forced Soviet Union to put an end to support revolutionary activities in the region. Apart from this, the Soviet Union also had to take into account the emergence of the United States from "Vietnam Syndrome", as it proved after the U.S. invasion to Grenada in 1983 and her support to counter-insurgency Contra forces against Sandinista regime. These factors made Soviet Union to reconsider her decision to support any revolutionary group in the region.

Subsequently, in 1985 the arrival of new Soviet leadership headed by Mikhail Gorbachev, on the scene introduced a far reaching changes in the Soviet foreign policy. The concrete implication of this new change involved Soviet Union withdrawing from its involvement and (iv)
support to the Third World revolutionary regimes, particularly Central American region.

Gorbachev, in the name of universal human approach to international politics, led greater emphasis on cooperation between the Soviet Union and developed western countries, specially U.S.A. While addressing 27th CPSU Congress in 1986, Gorbachev admitted that Soviet economic and social crisis was so acute that it could no longer afford even a pretense of being a great power. Chaos in political and economic life of the country forced Soviet Union to retreat from Central American region.

The proposed study entitled "Soviet Policy Towards Central America, 1979-1991", has been organised into six chapters.

The first chapter deals with basic Soviet approach towards the Third World with special reference to South and Central American region in Latin America. Further, it highlights the success of Cuban revolution and revolution and emergence of the guerrilla warfare strategy in Central America which made a profound impact on the Soviet policy towards the region.

The second chapter analyses the principal goals and policy of Soviet Union in South and Central America. Efforts has been made to examine various dimensions of the
Soviet policy towards the South and Central American countries, specially in the light of geographical fatalism.

The third chapter traces the historical background of dictatorial regimes and popular 'Sandism'. It also examines the Soviet instruments to help Sandinista governments and its related constraints. It further highlights Soviet policy of 'new thinking' and dilution of its commitments to Nicaragua.

The fourth chapter discusses the Soviet policy of support to Armed Revolutionary struggles in Central America with particular emphasis on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica. This chapter also investigates how Soviet Union responded to revolutionary activities in these countries in the light of Sandinista success in Nicaragua. Finally, it highlights Soviet and the US interference in the region and subsequent outcome of their involvement.

The fifth chapter analyses Gorbachev's "New Thinking" and its impact on Central America during the period of 1985-1991. It also enumerates the problems faced by the Soviet Union during the revolutionary activities in Central American region.
In the concluding chapter, an attempt has been made to find out the reasons for the failure of revolutionary activities and factors responsible for Soviet retreat from Central American region.

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(ABHAY KANT)